ENGLISH 271 INTRODUCTION TO LITERATURE:  
Genre  
(Contemporary Comedic Literature)  
T-Th 12:30–1:45 and 2:00-3:15  
(3 Credits)

INSTRUCTOR: Robert Barclay  
OFFICE: ‘Ākoaka 236  
OFFICE HOURS: M-W-F: 9:30 to 12:30; T-Th: 9:00 to 12:00  
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EFFECTIVE DATE: Fall 2011

WINDWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE MISSION STATEMENT

Windward Community College is committed to excellence in the liberal arts and career development; we support and challenge individuals to develop skills, fulfill their potential, enrich their lives, and become contributing, culturally aware members of our community.

CATALOG DESCRIPTION

This course introduces students to the study of significant works of literature in selected genres. Emphasis is on discussion of and writing about characteristics and themes of the works. A student may enroll in this course more than one time (for different genres); however, only three credits will be applied toward degree. Prerequisite: a grade of C or better in English 100 or consent of instructor.

REQUIREMENTS COURSE SATISFIES

This course satisfies one of the Arts and Humanities requirements (DL) and fulfills three of the six writing intensive credits needed for the Associate in Arts degree at WCC.

RECOMMENDED BASIC SKILL LEVELS

Ability to carefully read and take notes (allow at least two hours of reading and prep for most classes—slower readers will take longer). Ability to write papers that follow a clear thesis statement. Ability to arrive in class on-time and prepared.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

The student learning outcomes for the course are:

1. Use concepts and terminology particular to literary study to analyze and interpret imaginative literary works orally and in writing.
2. Respond to a work of literature as an expression of a culture’s values and compare those values with the student’s own.
3. Enjoy a more creative, enlightened, and fulfilled life through an appreciation of literature’s social, cultural, political, and philosophical significance.
4. Exhibit knowledge about selected writers and their characteristic themes and techniques.
COURSE CONTENT

Most of the semester will be devoted to discussing the assigned readings, and you will be called upon to actively participate. Other than the assigned readings, your homework will include focused and typed preparation for the discussions, and the writing of several papers. Along the way we will engage critical and creative thought, so that as the semester progresses you will become a greater critical, ethical, and analytical reader and thinker—and, as this is also a writing intensive course, you will become a greater writer as well. You will also maintain a portfolio of all drafts of all writing assignments, which you will turn in at the end of the semester.

Attendance will be taken daily via a short, easy quiz on the assigned reading, and your quiz scores will determine the Attendance and Participation portion of your final grade (I assume that if you do well on the quizzes, you are not only present but also prepared to contribute to the discussion). Also, be sure to activate and check your Hawaii.edu email account, as that is how I will communicate with the class at times.

BOOKS

Slaughterhouse Five by Kurt Vonnegut
Jennifer Government by Max Barry
Bridget Jones’s Diary by Helen Fielding
Choke by Chuck Palahniuk
Lost on Planet China by J Maarten Troost
Some handouts will also be provided

ASSESSMENT TASKS AND GRADING

You must complete ALL assignments to pass this class. No exceptions. Assignments that do not meet minimal proficiency (receiving an F grade) must be redone to receive passing credit.

- Quizzes: 10%
- Story Assignment: 10% 3-4 pages, plus drafts
- 3 Reader Response Assignments: 10% each Minimum 2 pages each, plus drafts
- Comparative Assignment: 10% 4 pages, plus drafts
- Typed Discussion Notes: 10% Approx 10 pages
- Conferences (three required):
- Portfolio (including self-analysis and revised final drafts): 30%

A = 90+; B = 80+; C = 70+; D = 60+; F = 59 and below

ATTENDANCE POLICY

This is not a correspondence course; it is discussion based and you cannot do that on your own at home. There are no excused absences. Schedule medical appointments outside of class times. You are required to show up and participate. A failure to show up on time will be reflected in your daily quiz score and result in a lowering of your grade. If, for whatever reason, you think you will miss more than five classes this semester, then this is not the class for you. There will be no make-up quizzes and no extra credit. Six absences (amounting to missing three full weeks of the semester) lowers your final grade by 20%. Seven absences lowers it another 10%. Eight absences results in an F final grade. As such, you will be wise to not miss class except for real illnesses or emergencies. If you do miss class, it is your responsibility to contact your classmates to find out what you missed, what changes have been
made to assignments, and what you need to be prepared for the next class. If it is a day that we are conducting peer reviews of your drafts, you are still responsible to get that done. If life prevents you from regularly attending, then drop the course. If life prevents you from attending after the drop deadline, contact the Dean with proof of a valid excuse (medical emergency, death in the family) and you will receive a late withdrawal without penalty. Valid excuses for late withdrawal do not include employer or child care demands. **Bottom line: you must attend class, arrive on time, and be prepared to contribute.** This is not a hard class, but don’t think you can blow off a week and easily catch up. We will have moved on without you and you will have twice as much work.

**PAPER AND ASSIGNMENT POLICY**

The writing assignments require you to turn in up to three drafts: a rough draft, a final draft, and a revised final draft. The rough drafts must be complete drafts, and final drafts must be typed in MLA format. The revised final draft will address and correct all punctuation, grammar, and content issues that I mark on the final draft. Drafts are due on the dates specified. Late drafts lose one letter grade. Drafts more than a week late will lose two letter grades. Keep in mind that paper lengths are minimums. **Not completing all assignments will result in a failing grade for the entire course.** Do not submit papers as email attachments, or send email drafts to me for editing. If you want help with any of your papers (for this class or any other) come see me during my office hours or make an appointment. I am always happy to help.

**PLAGIARISM POLICY**

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. If you do plagiarize, you will be dis-enrolled from the course, receive a failing grade, and the incident will be filed within your permanent academic record. All sources used in your papers must be properly cited according to MLA format. If in doubt, come see me before turning in your paper.

**CONTENT WARNING**

Literature, as does the world it comes from, sometimes contains violence, sexuality, profanity, depravity, and other graphic content that might offend you. Additionally, the purpose of a college education is not to reinforce our own existing beliefs, but to examine the world outside of them in its entirety, including—and sometimes especially—what we find offensive, distasteful, or otherwise disagreeable. If you would prefer not to expose yourself to these things in reading, then this is not the class for you.

**DISABILITIES ACCOMMODATION STATEMENT**

If you have a physical, sensory, health, cognitive, or mental health disability that could limit your ability to fully participate in this class, you are encouraged to contact the Disability Specialist Counselor to discuss reasonable accommodations that will help you succeed in this class. Ann Lemke can be reached at 235-7448, lemke@hawaii.edu, or you may stop by Hale ‘Akoakoa 213 for more information.
CONFERENCES WITH INSTRUCTOR

You are required, at least three times this semester, to sit down with me to discuss a draft of one of your writing assignments. You may either stop by during office hours, or make an appointment, or use the class days reserved for this purpose. On these class days, come prepared to work on your paper, as I probably can’t get to everybody, and you’ll have a lot of good writing time while you wait. Do not neglect these conferences, as you cannot pass the course without doing them. I will sign the papers so you and I can keep track.

DISCUSSION NOTES

For each class in which we are discussing assigned readings, you are required to bring to class a typed, one-half page note containing the following information.

1) A short summary of two passages that you found interesting, provocative, or problematic.

2) Brief commentary on the two passages, maybe using some of the vocabulary terms we discuss.

3) Two or three questions you think will promote a good discussion of the reading in class.

SAMPLE NOTES. (based on The Three Little Pigs). You can do it this way, or combine it in some other way.

1) Short Summaries: (should be a little more involved than this)

   A) The first little pig builds his house out of straw, and then the wolf blows it down and eats the pig.

   B) The second little pig builds his house out of sticks, and then the wolf blows it down and eats him.

2) Commentaries:

   A) This passage is interesting because the pig is obviously a metaphor for a lazy person, and it teaches a simple lesson about the consequences of doing shoddy work. It’s also interesting because for a children’s story it’s actually very violent, in that it causes you to imagine what it might be like to be eaten alive.

   B) This passage is interesting because a wood house is actually pretty common. I had to wonder what the message is here, because it seems life becomes not worth living if you have to fortress yourself away from the rest of the world.

3) Questions:

   A) Why is the wolf portrayed as a villain; shouldn’t he have just as much a right to a good life as the pigs? And what is the pigs’ gender?

   B) Why do stories like this works so well to teach moral lessons, as opposed to simply telling somebody the moral straight up?
In a three ring binder, keep all of your writing assignments for this course. This includes your rough drafts, peer reviews, final drafts, revised final drafts, and discussion notes. **Separate each assignment with tabbed inserts. Do not wait until the end of the semester to revise your final drafts.** Revise them shortly after I return them to you and place them in your binder.

You must also write a two-page self-analysis of your writing and class experience this semester. To do so, look at the Student Learning Outcomes for this course. Do you feel that you achieved these outcomes? Do you feel that the course left you deficient in any of these outcomes? Address all four outcomes, one at a time, and also give yourself a score for each outcome, on a scale of one to ten. Then look at your writing assignments. What did you do well? Where did you make the most improvement? What do you still need to improve on?

This portfolio is worth 30% of your final grade, so as the semester progresses make sure you complete all drafts and peer reviews and keep up with your discussion notes. **Your portfolio must be complete to pass this course, and it will be graded primarily on the quality of your revised final drafts.**

Portfolio Checklist (copy this page and include it in your portfolio, with items checked off.)

- (Story) 3-4 pages
  - Revised Final Draft
  - Final Draft
  - Rough Draft
  - Peer Review
  - Grade Sheet

- (Reader-Response 1) 2-3 pages
  - Revised Final Draft
  - Final Draft
  - Rough Draft
  - Peer Review
  - Grade Sheet

- (Reader-Response 2) 2-3 pages
  - Revised Final Draft
  - Final Draft
  - Rough Draft
  - Peer Review
  - Grade Sheet

- (Reader-Response 3) 2-3 pages
  - Revised Final Draft
  - Final Draft
  - Rough Draft
  - Peer Review
  - Grade Sheet

- (Comparative Paper) 4 pages
  - Final Draft
  - Rough Draft
  - Peer Review

- (Self Analysis) 2 pages
  - Final Draft
  - Rough Draft
  - Peer Review

- Typed Discussion Notes (Approx. 16 half page entries)
We are going to read books in this class by authors who want to make us laugh. How do they succeed, where do they fail, why even bother? A good way to begin understanding this, maybe especially how hard it is to write something truly funny (even harder to make it meaningful at the same time) is to try writing a humorous story yourself. As such, you will write and submit for publication, a 3-4 page (3 minimum) short story that tries to make us laugh—maybe even means something. Grading on this assignment will be very easy. Your story will receive an A if 1) it includes an interesting plot, 2) it has interesting and developed characters, 3) it strives to impart some theme, and 4) it is written with clear sentences and understandable punctuation. Remember this is fiction, not essay. Use your imagination to create this story, and feel free to go hyperbolic!

Look at the story we have read as a model. Go find some on your own. How are they structured? What makes for an interesting plot, characters, theme? What makes them funny, or not? Maybe, most importantly, what do you find funny? What do you see when you look out at the world that makes you laugh? What/who do you see that makes you angry? How can you make fun of it in such a way that we see its faults?

Think about the story having a beginning, middle, and especially a good ending. Think about point of view, good dialogue, strong descriptions that appeal to the senses and give the reader a precise and vivid evocation of experience. Write scenes that are in the moment, transitioning from scene to scene. Most of all, think about your audience. What must you do to make them laugh? Write through the senses of your character and to the senses of your audience.

Your story should be at least three full pages in MLA format. Two pages or shorter will be returned ungraded. Stories or Essays less than three full pages, but more than two full pages, will lose 10% from the final grade. See me if you are having trouble. On the due date you are required to turn in two copies of your story or essay as follows:

Copy 1) Final Draft
Rough Draft
Peer Review

Copy 2) Final Draft (without your name on it)
Rain Bird Entry Form

If your assignment is not turned like this, in its entirety, it will be handed back to you.
Story Peer Review

Final draft should be turned in stapled to the rough draft and the peer review, in that order

1) Describe the point of view character, and how you feel about him/her.

2) Is the setting detailed and specific enough to draw you into the story? If not, how might the setting become better established?

3) After reading the story, what images or lines remain in your mind?

4) Insure that dialogue is separated by paragraphs, not jammed together in the same paragraph. (Ask if you do not understand this).

5) Is the story funny, not? Say why.

6) What theme or main idea is the story communicating to you, or what theme might be developed?

6) What did you like best about this story?

7) What needs the most improvement?

8) Author’s comments: State three things in three full sentences on how you plan to improve this story.
Story Evaluation Sheet
Subtract 10% for a late paper, and 10% if it’s short of four full pages.
(Papers less than three full pages will not be graded)

Proper MLA Format 25%

12 pt. Times New Roman Font
Double Spacing Throughout
One Inch Margins
Headings (name, page #)
Stapled

Assignment Criteria 50%

Contains Interesting Plot (or situation)
Contains Interesting and Developed Characters
Theme
Peer Review
Good Title

Quality of Writing 25%

Grammar
Punctuation
Spelling
Voice
Final Draft Improves Greatly from Rough Draft
Write a 2-3 page Reader Response papers on Slaughterhouse Five, Jennifer Government, and Bridget Jones Diary. Begin with a thesis statement that clearly identifies the main point of your paper. Focus on what the novels are satirizing, the function of humor (as a response to trauma, to criticize society, government, themselves etc.) and what themes they are communicating. Avoid summarizing the novels, and assume your audience has already read them. In other words, they don’t need to be told what the novels are about or what happens in them. They want to know what you think about them. As part of each paper, cite two authoritative outside sources and include them in a works cited page. **Authoritative sources are not simple facts, statistics, dictionary definitions, or encyclopedia entries. Authoritative sources are identifiable human beings who have expertise in something, and have something intelligent for you to incorporate and comment on in your paper.** For example, you might cite a scholarly article on the novel, or some scholarly paper on an issue the novel raises, or a technique the novel employs. Below is a brief explanation of Reader Response theory and a sample paper. Your paper should be at least two full pages in MLA format. Papers shorter than two full pages will be returned ungraded. See me if you are having trouble.

**Use your discussion notes as the first step in writing these papers, focusing your thoughts on things you might be able to write about. In doing so, by the time you have finished reading the novel, you will have a wealth of written information, and you will have discussed it in class. Use class discussion to help you write the papers.**

**Reader Response Theory**

Reader response theory has been recognized as a critical movement since the 1970s. Its many advocates include Kenneth Burke, Wayne Booth, Stanley Fish, Louise Rosenblatt, and Walker Gibson. Although these thinkers disagree on many features of reader response criticism, they agree that reader response criticism pays attention to psychology, history, and sociology. In so doing, these critics make reading an interdisciplinary activity. They also weaken notions of "expert readers," for reader response criticism adheres to the principle that everyday readers can produce, if not "right" interpretations, then at least interpretations that make sense for them. Reader response criticism develops open-ended problem solving strategies, or **heuristics**, intended to assist readers with the work of interpretation. Reader response criticism operates on the following premises: Texts affect readers in unique and subjective ways. And readers participate in determining the meaning of literary works. Anything that contributes to the development of a reader influences his/her interpretation of a reading selection.

An individual's social class, racial background, ethnicity, gender, nationality, age, physical condition, employment, vocational interests, and so on, make a profound impact on how that person sees and understands the world.

Just because reader response theory validates the interpretive powers of the reader does not mean that "anything goes" in interpretation. Readers are expected to support their interpretations with sound references and inferences, combining their understanding of the text with their knowledge of the world.
As I began the story, I was jolted by Dave's use of the word "nigger," even before I understood that the character was an African American. I have always been conditioned not to use that word, and to think that people who do so are morally confused. Later, after I gathered that he was black, I reconsidered. However, I'm still doubtful of that whole cultural thing that says people who belong to a certain group can use whatever language they like to describe themselves. Just because I'm female, I wouldn't call other women "bitches" or "hos."

As I continued to read, I got over my language hang-up, because I saw that the whole piece is written in a rough country dialect. None of the characters in the story have much of a vocabulary. Actually, I enjoyed the dialect. My grandparents were tenant land farmers, and they spoke a country dialect. Once I realized that the people in the story are much like the people in my own hardworking, close-knit family, I began to sympathize with the characters. I wanted good things to happen for Dave.

I also wanted some opportunity to present itself that would enable Dave to feel good about himself. I felt sorry for Dave because of the way other men on the farm treated him, and I wondered if his problems are peculiar to African American males, or applicable to all. I tend to think that most men endure this treatment. I've listened to the conversations of some young men, and I know how cruel they can be to each other, and how much pressure they put on themselves to feel like men—the whole male angst thing. Not that females aren’t guilty of similar stuff, but… this story is about a guy.

At the same time, I understand that, sometimes, people treat others poorly because they themselves suffer from low self-esteem. I've been mistreated in similar ways. For instance, I once happened to win a special college award. At a party shortly afterward, I overheard two girls saying to each other, "What did she do to win that award? She's not so hot." I was a little stung
by their remarks. I had worked very hard to qualify for that award, and I had not pulled any strings in order to get it. After thinking about it, I thought that they might suffer from low self-esteem. Tearing me down, and suggesting that I won the award through secret channels, made them feel better about themselves. So, I tossed the whole thing off, and wished them both much happiness. Perhaps the older men in the story also felt bad about themselves, and talking down to Dave made them feel bigger and stronger.

After the shooting accident and the death of the mule, I knew Dave was in serious trouble. He couldn't possibly stay on the farm and endure an endless round of ribbing from the other men. As much as he loved his mom, he couldn't put up with more insults to his self-esteem. It was bad enough to be poor and to have nothing to look forward to but another day of backbreaking work. So, although I did not agree with his running away in the end, I understood why he did it. If it were my decision to make, I probably would have stayed, even though it would mean more or less constant humiliation for awhile. Eventually, though, people would forget about the mule and chalk up the whole incident to youthful high jinks. Perhaps the story would have become something to laugh about. Growing up is hard. Sometimes I've been so embarrassed that I've felt tempted to run away, but I never have, because I know that running away doesn't make problems disappear; it only creates a set of new problems. Dave's decision must have created more problems for him. Who would have supper waiting for him at the end of the train ride? No-one.

Dave's story makes me think about young people in the world who are desperate for some shred of human dignity. I believe that lots of teens think that drugs, sex, and violence will provide them a way out of a life of loneliness and deprivation. I'll have to think about this problem, because I don't have any good answers for it yet. As this story shows, family love is not enough, for, even though Dave's mother loved him, she couldn't help him. A more broadly cultural solution must be needed.
What main point or thesis is made in the paper? Write it down, and state what evidence is used to support it.

Does the paper tend to simply summarize the novel in places (this happened, then that happened, etc)? Show the author so that these areas can be deleted.

Does the focus get away from the novel in places? Where? How can the material be related to the story?

Does the paper include intelligence from at least two authoritative outside sources that are human beings with names and credentials? Who are the sources and how are they authoritative?

How would you rate the level of insight in the paper? How might the paper be made more insightful?

Author’s comments: on the back, in five complete sentences, state five ways you will improve this paper.
Reader-Response Evaluation Sheet
Subtract 10% for late papers, and papers less than two pages will be returned ungraded.

**Proper MLA Format 25%**
- 12 pt. Times New Roman Font
- Double Spacing Throughout
- One Inch Margins
- Headings (name, page #, Works Cited page)
- Stapled

**Assignment Criteria 50%**
- Contains a strong thesis that is supported with sound logic, evidence, and argument
- Avoids Summarizing the Novel
- Contains Intelligent Thought
- Peer Review
- Good Title

**Quality of Writing 25%**
- Grammar
- Punctuation
- Spelling
- Voice
- Final Draft Improves Greatly from Rough Draft
Paper 6 (COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS): Rough due Nov. 29. Final due Dec 8.

Write a four-page (minimum) comparative analysis, in MLA format, of Choke and Lost on Planet China. One is fiction, and the other is non-fiction. Here’s some ideas: how do they create humor in different/similar ways? How does humor operate differently in fiction as opposed to non-fiction? Is one a better book—why? Is one funnier—why? Is one more meaningful—how? Or you might choose a particular technique, such as irony or self-deprecation and compare how each work incorporates them. Cite at least three outside sources for this paper, and feel free to use any of the other works we have read in the class as your sources. You may compare these works in any way you wish, but keep your focus narrow to have a strong paper. Also, keep this paper in mind as you read both books, and use your notes and class discussions to help you arrive at what to write about.

You must have a thesis statement in the first paragraph, then a coherent organization that delivers a body of information supporting your thesis. Assume your audience to be this class and do not retell or summarize the works. See the peer review and evaluation sheets to insure you follow all criteria.

Your paper should be at least four full pages in MLA format, plus a Works Cited page. Papers three pages or shorter will not be graded and may cause you to fail the class. Papers less than four full pages, but more than three full pages, will lose 10% from the final grade. See me if you are having trouble.
Comparative Analysis Peer Review

Final draft should be turned in stapled to the rough draft and the peer review, in that order

Does the paper have a clear thesis statement in the first paragraph? What is it? Write it down. Comment on it.

What are the main points made in the paper that support the thesis statement? Write them down, and state what evidence is used to support each one.

Are there any points defended in the paper that are not related to the thesis statement? If so, how might the thesis statement be adjusted to accommodate these points?

Does the paper tend to simply summarize the works in places (this happened, then that happened, etc)? Show the author so that these areas can be deleted.

Does the paper include intelligence from at least three authoritative outside sources? What are the sources? How do they contribute to supporting the author’s thesis statement?

How would you rate the level of insight in the paper? How might the paper be made more insightful?

Author’s comments: on the back, in five complete sentences, state five ways you will improve this paper.
Comparative Analysis Evaluation Sheet
Subtract 10% for a late paper, and 10% if it’s short of four full pages. (Papers less than three full pages will not be graded—resubmit)

Paper that summarize the works will not be graded

Proper MLA Format 25%

12 pt. Times New Roman Font

Double Spacing Throughout

One Inch Margins

Headings (name, page #, Works Cited page)

Stapled

Assignment Criteria 50%

Contains a Clear Thesis Statement

Contains Authoritative Outside Sources (not encyclopedias or dictionaries)

Outside Sources Cited Properly, in Text and Works Cited Page (according to MLA)

Peer Review

Good Title

Quality of Writing 25%

Grammar

Punctuation

Spelling

Voice

Final Draft Improves Greatly from Rough Draft
Staple together final draft in the following order: Final Draft, Rough Draft, Peer Review

Does the paper have a title—not self evaluation or self analysis?

Is the paper in proper MLA format? If not, suggest how to get it there.

Does the paper address each SLO for the course, and give each one a numbered score? If not, help the author do so.

What did the author do well in his or her writing this semester?

Where did the author make the most improvement?

What does the author still need to improve on?

Remind the author that his or her portfolio needs to be hole-punched into a three ring binder, with no staples and no plastic sleeves.

Author’s comments: State five things in five full sentences that you will do to improve this paper.