

English 3301: Introduction to Literary Studies
Fall, 2012
TTh 10:00—11:30
Dr. James Pipkin

This section of English 3301 is designed to be an introduction to literary studies in several different respects.

First, the works we will study have been chosen to offer historical range and context, as well as examples of all four major genres of literature: poetry, novel, short story, and drama. We will begin with the seventeenth century English poet John Donne and proceed to nineteenth-century British literature as it is mirrored by Charles Dickens's novel *Great Expectations*. The rest of the course will focus on American literature of the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries. In addition to reading selected modern poems and short stories, we will study Toni Morrison's novel *Song of Solomon* and attend a performance of a contemporary play at the Alley Theatre.

The course will also introduce the students to a variety of critical approaches. For the week on Donne's poetry, we will use the close textual analysis favored by New Criticism. I have chosen the Bedford Edition of Dickens's novel because it includes essays representing important contemporary literary theories such as psychoanalytic criticism, feminist criticism, deconstruction, postcolonial theory, cultural studies theory, and new literary historicism. I will also have available on electronic reserves representative scholarship on the poems we study. We will spend three weeks each on Dickens's novel, Morrison's novel, and a few twentieth-century American poems so that students will have the time to study them from the perspective of several different models of interpretation.

Another dimension of the course is that it will also include a consideration of art as performance. We will attend as a group a performance of a contemporary play at the Alley Theatre, and students will write a response paper that will form the basis of class discussions the following week. In addition, sometime during the semester students will attend a poetry reading of their choice and write a response paper about that experience. This assignment will also complement our academic critical analysis of the poetry and fiction on the reading list with some different ways of responding to literature.