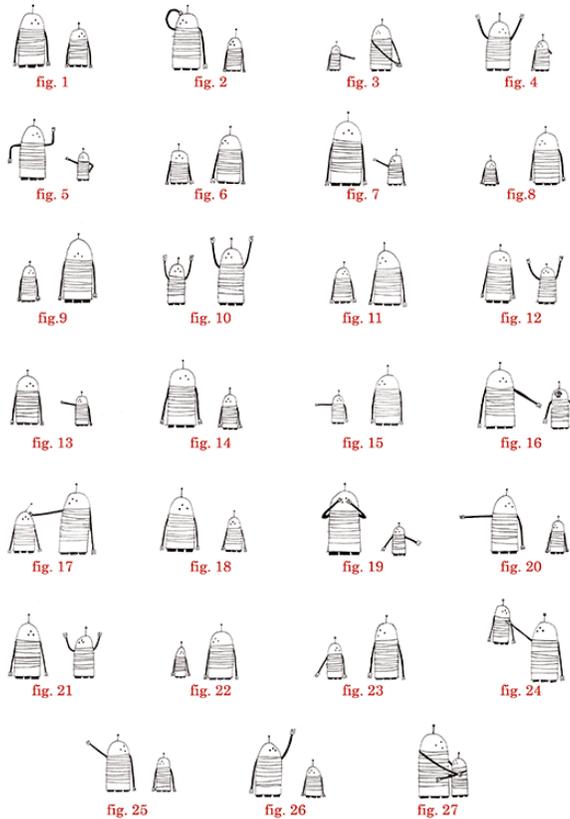


**COMP LIT 97—Spring 2017**  
**Sophomore Tutorial**  
**Dr Cécile Guédon**



h o w t o m a k e f r i e n d s i n y o u r f i r s t t e r m



How to make a sound demonstration in the field of literary analysis? What are the building blocks for a cogent approach to comparative studies? We'll pay attention to various scales of textual commentary, from the microscopic lens of close reading to the medium scope of thematic reading, with an eye to macroscopic trends in literary history and critical theory. We'll befriend texts ranging from various genres (poetry; fiction; drama) and relate form to content, historical context to contemporary significance, and join the dots connecting notions of authorship to reception theory.

**Jan. 26—April 20 | ::**  
**Thursdays 4-6, Dana-Palmer Seminar Room**

**COMP LIT 97—Spring 2017  
Sophomore Tutorial**

**Dr Cécile Guédon**

cguedon@fas.harvard.edu  
Office Hours: Fridays, 4-6 pm  
Office: Dana-Palmer 203  
Phone: (+1) 617-495-1715

**TF: Marina Connelly**

connelly@fas.harvard.edu

Classes—**Thursdays: 4-6** Dana-Palmer 102  
Workshops—**tba**, Dana-Palmer 102

**Course description**—How to make a sound demonstration in the field of literary analysis? What are the building blocks for a cogent approach to comparative studies? We'll pay attention to various scales of textual commentary, from the microscopic lens of close reading to the medium scope of thematic reading, with an eye to macroscopic trends in literary history and critical theory. We'll befriend texts ranging from various genres (poetry; fiction; drama) and relate form to content, historical context to contemporary significance, and join the dots connecting notions of authorship to reception theory.

**Attendance**—Students are expected to attend all classes and TF-led workshops from beginning to end. Please be sure to come to the office hours at least twice during the semester. Absence from more than two classes will affect the final grade. It is necessary to contact the lecturer ahead of time about foreseen absences or documented medical leaves.

**Course materials**—All texts, primary and secondary sources will be posted on the course website (check Canvas regularly).

**Required books**—All available at the Harvard Coop:

1. William Butler Yeats, *When You Are Old* (1902) [978-0143107644]
2. Alexander Pushkin, *The Queen of Spades* (1833) [978-0140441192]
3. Stefan Zweig, *Chess Story* (1941) [978-1-59017-169-1]
4. Vladimir Nabokov, *The Luzhin Defense* (1964) [978-0-679-72722-4]
5. Pierre Corneille, *The Theatrical Illusion* (1636) [978-0-14-044312-7]
6. James Baldwin, *No Blues for Mister Charlie* (1964) [978-0-679-76178-5]
7. Samuel Beckett, *Not I* (1972) [978-0802144386]
8. Roman Jakobson, *Language in Literature* (1987) [supplied]
9. Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero* (1953) [978-0-374-53235-2]
10. Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (1983) [978-0816654475]

**Assessments**—

**Weekly responses**—150-300 words per week in articulation with the theme (class blog) (5%)

**February 23 | Writing Deadline 1 | Close Reading | 750-1000 words (15%)**

**March 30 | Writing Deadline 2 | Comparative Study | 750-1000 words (15%)**

**April 27 | Writing Deadline 3 | Literary History | 750-1000 words (15%)**

**May 3–4 | Oral Exam | Final Commentary | (40%)**

**May 5 | Final Performance**

**Class participation**—Two interventions per class; two visits to office hours (10%)

## Calendar

### 1. Close-reading—Poetry—Structuralism

**Week 1 | 1. Introduction—What is poetry?**

**A Mold**—Roman Jakobson, *Language in Literature* (1987) [selected excerpts]

**January 26**

**Week 2 | 2. Metre—William Butler Yeats, *Poems* (1895)**

**February 2**

**Week 3 | 3. Motif—William Butler Yeats, *The Wind Among the Reeds* (1899)**

**February 9**

**Week 4 | 4. Metaphor—William Butler Yeats, *The Celtic Twilight* (1902)**

**February 16**

**February 23 | Writing deadline 1 | Close-reading (750 words)**

### 2. Intertextuality—Fiction

**Week 5 | 5. Introduction—What is fiction? Post-structuralism**

**A Mechanism**—Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero* (1953)

**February 23**

**Week 6 | 6. Myth—Alexander Pushkin, *The Queen of Spades* (1833)**

**March 2**

**Week 7 | 7. Mimesis —Stefan Zweig, *Chess Story* (1941)**

**March 9**

**Week 8 | 8. Memory—Vladimir Nabokov, *The Luzhin Defense* (1964)**

**March 16**

**March 30 | Writing Deadline 2 | Comparative Study (750 words)**

### 3. Reception—Drama

**Week 9 | 9. Introduction—What is drama?**

**A Mirror**—Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (1983)

**March 30**

**Week 10 | 10. Modernity—Pierre Corneille, *The Theatrical Illusion* (1636)**

**April 6**

**Week 11 | 11. Morality—James Baldwin, *Blues for Mister Charlie* (1964)**

**April 13**

**Week 12 | 12. Mutism— Samuel Beckett, *Not I* (1972)**

**April 20**

**April 27 | Writing deadline 3 | Literary History (750 words)**

**May 3—May 4 | Final Exam (30' Oral Critical Commentary)**

**May 5 | Final Performance (Corneille, Baldwin and Beckett)**

### Reading Practices

1. The literary texts we will study are few—one per session—and brief—often short statements—for the most part. Rather than covering extensive ground, what matters for this course is that you develop a sharp attention to details, and an ability to relate discrete parts with larger (thematic, generic, historic) wholes. We'll build connections from inside the stylistic fabric of these works but also from within our corpus at large.
2. There are very few secondary sources: one scholarly work of literary theory is paired up with one literary genre and three case studies. You are encouraged to actively find some in addition to the weekly article, ask me for more, and read them at your leisure; however, the primary goal for this course is to refine your own critical voice through a direct engagement with primary source and the critical text at hand. Secondary sources are therefore appreciated but not essential.
3. As we read this selection of nine works, the twelve critical building blocks we will uncover are: **Metre, Motif, Metaphor, Myth, Mimesis, Memory, Modernity, Mutism**. They are intended as tools to prop up our analysis of these nine works together ; they should not, however, pre-empt your own interpretation. In other words, they are open to revisions, if we decide they are necessary. We'll test their validity in class. I look forward to lively discussions in the course of the semester.

### Response Paper Assignments

4. In engaging with the weekly materials, it is crucial that you focus on the selected passage, while seeking to identify evidence of textual manifestations of our weekly theme. In the weekly response (**150-300 words**) you will be asked to provide either a close-reading of the selected literary passage or a close reading of the theoretical text that are paired up with the weekly notion. The response papers are due on **Tuesdays, 5 pm**.

### Short Papers and Final Assignment

5. In the first part of the semester, we'll focus on the genre of **poetry**, as we discover the tools offered by **structural linguistic**; we will refine the technique of **close reading**. In the second, we'll move to the genre of **fiction**, explore the tools afforded by **post-structuralism**, and hone the technique of **thematic reading**. In the third part, we'll consider the genre of **drama** through the lenses afforded by **social critique**, and perfect the technique of **literary history**. Three steps are to be taken throughout the semester to approach the final assignment. Those three small assignments will be an in-depth analysis (**750-1000 words**) taking the shape of one close reading of poetry (Paper #1), one comparative study of a narrative (Paper #2), and one critical analysis of a dramatic work (Paper #3).
6. In the final oral exam (30 minutes per student), you will choose a text we have discussed in class. You will be asked to integrate those three levels (**Close reading, Comparative reading and Literary history**) into one critical commentary on a piece of our choosing on the day—by an author we will have already encountered in class. You will have one hour to prepare and will present your commentary in 20 minutes; you will then answer questions from your two examiners (Marina Connelly and myself) for 10 minutes.
7. Since the written assignments are brief, structure is paramount; the three small essays need a clear design and a proper introduction with a conclusion. This is true also for the final commentary, in which you'll showcase the literary skills learned throughout the course. We'll cover the technique of the literary commentary in class; for now please note that the wordcount is an important factor, with a tolerance of 10% (+/-).

**8.** Extensions to hand in written work late can only be granted if the matter has been discussed well ahead of time with the lecturer.

### **Class Participation and Grading**

**9.** Class participation is vital and graded: you're expected to make two interventions per class—even a quick comment on each text at hand will do (10%).

**10.** The final grade is calculated as follows: Paper #1 (15%), Paper #2 (15%), Paper #3 (15%), and Final Paper (40%). Grades will be raised or lowered to reflect class participation (10%), weekly postings on the course blog (5%), and attending twice the office hours.

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**—Students needing academic adjustments or accommodations because of a documented disability must present their Faculty Letter from the [Accessible Education Office](#) (AEO) and speak with the lecturer by the end of the second week of the term: **February 1<sup>st</sup>**. Failure to do so may result in the lecturer's inability to respond in a timely manner. All discussions will remain confidential.

**Collaboration Policy, Academic Integrity and Harvard College Honor Code**—All papers and exams must be the student's own work. What this means is that students are permitted, and expected, to discuss their ideas with the instructors and other students as well as to request and accept advice from them. But if a piece of information or an idea comes from someone else, students should do the same thing that they would do when it comes from a book, an article, or online: cite the source. All academic work is collaborative in the sense that it builds on what others have written. Using such material is not plagiarism as long as it is appropriately cited. When using the same words as the source, put them inside quotation marks. If you are uncertain in a particular case: ask, don't guess. For final projects, students must include the following affirmation statement at the time of submission: "I affirm my awareness of the standards of the Harvard College Honor Code." The regulations are available here—<http://honor.fas.harvard.edu/>

**Pass/Fail and Auditor Policy**—Permitted.

**Personal Electronic Device Policy**—Not permitted.

**Course texts will be available on Canvas**—