ENGLISH 6391: Introduction to Graduate Study  
Experiments in Criticism and Theory

This course considers literature as both an object of multiple forms of interpretation and the means through which to experiment with novel ideas. The primary goal of this course is to introduce students to the professional study of English by becoming acquainted with its history and practicing its methods. An awareness of the history of literary criticism and theory will help students become insightful readers, capable researchers, and more effective writers.

We will begin with a series of discussions about what literature is, how it works, and why it matters. Working from this foundation, we will survey significant movements in literary theory and criticism as they emerge from—and often critique—the established literary canon. Students will engage directly with the key texts that have founded various branches of literary study: new criticism, psychoanalysis, poststructuralism, cultural studies, gender studies, critical race theory, and more recent approaches such as ecocriticism and affect studies. In class discussions and written assignments, students will experiment with these approaches on a novel—Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*—lyric and narrative poetry by John Keats, and a contemporary film.

Dr. Allison Dushane  
adushane@angelo.edu  
Office: Academic 021D

Office Hours  
M/W 2:00pm-3:00pm  
T 1:00-3:00pm  
And By Appointment

Course Description

Required Books and Materials

**Graded Course Work**

- 15% Discussion Board Work, In-Class Reflections, Preparation and Active Participation
- 20% Response Papers:
  - 4 out of 7: #1 and #7 Required
- 10% Midterm Exam
- 15% Cumulative Final Exam
- 5% Review of Semenza
- 5% Research Exercise I: Reverse Annotated Bibliography
- 30% Research Project:
  - 10% Research Exercise II: Proposal and Annotated Bibliography
  - 5% Project Presentation
  - 15% Final Research Paper

**Required Books and Materials**

**Required for Purchase:**

**Books Provided by the Department:**
- Kusch, *Literary Analysis: The Basics*

**On Library Reserve:**

**Other Materials:**
- *Printed* Handouts and Readings from Blackboard
- Notebook/paper for in-class writing and something to write with

**Blackboard:**
- This course has a Blackboard website, where you can find other course materials and turn in your assignments.
LEARNING OBJECTIVES FOR ENGLISH 6381

Upon completion of this course, graduate students will be better able to:

- demonstrate advanced knowledge of theories, terms, classifications, methods, and trends common to the discipline
- contribute insightfully to scholarly discourse on literature through individual projects and collaborative activities
- demonstrate advanced abilities in reading and writing for inquiry, learning, and critical thinking
- demonstrate advanced ability to execute both written and oral analysis of texts common to the discipline
- demonstrate historical and cultural awareness in discussing and analyzing literary texts.
- understand appropriate documentation and attribution necessary for writing in the profession
- work collaboratively to develop scholarly ideas in relation to the discipline

COURSE POLICIES

I. ATTENDANCE AND LATE WORK

A graduate seminar depends on the commitment of its members for the benefit of everyone's learning. As a graduate student, you are expected to attend every class meeting. Expectations at the graduate level are high; your attendance not only impacts your grade for a single course, but it also affects the overall perceptions that professors have of your dedication and capabilities.

- I do understand that life happens, so I will grant a single absence in the event of a documented and legitimate illness, emergency, or other exception agreed upon advance. Additional and/or unexcused absences will negatively affect your overall course grade, reducing it by a third of a letter grade each. **If you miss more than two class meetings, you risk failing the course.**
- If you cannot make it to class, please let me know in advance, or as soon as possible. You should ask for notes from a classmate and check Blackboard for any relevant updates, handouts, and lecture slides.
- Late Discussion Board Questions, Response Papers, and In-class Reflections will not be accepted under any circumstances.
- Other writing assignments may be given brief extensions without penalty in *extraordinary and documented* circumstances. Notify me as soon as possible if you think you will need an extension; extensions will only be granted in advance except in cases of true emergency.
  - Otherwise, the grades for these assignments will drop half a letter grade for each 24 hours it is late; after one week, it will receive a zero.
  - The grade for the Final Research Paper will drop half a letter grade for each 6 hours it is late; after 48 hours, it will receive a zero.
II. OBSERVANCES OF RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS and TRAVEL TO UNIVERSITY EVENTS

Students traveling to university-sponsored events and students who have spoken to me in advance about missing a class for purposes of religious observance will have the opportunity to make up whatever work can be completed. The opportunity to make-up work is the student’s responsibility to arrange: (1) notification must be made in writing and in advance of the absence and (2) all work must be completed in what I deem to be a timely manner. To be clear, no makeup work will be permitted after the fact; all arrangements must be made in advance and you and I must agree upon a timetable prior to your absence.

III. STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC HONESTY

“All ASU students are expected to understand and to comply with the University’s policy on Academic Honesty as stated in the ASU Bulletin and in the ASU Student Handbook. Students who violate the Policy on Academic Honesty will be subject to disciplinary action, including a failing grade in the course.”

Angelo State University expects its students to maintain complete honesty and integrity in their academic pursuits. Students are responsible for understanding the Academic Honor Code, which is contained in both the print and web versions of the Student Handbook. http://www.angelo.edu/cstudent/documents/pdf/Student_Handbook.pdf. By participating in ENGLISH 6391, you agree to abide by the Academic Honor Code.

If you do not understand the rules regarding plagiarism, cheating, or other lapses in academic integrity as outlined in the Academic Honor Code, it is incumbent upon you to seek clarification from me prior to the first assignment. Students who violate the Academic Honor Code in any way will receive a failing grade for the course and be referred to the Department Chair and the Academic Integrity Committee.

IV. STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

I am sympathetic to all disabilities, and request that all persons requesting accommodation work through the student life office to make sure that they receive the attention they need.

Persons with disabilities that may warrant academic accommodations must contact the Student Life Office, located in room 112 of the University Center, in order to request such accommodations prior to any being implemented. You are encouraged to make this request early in the semester so that appropriate arrangements can be made.
ASSIGNMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS

I. Preparation and Active Participation

ENGLISH 6391 combines lecture and discussion. This means you need to both prepare for class and pay attention and speak during class. You are expected to bring the relevant texts to class, take notes on the lecture, contribute to class discussion, and write down the key points that come out of both.

- Bring a hard copy of the assigned texts for the day (this means printing out readings from Blackboard instead of reading them on a phone or other electronic device).
- When speaking, please show respect to your instructor, your classmates, and the process of learning as a whole: allow others time to talk, try not to interrupt, and refrain from rude, offensive, or belittling comments. When others are talking, pay attention and do not do anything that will distract yourself or others.
- **Cell phone use is 100% prohibited at all times.** Your phone should be on silent and away from sight. If you are expecting an important call, please put your phone on vibrate and let me know before class that you may need to leave class to answer your phone.

Your Preparation and Active Participation assumes the above as a baseline minimum. That is, a student who attends every class meeting, submits discussion board questions on time every week, brings the appropriate texts and assignments to every class, pays attention to the professor and fellow students, yet does not speak will receive a C. If you want a B or A grade for this category, you should:

- Read the assigned texts before class thoroughly, including introductory material and notes. Pay attention not only to the basics of plot and characterization in the literary texts, but also how the texts might be informed by the terms and ideas in the criticism and theory.
- Take your own notes as you read, either in the text or in a notebook. Note key phrases and/or passages and mark ideas that you find interesting and/or confusing. I highly recommend both writing in your texts with pencil and investing in some post-it notes to keep track of important places in the text.
- A lot of the texts we will read, particularly the primary theory texts, are dense and difficult even for established scholars. You may have to read them more slowly and carefully than you are used to, and you may have to read them more than once. It is **EXPECTED** that you will feel confused or lost at times! The important thing is to stick with it and bring your questions to class so that we can work through them together.
- Submit thoughtful, detailed, and original discussion questions.
- Make **regular** and **relevant** contributions to class discussion. Relevant contributions stay on topic, are specific (for example, start from specific places in the course texts instead of stating generalities), and indicate that you have both thought about the material itself and the contributions of others.
II. Writing Guidelines and Resources

Paper Formatting and Citation Style
All papers for this course, including response papers, must be adhere to the citation and formatting conventions outlined in the MLA Handbook (8th edition), with a word count added to the standard header. Check Blackboard for handouts and links to resources that cover MLA style.

Word Count
Each assignment will include a minimum word count or range. The main text of your paper, not including the header, bibliography, and notes, should reach the minimum or fall within the indicated range. If your paper does not reach the minimum, it will receive a deduction. Papers that fall more than 20% short of the minimum will receive a failing grade.

Online Submission: Blackboard and SafeAssign
You will turn in most of your written assignments online through Blackboard, either through the discussion board or an assignment dropbox. If you are turning in an assignment to a dropbox, you will be required to give permission to have your paper checked by SafeAssign, which is a plagiarism-checking software that checks for similarities to past submissions and online material.

Writing Center
The ASU Writing Center is a wonderful resource for students of all levels. They offer face-to-face tutoring, synchronous online tutorials, and responses to e-mailed questions about writing and reading. If you seek their help with your writing, you should provide the assignment prompt and all work you’ve completed toward the assignment. The office is on the third floor of the Porter Henderson Library, Room C305.
To set up an appointment, go to http: www.angelo.edu/dept/writingcenter.

III. Written Assignments

Discussion Board Questions
For weeks 1-5 and 7-9, you should prepare at least one brief, but well-thought out question or problem in response to the assigned reading. These questions are due midnight the night before class (so, Monday at 11:59pm) and are taken into consideration for your overall Preparation and Active Participation grade. This question or problem should not be purely mechanical or typographical (e.g., “Why does this writer use ‘which’ where she should use ‘that’?”), nor stray too far from the text (e.g. “This novel reminds me of a movie I saw.”), nor have a simple yes/no answer. It should bring out a productive tension, paradox, or complicated idea in the reading, perhaps in relation to themes explored by our other readings.

Response Papers
These short papers will answer or further develop one of the discussion questions that you posted (or that one of your classmates posed!) for the week. The goal of these papers is twofold: to raise questions about the critical/theoretical approach for the week and to demonstrate your understanding of how to make an argument about a literary text using that approach. A strong response paper will support its claims using specific details and quoted evidence from both the
literary text and the critical/theoretical texts. Your goal is not to simply repeat the words of a critic or theorist, but to use their ideas to work through your own reading of the literary text. Please avoid summary, purely subjective responses (what you "like" or "dislike"), and evaluations of an author's skill, greatness, or lack thereof.

- Word Count: 700-1000
- Submit through Blackboard dropbox before class begins (Tuesday @6:00pm)
- Bring one hard copy to class and be prepared to discuss it
- Response papers #1 and #7 are mandatory. Your grade will be based on 4 response papers out of a total of 7 opportunities for submission. You can skip one or more, or submit more than the minimum and drop the lower grades.

**In-Class Reflections**

At the beginning of each class, I may pose one or more questions about the day's readings. Sometimes I will use contributions from the discussion board, and other times I will point you to specific points in the course text that I think are particularly important. Students will write a response to these questions for 15-20 minutes. I will evaluate in-class reflections for correctness (be sure to bring your printed texts to class!), depth, and originality on a scale of 1-5 and drop the two lowest grades before calculating the average.

**Review of Semenza's Graduate Study for the 21st Century**

This review will be relatively informal and short and will cover selected chapters of Semenza’s book (most of the ones not pertaining to PhD programs). We rarely will discuss Semenza’s book in class, but I expect you to read it and learn from it. It will help you for the rest of the time you spend as a grad student at ASU (and maybe after).

**Research Exercises**

These assignments will introduce you to the process of finding, evaluating, and using scholarly sources. The first exercise is designed to introduce you to using databases and the conventions of citation in literary studies, and the second is a Proposal and Annotated Bibliography for your research project.

**Research Project**

The research project is divided into several steps, culminating in an original argument that uses one or more of the critical approaches we discussed this semester to produce a reading of one of the major literary course texts: *Frankenstein*, one or more of Keats' Odes, or *Lamia*.

- Proposal Due: Bring THREE HARD COPIES to class Week 11
- Revised Proposal and Annotated Bibliography: Submit to Blackboard dropbox before week 12 Paper Conference
- Complete Rough Draft: Bring THREE HARD COPIES to class Week 14
- Project Presentation: 10-15 minute PowerPoint presentation in class Week 15
- Complete Final Draft:
  - Word Count: 3000-3500
  - Submit through Blackboard dropbox before class begins Week 15 (Tuesday @6:00pm)
  - No hard copy
IV. Exams

The midterm and final exams will cover relevant material from the assigned literary texts and scholarly articles, Kusch's *Literary Analysis*, and the material assigned from *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, including the introductions in the anthology to the texts we cover. You will be tested on key literary terms, your understanding of critical schools and theoretical approaches, and the names of relevant critics and theorists. The final exam will be cumulative and will take place during the final exam period scheduled by the University for the course.

V. Paper Conferences, Office Hours, and E-Mail

All students will be required to attend a one-on-one meeting with me to discuss the Proposal and Annotated Bibliography for the research project. We will discuss your experiences with the research project and work on developing the argument for your final research paper. This meeting will substitute for our regular seminar meeting, so attendance is mandatory; penalties for missing the conference are the same as for regular class meetings.

My office hours are listed on the first page of the syllabus and posted on my office door. I encourage you to visit office hours to discuss any aspect of the course. I am always happy to discuss the readings, help you with getting started on assignments, or aid in any other part of the research or writing process. If you cannot meet during my posted hours, please e-mail me for an appointment.

I try to answer emails quickly within business hours (M-F 9am-5pm); however, I also teach other courses and often have meetings on and off campus, so it may take me a few hours to respond. After 5pm and on weekends, I check my email less regularly and it may be several hours or even the next day/Monday before you hear back from me. E-mail is best suited for quick questions that have concrete responses; if you need to discuss a more complex and/or personal issue, please see me after class or during office hours. I do not read/respond to drafts submitted by e-mail—for help with writing assignments that goes beyond a clarification question, please come to office hours or make an appointment!
**WEEKLY SCHEDULE***

*Subject to change

Be sure to check Blackboard regularly for any changes to the schedule. This schedule provides an overview of the semester so that you can plan around major assignment due dates, but I will post more detailed reading assignments, handouts, lecture slides and other important information on a weekly basis.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>T 8.28</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>BB:</strong> Keats, Odes</td>
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<td><strong>BB:</strong> Culler, &quot;What is Literature, and Does it Matter?&quot;</td>
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<td>Kusch, Chapters 1-2</td>
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<td>RR: Wimsatt and Beardsley, &quot;The Intentional Fallacy&quot;</td>
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<th>Week 2</th>
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<td><strong>Response Paper #1 Due</strong></td>
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<td>Kusch, Chapters 3 and 5</td>
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<td>RR: Brooks, &quot;Keats' Sylvan Historian: History Without the Footnotes&quot;</td>
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<td>RR: Rapaport, &quot;Tools for Reading Poetry&quot; (pp. 55-67 only)</td>
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<th>Week 3</th>
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<td>Kusch, Chapter 6</td>
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<td><em>Frankenstein: A Case Study in Contemporary Criticism</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>• A Critical History of <em>Frankenstein</em></td>
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<td>RR: Saussure, from <em>Course in General Linguistics</em> (pp. 137-147 only)</td>
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<td><strong>BB:</strong> Derrida, &quot;Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences&quot;</td>
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<td>RR: Foucault, What is an Author?</td>
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<th>Week 4</th>
<th>T 9.18</th>
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<td><strong>Response Paper #2 Due</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Frankenstein: A Case Study in Contemporary Criticism</em></td>
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<td>• Introduction: Biographical and Historical Contexts</td>
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<td>• What is Marxist Criticism?</td>
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<td>• Montag, &quot;The 'Workshop of Filthy Creation': A Marxist Reading of <em>Frankenstein</em>&quot;</td>
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<td>RR: Althusser, Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses</td>
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W 9.19 Optional Screening and Lecture: Branagh, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*

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<th>Week 5</th>
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<td><strong>Response Paper #3 Due</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Frankenstein: A Case Study in Contemporary Criticism</em></td>
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<td>• What is Psychoanalytic Criticism?</td>
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<td>• Collings, &quot;The Monster and the Maternal Thing: Mary Shelley's Critique of Ideology&quot;</td>
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<td>RR: Freud, &quot;The Uncanny&quot;</td>
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<td>RR: Lacan, &quot;The Mirror Stage&quot;</td>
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| Week 6 | Review of Semenza Due  
|       | Midterm Exam |
| Week 7 | **Response Paper #4 Due**  
| T 10.9 | *Frankenstein: A Case Study in Contemporary Criticism*  
|       | - What is Cultural Criticism?  
|       | - Carroll, "Crusades Against Frost: Frankenstein, Polar Ice, and Climate Change in 1818"  
|       | RR: Marland, *Ecocriticism*  
|       | **BB:** Erasmus Darwin selections |
| Week 8 | **Response Paper #5 Due**  
| T 10.16 | *Frankenstein: A Case Study in Contemporary Criticism*  
|       | - What is Feminist Criticism?  
|       | - What are Gender Criticism and Queer Theory?  
|       | - Smith, "'Cooped Up' with 'Sad Trash': Domesticity and the Sciences in *Frankenstein*"  
|       | RR: Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Epistemology of the Closet" |
| Week 9 | **Response Paper #6 Due**  
| T 10.23 | *Frankenstein: A Case Study in Contemporary Criticism*  
|       | - What is Postcolonial Criticism?  
|       | - "'This Thing of Darkness': Racial Discourse in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*"  
|       | RR: Ahmed, "Affective Economies" |

**Frankenreads Week! Monster's Ball Wednesday 10.24**

| Week 10 | **Research Exercise I Due**  
| T 10.30 | **BB:** Gigante, "The Monster in the Rainbow"  
|       | **BB:** Keats, *Lamia* |

| Week 11 | **Proposal Draft Due**  
| T 11.6 | Kusch, Chapter 7  
|       | **BB:** Hayot, *The Elements of Academic Style*, Chaps. 1-3 (BB)  
|       | Review Semenza, *Graduate Study for the Twenty-first Century*, Chap.5 |

| Week 12 | **No Class Meeting:** *Get Out* Screening and Lecture  
| T 11.13 | This Week: Individual Meetings With Instructor  
<p>|       | Submit Revised Proposal and Annotated Bibliography Before Appointment |</p>
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<td><strong>Film:</strong> <em>Get Out</em></td>
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<td>RR: Morrison, &quot;Playing in the Dark&quot;</td>
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<td><strong>BB:</strong> Mulvey, &quot;Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema&quot;</td>
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<td><strong>No Class Meeting:</strong> Discussion Board Assignment Due (Response Paper #7)</td>
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<th>Week 14</th>
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<td>T</td>
<td>11.27</td>
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<td><strong>Workshop:</strong> Complete Rough Draft of Research Paper Due</td>
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<td>Project Presentations</td>
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<td>Final Exam Review</td>
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<td>Course Evaluations</td>
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**FINAL EXAM:**
Tuesday, December 11th
6:00-8:00pm