

# English 253: Introduction to Fiction

## Spring 2021 Course Syllabus

Daniel J. Pizappi

Section 001 / Online / MWF 3:30-4:20 PM

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### FACULTY CONTACT INFORMATION

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Office Hours: M 2:30-3:30 and W 2:30-3:30  
or by appointment

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### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will cover a range of writers and texts and to represent a variety of movements, styles, and historical periods. We will consider the American canon and think about the benefits and limitations of this canon. Students will learn that literary genres exist in history, and that the formal possibilities and constraints of fiction reveal themselves across the spectrum of historical difference. This course challenges students to develop an understanding of different ways to approach literature and be able to communicate those understandings to others in conversation, but especially in written essays that draw on close readings and/or literary theory or history to present an extended argument about the meaning and function of literary works. The course works to further the University's aim to create a foundation for successful academic study, for lifelong learning, and for carrying out the duties of local, national, and global citizenship. This course satisfies the "Communicating Through Writing" General Education requirement; therefore, students must compose at least 5,000 words of written work via multiple writing assignments.

### COURSE OUTCOMES

By the end of this course, students should have mastered the terms, conventions, and goals of literary analysis well enough to:

1. engage a variety of texts and discourses with close attention and respect; their knowledge of, and appreciation for, those texts/discourses through reflection, discussion, and/or research;
2. place discourses in their cultural, historical, and generic contexts;
3. develop informed responses based on reasoned analysis and conduct close readings that address form, genre, and style;
4. contribute to conversations about texts and discourses;
5. produce effective writing within the appropriate context and genre; and
6. better understand the broad range of discourse studies in English: literature, rhetoric, composition, linguistics, and cultural studies.

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## REQUIRED TEXTS

- Toomer, Jean. *Cane*. Liveright, 2011.
- Roberts, Elizabeth Madox. *The Time of Man: a Novel*. Kentucky UP, 2000.
- Barnes, Djuna. *Nightwood*. New Directions, 2006.
- Butler, Octavia E. *Parable of the Sower*. Grand Central Publishing, 2019.
- Morrison, Toni. *A Mercy*. Vintage International, 2009.
- Johnson, Denis. *Train Dreams: a Novella*. Picador, 2012.

Additional readings will be posted directly to Canvas.

## Content Warning

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Please be advised that all readings in the course are required; some texts include material including but not limited to racism, misogyny, graphic violence and sexually explicit subject matter that you may find emotionally challenging, even difficult. If some of this stuff makes you feel uncomfortable, that's perfectly normal, and I encourage you to talk to me and your friends about it. But bear in mind that a liberal arts education is designed to confront you with things that challenge and at times even threaten your worldviews. So if you feel intellectually or emotionally disturbed by what you learn in class, don't assume that you should be concerned. It may only mean that you are engaging with novel perspectives, which is what college is all about. However, while the classroom is a space where challenges are posed and risks are taken, microaggressions or personal attacks on your classmates will not be tolerated. That said, if you ever feel the need to step away from a class session due to the material being discussed you may do so without penalty. You may also email me ahead of a class meeting if you would prefer not to be called upon to discuss the subject matter of that day's reading.

## Attendance/Participation

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Much of our class time will be spent in active discussion of literature as a community of scholars, readers, and thinkers—an experience that is difficult to replicate outside of the classroom setting. Therefore, regular attendance will not only prepare you for your essays and the final exam, but will also provide you with an opportunity to engage in enriching conversations about ideas, an activity central to the purpose of a university education. You may miss up to 3 class meetings without any reduction in your final grade; you should reserve those for true emergencies. Each absence after 3 will reduce your final course grade by 1/3 of a letter grade (for example, from B+ to a B or from a B- to a C+). If you miss 7 or more class meetings, for any reason(s), you will fail the class. Also be aware that missed quizzes cannot be made up. Participation in class discussions is required and vital to earning high grades. You need to make significant contributions to class discussions at least once a week.

Attendance expectations include your corporation and attention during class. If you are not attentive during class, you may be counted as absent.

## Assignments

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**Reading Responses:** Participation includes doing the reading, attending class, and being willing to share your thoughts on the reading. To promote such participation, I require that you write a daily reading response and submit this ahead of each class session via Canvas. This response should cover one plot point, character, theory, connection, etc. that you want to discuss based on the reading assigned for that day. In other words, this response should be the one thing you most want to talk about in that day's reading. We will often use these responses to drive our discussions in class (meaning I will call on you to talk about your responses, so be prepared).

**Close Reading Essay:** In approximately 1200 words, you will write a claim-driven essay in which you primarily use close reading skills to support and develop your points. More information will be provided on the assignment sheet given out in class.

**Analytical/Theory Application Essay:** In approximately 1200 words, you will write a claim-driven essay in which you primarily use a particular analytical theory or model to support and develop your points. Some theories or models you could use include: historical, economic, ethical, feminist or gender study approach, et. cetera. More information will be provided on the assignment sheet given out in class.

**Portfolio:** At the end of the semester you will complete a portfolio. This should contain your first drafts, original "final" drafts, and revised final drafts of both of your essays, along with any relevant supplementary materials that you wish for me to view. The new drafts of your essays should display substantial revisions and improvement from the previous versions.

## Formatting

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Except for responses and quizzes, assignments should be typed, carefully proofread, and properly formatted according to MLA style (12 pt. Times New Roman, 1" margins, double-spaced, etc.) unless otherwise specified. Submitting work that does not meet these requirements will result in a lower grade on the assignment. An easy reference for formatting assistance is the MLA Guide on the Purdue OWL website (Google it if you haven't been there before, it's not hard to find.)

## Late Work

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This course requires extensive reading and writing on a regular basis. To keep up with the course, you must complete all assignments by the date and time stated on Canvas. Late reading response posts and other minor assignments will not be accepted. Late essays may be accepted, but keep in mind that every day past the due date may have an

impact on your ability to keep up with subsequent work in the course, which in turn may have a negative effect on your overall grade. If you know that you will miss a deadline, I ask that you contact me and ask for an extension **at least 72 hours in advance of the deadline.**

## Grades

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**I do not discuss grades over email.** If you want to discuss your grade with me, visit me during office hours or email to schedule an appointment.

Wait 48 hours before discussing an assignment grade with me. Please respect this time frame, as it allows you to review and fully consider any comments that I have made on your draft.

### Major Assignments:

Participation/Reading Responses	Throughout the Semester
Close Reading Essay	Due March 15
Theory Application Essay	Due April 19
Portfolio	TBA

### Grading Policy:

Grades in this course will be determined by using a method called ungrading. The purpose of this method is to better reflect the work that you put into the course, rather than assigning you with an (often arbitrary) assessment of its quality (i.e. 31/35 points). For more information about this grading policy, see the **Grading Memo** and **Grading Matrix**.

## Academic Integrity & Plagiarism

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As a UTK student, you are expected to abide by UTK's Honor Statement, which is available in section 10 of [Hilltopics](#):

*An essential feature of the University of Tennessee is a commitment to maintaining an atmosphere of intellectual integrity and academic honesty. As a student of the university, I pledge that I will neither knowingly give nor receive any inappropriate assistance in academic work, thus affirming my own personal commitment to honor and integrity.*

All work you turn in must be your own; appropriating others' work, cutting and pasting from the internet, failing to properly acknowledge sources, turning in work that was substantially written or rewritten by a friend, family member, or tutor, providing false attributions of source material, falsifying data, or other forms of plagiarism or academic dishonesty *will result in failing the assignment and other penalties, up to and including failure of the course and possible additional university action.* All plagiarism and academic dishonesty is reported to the Office of Student Conduct and Community

Standards and the Dean's Office of your College. Plagiarism is serious; we'll talk about what it is and how to avoid it throughout the semester.

### ***UTK's Policy on Plagiarism as Stated in Hilltopics***

Plagiarism is using the intellectual property or product of someone else without giving proper credit. The undocumented use of someone else's words or ideas in any medium of communication (unless such information is recognized as common knowledge) is a serious offense, subject to disciplinary action that may include failure in a course and/or dismissal from the University.

### **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Any student who feels they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the [Student Disability Services](#) office at 865-974-6087 in 100 Dunford Hall to document their eligibility for services. Student Disability Services will work with students and faculty to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

### **ACCESSIBILITY**

UT values accessibility for everyone in our community and has expressed this value in system-wide policy. All communications, learning material, and technology at UT should be accessible. For more information about accessibility including the full policy and opportunities for training, visit the [UT accessibility webpage](#).

### **TITLE IX**

University of Tennessee faculty are committed to supporting our students and upholding gender equity laws as outlined by Title IX. Please be aware that if you choose to confide in a faculty member regarding an issue of sexual misconduct, dating violence, or stalking, we are obligated to inform the University's Title IX Coordinator, who can assist you in connecting with all possible resources both on- and off-campus. If you would like to speak with someone confidentially, the Student Counseling Center (865-974-2196) and the Student Health Center (865-974-3135) are both confidential resources.

For additional resources and information, visit [titleix.utk.edu](http://titleix.utk.edu).

## RESOURCES

There are a lot of resources available to you as a student in this course and at UT. I will highlight here three here that I believe are particularly useful: the University Libraries, the [Judith Herbert Anderson Writing Center](#), and the Counseling Center.

### THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

The University Libraries are staffed by knowledgeable and helpful professionals and should be one of your first research resources throughout your time at UTK.

The easiest way to get in contact is to chat with a reference librarian to ask a quick question (about almost anything) on the Library homepage at <http://www.lib.utk.edu>.

For the most up-to-date information regarding the University Libraries services during the pandemic, please consult this page: <https://www.lib.utk.edu/contingency/>

### The Judith Herbert Anderson Writing Center

Getting feedback while you're in the process of working on a writing assignment is a great way to improve the quality of your writing and develop as a writer. You're encouraged to talk with the Herbert Writing Center's trained tutors about getting started on a paper; organizing your ideas; finding and citing sources; polishing final drafts; editing for grammar; revising; and more. **For information about how to make and attend online appointments**, see <https://writingcenter.utk.edu/> or email [writingcenter@utk.edu](mailto:writingcenter@utk.edu).

### The Counseling Center

The Counseling Center's mission is to promote students' psychological, educational, and social well-being. They provide a variety of services, including crisis intervention, individual counseling, workshops, and more. If you or someone you know could benefit from their assistance, contact them anytime:

Website: <https://counselingcenter.utk.edu/>

Phone: 865-974-2196; 24-Hour Helpline: 865-974-HELP (4357)

Email: [counselingcenter@vols.utk.edu](mailto:counselingcenter@vols.utk.edu)

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## Course Schedule

The reading listed on this schedule is what we are covering in class *on the day it is listed*. You are expected to have the reading completed *before* you come to class that day. Occasionally readings will be supplemented with pertinent academic articles.

Note: I reserve the right to change/revise this syllabus. You will be duly notified if I do.

<b>DATE</b>	<b>READ</b>
W Jan. 20	Syllabus, Student Info Sheet
F Jan. 22	<i>Cane</i> , “Karintha” through “Blood-Burning Moon”
M Jan. 25	<i>Cane</i> , “Seventh Street” through “Bona and Paul”
W Jan. 27	<i>Cane</i> , “Kabnis”
F Jan. 29	<i>Cane</i> , Supplementary Article(s) TBA
M Feb. 1	<i>The Time of Man</i> , Ch. 1
W Feb. 3	<i>The Time of Man</i> , Ch. 2
F Feb. 5	<i>The Time of Man</i> , Ch. 3
M Feb. 8	<i>The Time of Man</i> , Ch. 4
W Feb. 10	<i>The Time of Man</i> , Ch. 5-6
F Feb. 12	<i>The Time of Man</i> , Ch. 7
M Feb. 15	<i>The Time of Man</i> , Ch. 8-9
W Feb. 17	<i>The Time of Man</i> , Ch. 10
F Feb. 19	<i>The Time of Man</i> , Supplementary Article(s) TBA
M Feb. 22	<i>Nightwood</i> , “Bow Down” through “Night Watch”
W Feb. 24	<i>Nightwood</i> , “The Squatter” through “Where the Tree Falls”
F Feb. 26	<i>Nightwood</i> , “Go Down, Matthew” through “The Possessed”
M Mar. 1	<i>Nightwood</i> ; Supplementary Article(s) TBA
W Mar. 3	<i>Parable of the Sower</i> , Ch. 1-3
F Mar. 5	<i>Parable of the Sower</i> , Ch. 4-5
M Mar. 8	<i>Parable of the Sower</i> , Ch. 6-9
W Mar. 10	<i>Parable of the Sower</i> , Ch. 10-13
F Mar. 12	Supplementary Article(s) TBA
M Mar. 15	<b>Close Reading Essay Due</b>
W Mar. 17	<i>Parable of the Sower</i> , Ch. 14-16
F Mar. 19	<i>Parable of the Sower</i> , Ch. 17-19
M Mar. 22	<i>Parable of the Sower</i> , Ch. 20-22
W Mar. 24	<i>Parable of the Sower</i> , Ch. 23-24
F Mar. 26	<i>Parable of the Sower</i> , Ch. 25-End
M Mar. 29	Supplementary Article(s) TBA
W Mar. 31	<i>A Mercy</i> , p. 1-41

F Apr. 2	<b>No Class – Spring Recess</b>
M Apr. 5	<i>A Mercy</i> , p. 42-78
W Apr. 7	<i>A Mercy</i> , p. 79-118
F Apr. 9	<i>A Mercy</i> , p. 119-136
M Apr. 12	<i>A Mercy</i> , p. 137-167
W Apr. 14	<i>A Mercy</i> , p. 168-End
F Apr. 16	<i>A Mercy</i> , Supplementary Article(s) TBA
M Apr. 19	<b>Theory Application Essay Due</b>
W Apr. 21	<i>Train Dreams</i> , Ch. 1-3
F Apr. 23	<i>Train Dreams</i> , Ch. 4-6
M Apr. 26	<i>Train Dreams</i> , Ch. 7-End
W Apr. 28	Portfolio Compilation/Assistance Day
TBA	<b>Final Exam Period – Portfolios Due</b>