

## Foundational Studies – Literary Studies

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### English 484: Interrelations of Literature

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*Literature and Language at ISU* (2009), an official document of the Department of English, includes the following description of English 484:

English 484, Interrelations of Literature, a capstone course for both the English major and the General Education program, considers texts from various time periods, cultures, and disciplines to encourage students to extend the lessons of literary inquiry and media literacy into life beyond the university. This course explores the relevance of literature and art and aims to cultivate students' curiosity about the vastness and complexity of this world, its cultures, texts, and ways of knowing. In this culminating educational experience, students are asked to synthesize the knowledge gained from their individual courses of studies while engaging peers from diverse social and disciplinary backgrounds in wide-ranging conversation about course texts and the issues they convey. Students produce a substantial thesis-based researched essay that reflects on the student's undergraduate experience of literature and language.

1. **Use a thematic approach to a particular topic or issue that integrates multiple ways of knowing:** English 484 offers students from a variety of academic and disciplinary backgrounds the opportunity to consider and discuss a given course theme precisely through the interrelations between different kinds of texts (literary, scientific, journalistic, etc.) from distinct time periods, cultures, and disciplines. The diversity of texts addressing the given course theme ensures that the ideas or questions governing the overall course are approached through various ways of expressing, representing, and thinking through knowledge and its acquisition. Central to this course is the pervasive recognition of the vastness, complexity, and interconnectedness of the world in which live.
2. **Engage in a project or conduct research that makes use of multiple ways of knowing to address a particular topic or issue:** Just as English 484 prospectively encourages students to extend the lessons of literary inquiry and media literacy into life beyond the university, it also asks students to build upon their individual areas of expertise drawn from their own courses of studies, especially with regard to the culminating project of the course. This project consists of a substantial thesis-based researched essay or similar project that reflects on the student's undergraduate experience of literature

and language writ-large. By giving students choices in terms of the precise format of the culminating project, a wide array of subjects and approaches may be addressed by a given class. And, because of its substantive nature, this culminating project allows students to examine their subject of study to a significant depth.

- 3. Analyze and write at an advanced level:** By means of various reading assignments in distinct genres, English 484 fosters the close reading and media literacy skills essential to the production of advanced-level writing. Various shorter writing assignments give students the opportunity to work closely with the instructor to identify and correct deficiencies in students' prose while enhancing strengths. Shorter writing assignments also give students the opportunity to review basic research and citation practices necessary for the culminating project. All writing and reading assignments are intended to prepare students for their culminating project, which allows students to demonstrate advanced analytical and writing skills.

Dr. Brendan Corcoran  
**English 484.001: Interrelations of Literature (World-Making, World-Breaking)**  
 Fall 2009, MWF 12:00-12:50  
 SH 301

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#### CONTEXTS:

*ISU Undergraduate Catalog describes English 484 as follows:*

Interdisciplinary in approach and international in scope, this comparative literature course deals with the intersection of literature with other forms of art and knowledge. Prerequisites: 78 credit hours and seven of nine required Liberal Studies courses. See the General Education section of the *Catalog* for a complete description of the capstone requirement. General Education Credits: [GE2000: Capstone Course] [FS Syllabus]

#### *Course Content:*

Unquenchable curiosity about the world in which we live, matched with humility and a sense of wonder, forms the basis for all serious work—be it artistic, philosophical, scientific, or spiritual—that seeks to comprehend and respond to our living world. Through the course texts and assignments (addressing the five areas of Liberal Studies: 1. Science and Mathematical Studies 2. Literary, Artistic, and Philosophical Studies 3. Historical Studies 4. Social and Behavioral Studies and 5. Multicultural Studies), this class will consider how human beings simultaneously create and destroy the world. What does it mean to designate a *human world* and a *natural world*? Can such a mind-body split be sustained? What do we know of these worlds? We will explore a variety of texts from multiple disciplines and discuss how these works represent world-making and world-breaking. To make *a* world, do we necessarily have to destroy *the* world?

Through course readings, films, class discussions, three short essays, and the final project, we will consider how various disciplines apprehend the notion of world-making/world-breaking. English 484 is an English course, and it will be conducted with an appropriate emphasis on literary thinking and analysis. However, as a capstone course satisfying the

university's Foundational Studies Integrative and Upper Division Electives requirements, students will be asked to connect this central question (what does it mean to make or break the world?) to their diverse academic experiences from Foundational Studies, their major's course of studies, as well as from their own lives and personal experiences. [FS Syllabus]

*Outcomes:\**

After students complete English 484, they should be able to:

1. appreciate the cumulative benefit of reading and course work in one's major (English or other) and be able to extend the lessons of literary inquiry and media literacy into life beyond the university; understand the intersection of literature and other forms of art and knowledge. [FS Integrative 1, 2, 3]
2. grasp the relevance of literature and art. [FS Integrative 1, 5]
3. cultivate individual curiosity about the vastness and complexity of the world, its cultures, texts, and ways of knowing. [FS Integrative 1, 2, 4]
4. demonstrate knowledge of the variety of literary texts and approaches to studying texts across time and cultures. [FS Integrative 1, 2, 4]
5. engage fellow students and teachers from different social or professional/disciplinary backgrounds in wide-ranging conversation about texts and the issues they convey. [FS Integrative 1, 2, 4]
6. produce a substantial thesis-based researched essay that reflects their undergraduate experience of literature and language. [FS Integrative 3, 4, 5]
7. apply the principles of close reading in their discussions and in their writing. [FS Integrative 3, 4, 5]
8. express themselves clearly in both written and spoken forms. [FS Integrative 3, 4, 5]
9. apply critical thinking skills when reading, writing, speaking, and listening. [FS Integrative 1, 3, 4, 5]

COURSE MATERIALS:

**Books (Required)**

- Edward O. Wilson's *The Creation: An Appeal to Save Life on Earth* (2006) [W. W. Norton 0393062171]

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\* These outcomes are presented in *Literature and Language at ISU* (2009), a Department document that articulates the overall goals of the literature program, as well as goals for individual courses.

- Gavin Schmidt's *Climate Change: Picturing the Science* (2009) [Norton 9780393331257]
- Aeschylus' *The Oresteia* (1984), Ted Hughes, trans., [Farrar, Straus, Giroux 0374227217]
- Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1999) [Arden 1903436087]
- Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (2005) [Norton Critical Edition 0393926362]
- Bruce Chatwin's *The Songlines* (1988) [Penguin 0140094296]

#### Books (Recommended)

- Elizabeth Bishop *The Complete Poems 1927-1979* (1984) [FSG 0374518173]
- Mark Lynas's *Six Degrees: Our Future on a Hotter Planet* [National Geographic Books 142620213X]

#### Essays and Articles (On Blackboard)

- Thomas Hardy's "Apology"
- Tim Robinson's "The Echosphere" (essay)
- Philip Gourevitch's Introduction to *We Wish to Inform You that Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families* (prose)
- Jonathan Bate's "A Voice for Ariel" (essay)

#### Films

- Ron Fricke's *Baraka*
- David Attenborough's *Planet Earth*
- Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*
- Bill Moyers' *Facing the Truth*
- Eugene Jarecki's *Why We Fight*
- Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth*
- Leonardo Di Caprio's *The 11<sup>th</sup> Hour*
- Australia's "Sorry Day" (web video/DVD); Paul Kelly's "Union Song;" Getup Mob's "Sorry Day" video
- Godfrey Reggio's *Koyaanisqatsi: Life Out of Balance* (recommended)
- Godfrey Reggio's *Powaqqatsi: Life in Transformation* (recommended)

#### GRADING

- Attendance and Participation 20%
- Short Essays 3 x 10% = 30%
- Final Essay/Project 50%
- **Attendance:** Punctual attendance and regular participation in class discussion are course requirements. If absent, be sure to find out what was

missed and make up any work. Consistent attendance will be rewarded as follows:

0-1 total absences	A
2-3 total absences	B+/B
4-5 total absences	C+/C
6-7 total absences	D+/D
8+ total absences	F
12+ total absences	F for the course

While I do not maintain a list of excused or unexcused absences, students should keep me abreast of personal emergencies and severe illnesses that necessitate extensive absence. Any absencing situations in which the university would need to be notified are obviously excused. The number of absences will correspond to a letter grade worth 10% of the total grade. Participation in class discussion is worth another 10% of the course grade. In the unfortunate circumstance that a student misses 12 class sessions or more, that student will fail the course. [FS Syllabus]

- **Quizzes:** Occasionally I will give short reading quizzes. These will count towards the Attendance/Participation grade.
- **Short Essays:** Each of these 3 short essays should be 800+ words (2-3 pages minimum – not maximum) in length. Each requires a strong thesis in response to the specific assignment. Please use the MLA format for (in-text parenthetical) citations. [FS Syllabus] Remember that ANY instance of plagiarism will result in an automatic F for the course. [FS Syllabus]
  - **Essay #1:** This is a thoughtful response to the wordless (though hardly silent) film *Baraka*. The essay is *not* a review of the film, but rather an analysis of it. What does this film mean or signify? What does it communicate? How does it work?
  - **Essay #2:** What does extinction mean? After reading and thinking about E. O. Wilson's *The Creation*, choose a single species that is currently threatened with extinction. Write an essay that briefly introduces us to the organism in question and describes its current plight. What would its *extinction* mean? To get to this answer, you first must deeply consider what extinction itself means. Then, examine what will be lost – not only for humanity but for the world and the ecosystems once inhabited by this animal, plant, fungus, or bacterium. What will this loss mean? What can or must be done to prevent this loss?

- **Essay #3:** This essay will practice the crucial skill of close-reading. How does one of the key course texts (*The Oresteia*, *The Tempest*, or *Heart of Darkness*) represent either world-making or world-breaking? After reading the work you have chosen to write on, develop a thesis based on a key passage or passages that illuminate the idea of either world-making or world-breaking. Keep the focus as narrow as possible. Quotations from the text must be used to argue your point. The essay should be turned in no later than a week after we have finished discussion the work in question.
- **Final Essay Project:** This is a culminating essay (40% of final grade) that brings together various ideas, texts, and techniques employed throughout the semester. At 2500 words or a minimum of 10 pages, this research-backed (multiple sources—6 minimum) essay should use a specific event or idea or text to inquire into the idea of *world-making*, *world-breaking*, or the double-helix relationship between the two. ~~Please use the MLA format for (in-text/parenthetical) citations.~~ [FS Syllabus] Please begin working on the project *early*.
  - **Option A).** Building from E. O. Wilson's book, this project will address at length an ongoing *global* crises facing humanity and/or the biosphere. The project should provide a detailed examination of the human relationship to the planet by way of one of the environmental and/or social catastrophes we are presently living through. How does the issue in question constitute an instance of world-breaking? What are the consequences of the crisis in the short and long term? What responses – technological, philosophical, political, or spiritual – are possible or necessary? Where do we go from here? Feel free to use your own disciplinary (as in major) expertise to chart an individual analysis of the issue in question.
  - **Option B)** Given that this is a literature course, examine closely one of the course texts and present a detailed critical analysis of how the text in question addresses the notion of world-breaking, world-making, or the conjunction of the two. I prefer that you do *not* write on the same text you wrote on for the third short essay; however, if you can make a compelling argument for your passionate need to write on the same work, you should see me to discuss how to ensure that the two essays are different.
  - **Option C)** For this project, identify and analyze a local, regional, or global problem involving human beings or human society living

*out of balance* with Nature. Then present an idea for solving this problem. The analysis of the problem should be accurate and data-driven. The proposed solution should be practical, workable, and presentable to local, regional, or national leaders or funders. This is for-real. Be creative. Groups of up to three students may work on a single project, but a group project will be expected to have more depth and complexity than a single-student project as well as a clearly articulated (and fair) division of labor. Please see me to discuss specific requirements as soon as the project begins to develop.

#### GENERAL EXPECTATIONS

- **Classroom Comportment:**
  - Cell Phones: Handheld electronic devices are to be turned off prior to entering the classroom. Text Messaging is absolutely prohibited. If a student is observed using a cell phone for any purpose in the classroom he or she will be summarily asked to leave the room and the student will be marked absent for the day. Repeat offenders will receive an F for attendance and participation.
  - Laptops: Laptops may be used for note-taking. However, if I observe one student at any time using a laptop for anything other than note-taking, ALL laptops will be banned from the class for the entire semester. [FS Syllabus]
  - Packing Up: The class meets for a fixed time. Please do not pack up your things until the class is over. Such shuffling about is rude to the professor and other students.
  - Littering: Please make sure you clean up after yourself when you leave the class. There are bins in the building to receive your recyclable glass, plastic, aluminum, and paper.
  - Professional Communication with Professor: Students are expected to be professional in all communication with the professor. All email communication should be in complete sentences with a proper salutation and conclusion.
- **Class Discussion:** Enthusiastic participation is a course requirement. In lectures I will offer context, readings, and questions. But, the real work of textual inquiry falls to the class. I will NOT lecture all the time. But, if I am speaking, do not feel inhibited to ask questions. At times I will use language or words that are either unclear or unknown. Never be ashamed



of asking me what I mean by saying something a certain way. All students will have the opportunity to address issues and pose questions both before the whole class and in small groups. This course will provide an opportunity to try out ideas, to take risks, and to make mistakes. Therefore, the classroom must be a safe place where open conversation is honored and individual persons are respected. **Our classroom is composed of students from diverse backgrounds. You will be expected to conduct yourself professionally and as a scholar in all situations.**

- **Academic Freedom** is a core value of this university and this course. Diverse viewpoints and world-views are highly valued as they enhance the course discussion and the overall quality of the course work. Academic Freedom is also founded on a responsibility to present not merely knee-jerk “opinion” but reasoned, fact-based “argument.” For example, Holocaust-denial is considered to be hate-speech as opposed to reasoned argument. However, a reasoned, fact-based discussion of the fact that Holocaust-denial exists might be pedagogically valuable.
- **Reading:** All students must acquire the course texts listed on this syllabus. Versions with different page numbers are NOT acceptable for this course. Students are expected to bring the relevant course texts to every class session. Repeated arrival to class without the course text will severely impact the Attendance and Participation grade, and if I have to, I reserve the right to ask students who come unprepared to leave the classroom. Obviously complete preparation of all reading assignments by the date listed is expected. Poems must be read multiple times. For every class, be prepared to discuss the reading with the whole class and in small discussion groups.
- **Note-Taking:** Accurate and comprehensive class notes are absolutely invaluable to academic success. Generally, I do not provide lecture notes to the class. It is the responsibility of every student to be sufficiently engaged with the course materials and issues to take accurate and useful reading and class notes.
- **Film Screenings:** Occasionally throughout the semester on either Monday or Wednesday afternoons or evenings, I will be screening a number of the required and recommended films. Obviously, some people have commitments in the afternoons and evening, but I strongly encourage attendance at these events which will enhance our overall engagement with course themes. Copies of films will be on reserve at the library. For recommended films, extra credit (a boost in attendance and participation

grade) will be given for attendance at screenings or written evidence of viewing the film on your own time.

- **Office Hours:** I strongly encourage all students to meet me in office hours at least once during the quarter to review work, to address questions or concerns, or just to talk about the course material. For such meetings appointments should be made.
- **Academic Integrity:** This course will be using the university's Turnitin software and other modalities to catch plagiarism. **Work done for this course must adhere to the University Academic Integrity Policy, which you can review in the Undergraduate Catalog.** Proper research strategies will be discussed throughout the semester so as to ensure problems with plagiarism do not crop up. Because academic integrity is a cornerstone of the University's commitment to the principles of free inquiry, students are responsible for learning and upholding professional standards in research, writing, assessment, and ethics. In the academic community, the high value placed on honesty mandates a corresponding intolerance of dishonesty. Written or other work which students submit must be the product of their own efforts and must be consistent with appropriate standards of professional ethics. *Academic dishonesty, which includes cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of dishonest or unethical behavior, is prohibited and will result in an F for the course.* **[FS Syllabus]**
- **Further Information:** For information about the General Education-Foundational Studies program—specifically the Sycamore Standard, academic freedom, and the rights and responsibilities of students with disabilities—consult the General Education-Foundational Studies website (<http://www.indstate.edu/gened/newfoundationalstudiesprogram.htm>). **[FS Syllabus]**

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### *Here, Now*

#### Week 1 (August 26, 28)

- W: Syllabus review, Introductions  
 F: *Climate Change: Picturing the Science* (Foreword, Introduction); Images: Hubble Space Telescope's Deep Field Survey; Earthrise, Etc.

#### Week 2 (August 31, September 2, 4)

- M: *Climate Change: Picturing the Science* (Chapter 1); Thomas Hardy's "Apology"; Elizabeth Bishop's "The Map" [Handouts]  
<http://www.carbonneutral.org/> [complete your Personal Carbon Footprint]  
 W: *Baraka* (film)  
 F: *Baraka* (film)

#### Week 3 (September 7, 9, 11)

- M: LABOR DAY  
 W: *Climate Change: Picturing the Science* (Chapter 2); *Baraka* (film) Discussion  
 F: Tim Robinson's "The Echosphere" (BB)

#### Week 4 (September 14, 16, 18)

- M: *Climate Change: Picturing the Science* (Chapter 3); E. O. Wilson's TED Lecture; E. O. Wilson's *The Creation* [Chapters 1, 2, 3]  
**Due: Essay #1**  
 W: E. O. Wilson's *The Creation* [Chapters 4, 5, 6]  
**Film Screening: *An Inconvenient Truth*** (Place/Time t.b.a.)  
 F: E. O. Wilson's *The Creation* [Chapters 7, 8, 9]

#### Week 5 (September 21, 23, 25)

- M: *Climate Change: Picturing the Science* (Chapter 4); E. O. Wilson's *The Creation* [Chapters 10, 17]; Philip Gourevitch's Introduction to *We Wish to Inform You that Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families*  
 W: David Attenborough's *Planet Earth* (film); from Mark Lynas's *Six Degrees* (Introduction-BB)  
 F: David Attenborough's *Planet Earth* (film); from Mark Lynas's *Six Degrees* (Chapter 7-BB)

### *Worlds Made and Unmade*

#### Week 6 (September 28, 30, October 2)

- M: Hughes's *Agamemnon*

**Due: Essay #2**

- W: Hughes's *Agamemnon*  
 F: Hughes's *Agamemnon*

Week 7 (October 5, 7, 9)

- M: Hughes's *Choephor*  
 W: Hughes's *Choephor*; Archbishop Desmond Tutu on Restorative Justice  
**Film Screening:** *Facing the Truth* [a documentary by Bill Moyers about the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission] (Place/Time t.b.a.)  
 F: FALL BREAK

Week 8 (October 12, 14, 16)

- M: Hughes's *The Eumenides*  
 W: Hughes's *The Eumenides*  
 F: Hughes's *The Eumenides* and review of *The Oresteia* trilogy

Week 9 (October 19, 21, 23)

- M: Shakespeare's *The Tempest*; Jonathan Bate's "A Voice for Ariel"  
 W: Shakespeare's *The Tempest*  
 F: Shakespeare's *The Tempest*

*Questions of Travel*Week 10 (October 26, 28, 30)

- M: Shakespeare's *The Tempest*  
 W: Shakespeare's *The Tempest*  
 F: Shakespeare's *The Tempest*

Week 11 (November 2, 4, 6)

- M: Background: Colonialism in Africa  
 W: Rudyard Kipling's "The White Man's Burden" [handout]  
 F: Simon Schama's documentary on J. M. W. Turner's *The Slave Ship*

Week 12 (November 9, 11, 13)

- M: Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*  
 W: Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*  
 F: Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*

Week 13 (November 16, 18, 20)

- M: Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*  
 W: Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*  
**Film Screening:** *Apocalypse Now* (Place/Time t.b.a.)  
 F: Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*

*Mapping the Known and Unknown*

Week 14 (November 23, 25, 26)

- M: Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*  
**Due: Essay #3 (last day accepted)**  
 W: THANKSGIVING VACATION  
 F: THANKSGIVING VACATION

Week 15 (November 30, December 2, 4)

- M: Elizabeth Bishop: *Questions of Travel* - "Brazil" Section (handout)  
**Due: Final Project Thesis Paragraph**  
 W: Elizabeth Bishop: *Questions of Travel* - "Elsewhere" Section (handout)  
 F: Paul Kelly's "Union Song;" Getup Mob's "Union Song;" Bruce Chatwin's  
*The Songlines*

Week 16 (December 7, 9, 11)

- M: Bruce Chatwin's *The Songlines*  
 W: Bruce Chatwin's *The Songlines*  
**Film Screening: *The 11<sup>th</sup> Hour*** (Place/Time t.b.a.)  
 F: Australia's "Sorry Day"

**FINAL ESSAY PROJECT DUE: FRIDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2009**

