

**Course Description, ENGL 3301, Spring 2013**

**James Joyce's *Dubliners***

**Professor Margot Gayle Backus**

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**I. Course Materials**

**Required Texts:**

James Joyce, *Dubliners* (Ed. Margot Norris)

Vicki Mahaffey, *Collaborative Dubliners*

Gordon Bowker, *James Joyce: A Biography*

Gregg and Seigworth *The Affect Theory Reader*

**Statement of Purpose**

Students tend to know James Joyce by reputation. On the occasions when I have taught Joyce's masterpiece, *Ulysses*, students invariably admitted to me that they were intimidated even before they opened the book. One of the great problems posed by *Ulysses* is that first-time readers need a great deal of preparation in order to read the novel successfully. Ideally, they should have read Joyce's earlier work, Homer's *Odyssey*, on which *Ulysses* is based, and they also need to spend significant time familiarizing themselves with the large and dynamic critical tradition that allows us to understand Joyce's notoriously difficult oeuvre. In this course, I address this problem by focusing exclusively on Joyce's first published prose: his short story collection, *Dubliners*. The course will incorporate a range of essays that will allow students to understand what kinds of tools literary critics have used to make sense of these strangely complex, endlessly critically generative little pieces of prose. Our work in the class will seek to enable readers to understand both the writings of Joyce, and the methodologies that have been applied to his work, and to understand both in order to be able to make deliberate choices about their own positions in various debates concerning aspects of Joyce's writing, what critical tools they will use to support their positions, how they will use these tools, and why.

**Assignments and Grading**

Students will also produce four short (3-5 pp.) essays. The first will be a collaborative close reading of a short story in *Dubliners*, and the other three will be position papers arguing for a particular reading of some aspect of Joyce's work.

**The Collaborative Essay**

The short collaborative essay should represent a close, detailed reading of one of the stories in *Dubliners*. All students whose work contributed to a given essay will receive the same grade, except in

circumstances in which a student fails to contribute to the project. In such cases one student may fail, while the others receive the final grade for the project. Students having trouble with either the project or with their collaborators should contact me as soon as possible. Once I assign the grade, I will not change it based on belated accounts of inactive or sabotaging group members. All participants should be aware that their group relies heavily on each member to produce the best possible essay. This essay will count for 20% of the final grade.

### **Short Position Papers**

These essays represent a central goal of this course; a lot of your in-class and out of class course work will be directed toward their production. Ideally, you should first try out ideas when taking notes as you read, explore them in class, perhaps try them out online, and finally develop the ones you like best in the three position papers.

Each essay will count for 20% of the final grade. I will accept one re-write if it is submitted by the final day of class (which means that you can't rewrite the final essay for a new grade). If the rewrite earns a worse grade than the first effort, I will not lower your grade, but if the rewrite does not substantially improve the first effort, I won't raise the grade either. If the rewrite does substantially improve the first effort, I will substitute the new grade for the previous grade.

### **Attendance**

Attendance is mandatory. I will take roll with every class meeting and those not present by the end of roll call are counted absent. Students may permissibly miss up to four class meetings without penalty.

**I reserve the right to drop any student who misses four or more classes within the first four weeks; I start counting absences on the second class meeting.**

**If a student misses five or six class meetings, his or her final grade will be reduced by one half grade per absence. Students missing more than six class meetings will receive an F for the course.**

### **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of someone else's ideas, construction, organization, words or phrases in one's writing. It does not matter if the material came from a published scholar, your roommate, or the Encyclopedia Britannica. **Material obtained on the web MUST be cited correctly just like any other outside source; if ideas or**

**words that originated with someone else are included in your work without acknowledgement, that is plagiarism.** Avoid it by acknowledging the source of all ideas, words or organization in your writing that did not originate with you. In my classes, **students submitting work with phrases or ideas that are not theirs without acknowledging their debt with quotation marks and correct bibliographic citation WILL receive an F for the assignment and may (depending on the severity of the offense) receive an F for the course.** The University of Houston offers first-time plagiarism offenders the opportunity to sign a document that waives their right to a departmental hearing if they acknowledge that they plagiarized and accept the penalty applied by the instructor. Second-time offenders may not sign such a waiver; their offense will be considered in a formal university hearing and they may be put on probation, suspended, or expelled.

Plagiarism is against the rules of all learning communities because it short circuits learning. Learners can only develop if they actually struggle at their own level. Misrepresenting your skills ultimately cheats you, since by doing it you prevent your professors and peers from offering feedback to you as you are, thus cheating yourself of the feedback and guidance you need.

**The Final Grade Breakdown:**

<b>Class Participation:</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Collaborative Essay:</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Position Paper 1:</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Position Paper 2:</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Position Paper 3:</b>	<b>20%</b>