

# THE HISTORY AND THEORY OF THE NOVEL



Vincent van Gogh,  
"Woman Reading  
a Novel," 1888

## Course description

1. The novel arose with
  - the spread of classical culture in the Roman Empire (e.g., Heliodorus)*
  - the cultural sophistication of the Imperial Court during the Heian period in medieval Japan (e.g., Murasaki).*
  - the decline of the medieval worldview in sixteenth-century Europe (e.g., Cervantes).*
  - early eighteenth-century commercial culture in England (e.g., Defoe).*
2. Its rise was essentially an outgrowth of
  - the printing press.*
  - individualism and empiricism.*
  - increased leisure and literacy; especially among women.*
  - nationalism.*
  - The European pursuit of travel, trade, and colonization.*
3. As a genre, the novel is fundamentally
  - open, individualistic, and liberating.*
  - closed, coercive, and normalizing.*
4. For the novel, "realism" is
  - its fundamental mode.*
  - an anomaly or deviation in its history.*
  - the opposite of romanticism.*
  - a version of romanticism.*
  - the opposite of modernism.*
  - a phenomenon that logically culminates in fictional modernism.*
5. In an age of electronic texts and images, novels are
  - the same as ever.*
  - changing.*
  - over.*
  - just getting started.*

Fall 2014  
MWF 11:15 AM-12:05 PM  
Park Hall 250

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Park Hall 311(moving to 111B)  
Office hours: F 1:15-4:15

## Main course objectives

1. Students will gain a critical understanding of the novel as an art form, of the development of prose fiction, and of theoretical approaches to the poetics, history, and cultural significance of the novel.

2. Students will enhance their skills at presenting their ideas orally, on paper, and online.

3. Students will develop their abilities to think critically, argue persuasively, write vigorous prose that adheres to conventional standards of grammar and usage, as appropriate to its genre and audience.

4. Students will explore the possibilities for collaboration and critical thinking in the classroom and beyond, through class blogs and online groups and projects, for instance.

## Required texts

- Michael McKeon, *Theory of the Novel: A Historical Approach* (Johns Hopkins UP, ISBN 080186397X)
- Lisa Zunshine, *Why We Read Fiction* (Ohio State UP, 081425151X)
- Daniel Defoe, *Roxana* (Oxford UP, 9780199536740)
- Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield* (Norton, 9780393958287)
- Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (Harcourt, 9780156628709)
- Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 0061120065)
- Jennifer Egan, *A Visit from the Goon Squad* (Anchor, 9780307477477)
- Supplemental PDF files, which I'll provide  
*These editions are recommended.*

## Paper guidelines

**A**n “A” paper responds to the assignment in a thorough, compelling, intelligent way. In order to do this, it must have several qualities. First of all it must have a **point**; in a critical essay, that means an **argument or thesis**. The point must engage the interest of a reasonably intelligent and informed reader because it is **not obvious**, because it has some **importance** in itself, and because the writer gives it a rich **development** with cogent **logic**, illuminating **examples**, and relevant **details**. The paper must have a clear **structure** suitable to the point it is making, including an inviting **introduction** and a **conclusion** that does more than simply rehash the thesis. The **syntax** must be sound (*i.e.*, no grammatical errors or errors of idiom) and the **style** lively, clear, and free of awkwardness and obfuscation.

A “B” paper falls short when it comes to one or two of these qualities. A “C” paper lacks several of them, a “D” paper most of them, and an “F” paper almost all of them.

Because this is an advanced course in English, I expect papers to display full mastery of elementary issues of grammar, usage, punctuation, and syntax (for instance, sentence formation, use of apostrophes, and

**Borrowing (part of) a novel  
from a private British  
circulating library, 1877**



## Schedule

*TN* = *Theory of the Novel*, ed. McKeon; unless I've provided specific page numbers, you are responsible for reading the whole selection. Please also make sure to read all of McKeon's section introductions. (I recommend that you re-read and return to these introductions throughout the term. They're really helpful!)

### August 18 (*Week one*)

Introductions, syllabus, course requirements

### August 20

Defoe, *Roxana* (1-10)

Northrop Frye (*TN* 1), E. D. Hirsch (*TN* 2, pp. 27-32)

### August 22

Defoe, *Roxana* (11-25)

Jonathan Culler (*TN* 4), Marthe Robert (*TN* 5)

### August 25 (*Week two*)

Defoe, *Roxana* (25-96)

Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (*TN* 23)

### August 27

Defoe, *Roxana* (97-122)

Walter Benjamin (*TN* 6)

### August 31

Defoe, *Roxana* (123-60)

Claude Lévi-Strauss (*TN* 7)

*September 1 (Labor Day—no classes)*

### September 3 (*Week three*)

Defoe, *Roxana* (161-240)

Northrop Frye (*TN* 8), and from "Secular Scripture" (PDF)

### September 5

Defoe, *Roxana* (241-300)

Ian Watt (*TN* 14, 18)

### September 8 (*Week four*)

Defoe, *Roxana* (301-30)

Michael McKeon (*TN* 27)

### September 10

Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*

Virginia Woolf (*TN* 34)

### September 12

Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*

Georg Lukács (*TN* 35)

### September 15 (*Week five*)

Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*

Joseph Frank (*TN* 36)

### September 17

Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*

Dorrit Cohn (*TN* 21)

### September 19

Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*

Lisa Zunshine, *Why We Read Fiction*

### September 22 (*Week six*)

Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*

Lisa Zunshine, *Why We Read Fiction*

Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

### September 24

Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Mikhail Bakhtin (*TN* 13)

### September 26

Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Henry Louis Gates, from *The Signifying Monkey* (PDF)

### September 29 (*Week seven*)

Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Barbara Johnson, "Metaphor, Metonymy, and Voice in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*" (PDF)

**October 1**

Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Fredric Jameson (TN 16)

**October 3**

Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

*Midterm exam due.*

**October 6 (Week eight)**

Dickens, *David Copperfield* (#1-2)

Clifford Siskin (TN 25)

**October 8**

Dickens, *David Copperfield* (3)

Sigmund Freud (TN 9)

**October 10**

Dickens, *David Copperfield* (4)

Marthe Robert (TN 10)

**October 13 (Week nine)**

Dickens, *David Copperfield* (5-6)

Franco Moretti (TN 24)

**October 15**

Dickens, *David Copperfield* (7)

Barthes, "The Reality Effect" (PDF)

**October 17**

Dickens, *David Copperfield* (8)

Rosalind Cowart and John Ellis (TN 26)

**October 20 (Week ten)**

Dickens, *David Copperfield* (9-10)

Nancy Armstrong (TN 19)

**October 22**

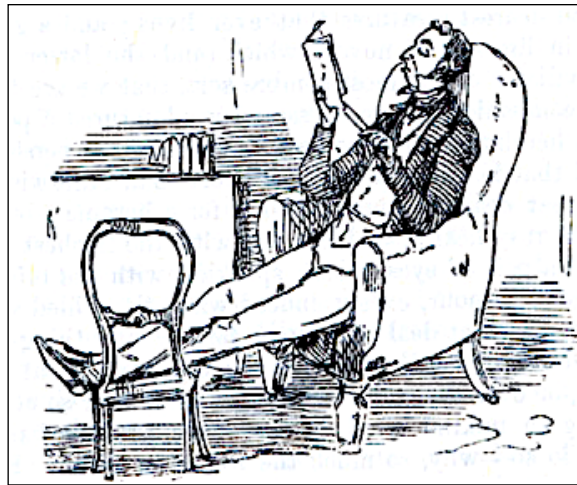
Dickens, *David Copperfield* (11)

Gillian Brown (TN 20)

**October 24**

Dickens, *David Copperfield* (12)

Ann Banfield (TN 22)



**William**

**Makepeace**

**Thackeray,**

**“Jones, who  
reads this book  
at his Club...,”**

***Vanity Fair***

**October 27 (Week eleven)**

Dickens, *David Copperfield* (13-14)

Georg Lukács (TN 11)

**October 29**

Dickens, *David Copperfield* (15)

*October 31 (Fall Break)*

**November 3 (Week twelve)**

Dickens, *David Copperfield* (16-17)

José Ortega y Gasset (TN 12, pp. 285-93)

**November 5**

Dickens, *David Copperfield* (18)

George Levine (TN 28)

**November 7**

Dickens, *David Copperfield* (19/20)

Henry James (TN 30)

**November 10 (Week thirteen)**

Egan, *A Visit from the Goon Squad*

Catherine Belsey, from *Critical Practice* (PDF)

**November 12**

Egan, *A Visit from the Goon Squad*

Linda Hutcheon (TN 38)

**November 14**

Egan, *A Visit from the Goon Squad*

**November 17 (Week fourteen)**

Egan, *A Visit from the Goon Squad*

## Course requirements

Thoughtful reading of all the assigned course material; consistent attendance and participation in discussions; brief response papers; two in-class essays; a take-home midterm exam; a final paper.

### Weighting of final grades:

55% Major assignments

20% Take-home midterm (due 10/3)

35% Final critical essay (due 12/15)

35% Class blog assignments; cross-campus collaboration

10% Everything else (participation; quizzes or other assignments)

Unless otherwise specified, **assignments** are due in class, at the beginning of class. Only those that arrive on time will receive full credit; please do not skip class to finish an assignment.

**Blog assignment.** Regular blog contributions according to a rotating schedule (*see separate guidelines*).

**Final critical essay.** A 10-15-page, argumentative essay that places literary readings of a novel (or novels) within a larger discussion of literary history, literary theory, or the novel as a genre, and which makes explicit and significant references to our class readings in these topics. As part of this assignment, you'll give a brief talk presenting your work in progress to the rest of the class and soliciting feedback (~Dec. 1-9).

Walter Benjamin (*TN* 31)

### November 19

Egan, *A Visit from the Goon Squad*

Benedict Anderson (*TN* 17)

### November 21

Egan, *A Visit from the Goon Squad*

### THANKSGIVING BREAK

### December 1

Egan, *A Visit from the Goon Squad*

Paper presentations.  
(*Blog assignment ends.*)

### December 3

Paper presentations.

### December 5

Paper presentations.

### December 8

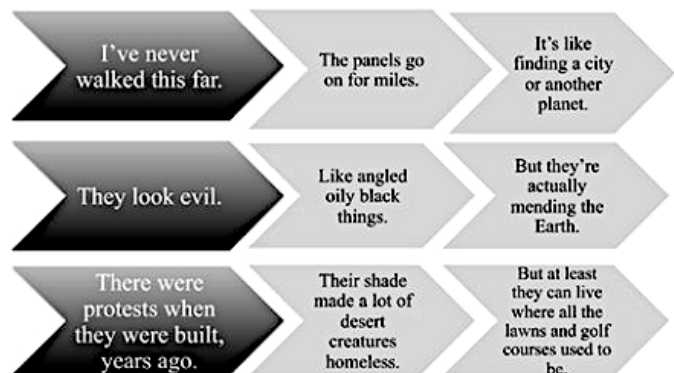
Paper presentations.

### December 9 (*Friday class schedule*)

Paper presentations.

## Jennifer Egan, *A Visit from the Goon Squad*, 2010

### After a Long Time, We Reach the Solar Panels



## Area of Emphasis:

### Studies in the Novel

This course can count toward area four of the requirements for upper-level coursework in the English major (“Language, Criticism, and Culture”). It is also the core, required course for the English Major’s area of emphasis in Studies in the Novel. In addition to ENGL 4864, this area of emphasis requires the following:

- one course in the novel before 1900 (for instance, ENGL 4430/Eighteenth-Century Fiction or ENGL 4505/Jane Austen)
- one course in the novel after 1900 (for instance, ENGL 4780/Twentieth-Century American Novel or ENGL 4690/James Joyce)
- one other course in the novel (of any period)

If you’ve taken a special topics course focused on the novel, you may petition for it to count toward one of these requirements, as appropriate.

*For more information on Studies in the Novel or the other areas of emphasis in English, please visit the English Department website or talk to me.*

## Course policies

**Attendance policy.** Please come to class and come to class on time. Habitual absence and lateness will limit your **final** grade for the course: for a final grade of an “A,” you may have no more than **three** absences; for a “B,” no more than **five**. Anyone with **more than five** absences (or more than three absences in a row) has relinquished membership in the class and should expect to be dropped from it. (I give WPs rather than WFs for nonattendance, if possible—that is, as long as it is before the midpoint withdrawal deadline and you have not reached your UGA course withdrawal limit.)

Unless otherwise noted, assignments must be your own original work and must be written specifically for this class. They should also clearly and fully cite all sources upon which you have drawn. If you have questions about how or what to cite, please talk to me.

You must complete the course’s major assignments (midterm, final essay) in order to pass this class.

## University Statement on Academic Honesty

All academic work must meet the standards contained in “A Culture of Honesty” (see <http://www.uga.edu/honesty/>). Students are responsible for informing themselves about those standards before performing any academic work.

## Disclaimer

The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor

☞ <http://ctlsites.uga.edu/engl4864-fall2014/>

As one of your main writing assignments for this class, you'll be contributing to our class blog (☞ URL above), both by posting your own blog entries in response to our readings and by commenting productively on blog posts by your classmates.

## I. Blog posts (ten entries total, posted about once every week)

About once a week, you'll create and publish a blog post as *a response to the day's readings* (~300-400 words). Some suggested approaches:

- try applying the theory we're reading to issues that arise in a specific novel (one you've read in this class or elsewhere)
- go to work on an issue in the reading that's unclear to you, and work on making sense of it
- draw our attention to an implication of the reading that we might not have noticed, something surprising or unexpected
- consider the reading in light of what we've already read or discussed in class
- come up with an insightful question about the reading and then attempt to answer it  
(*TIP! I find it helpful to write my posts in a word processing program, edit them there, and then paste them into the "add new posts" screen on the class blog.*)

We'll be blogging for fourteen weeks of the semester, until we have completed our main readings for the course and switch over to presentations on final papers (see schedule on syllabus). You are responsible for posting blog entries during **ten** of these weeks.

### *Characteristics of a great class blog post*

Strong class blog posts focus on a specific problem, issue, connection, or question. They offer and analyze examples, going beyond what we'd get from a superficial reading or examination. They consider the possible implications of what they have found, making it clear why their topic deserves our attention. They represent significant thought, but they also solicit further thought and engagement.

## II. Blog comments (twenty total)

During the class blog assignment, you will also respond intelligently to your classmates' posts by providing brief comments. Thoughtfully build upon or clarify some aspects of a classmate's posts, or perhaps return to a post after class discussion to reconsider the issues it raises. I'd like you to provide at least **twenty comments** on classmates' posts.

### *Characteristics of a useful blog comment*

A useful comment engages with the content of a classmate's post intelligently. It can be short, but shouldn't be dismissive or flippant—or offer empty praise. What did you find compelling in the original post (and why)? What seems useful? What raised further questions for you? How would you add to, enrich, or modify some of the points made by your colleague's post?

## Assessment

I like the assessment rubric for blog entries written by **Dr. Mark Sample** (George Mason University, [www.samplereality.com](http://www.samplereality.com)):

Rating	Characteristics
4	<i>Exceptional.</i> The journal entry is focused and coherently integrates examples with explanations or analysis. The entry demonstrates awareness of its own limitations or implications, and it considers multiple perspectives when appropriate. The entry reflects in-depth engagement with the topic.
3	<i>Satisfactory.</i> The journal entry is reasonably focused, and explanations or analysis are mostly based on examples or other evidence. Fewer connections are made between ideas, and though new insights are offered, they are not fully developed. The entry reflects moderate engagement with the topic.
2	<i>Underdeveloped.</i> The journal entry is mostly description or summary, without consideration of alternative perspectives, and few connections are made between ideas. The entry reflects passing engagement with the topic.
1	<i>Limited.</i> The journal entry is unfocused, or simply rehashes previous comments, and displays no evidence of student engagement with the topic.
0	<i>No Credit.</i> The journal entry is missing or consists of one or two disconnected sentences.

Please note that this assignment is supposed to cover most of our semester, from August until Thanksgiving Break, and to help stimulate class discussion. You will not receive credit for a slew of last-minute posts or comments, or for belated posts on long-ago class readings.