



DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

ENGL 251, Section 2: Literature and Society Allegory and Allegorical Interpretation in the “Western” Context FALL 2021

Course Number: ENGL 251, Section 2
Faculty / Department: Faculty of Arts/Department of English
Instructor Name: Benjamin Groh **Email:** benjamin.groh@ucalgary.ca

Instructor Email Policy: I will respond to emails sent via students' @ucalgary addresses within two business days. Please note that all course communications must occur through @ucalgary email.

Office Location: Zoom (please email me to schedule an appointment)

Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays from 1:00 – 2:00pm (MST)

Class Zoom and Slack:
Dates/Times/Location: Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays
from 11:00 – 11:50am (MST)

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course explores the mode of writing called “allegory” across a range of temporal periods and creative and critical approaches. The word itself is difficult to define, but it comes from the Greek *allēgoria*, which denotes a disparity between what one says or writes and some *other* sense (Greek *allos*). This course will demonstrate various structural, formal, narrative, and stylistic ways in which texts might convey this *other sense*. Why might historical and contemporary authors have chosen to write allegorically? What differentiates allegory from other modes of writing? How has allegory changed over time, and how do we recognize an allegory when we read one?

This final question poses the central problem of the course. Northrop Frye writes in *Anatomy of Criticism* that “all commentary is allegorical interpretation” (89). This course, therefore, will also discuss how we conceive of the relationship between a creative or critical text, and criticism or commentary written about it later. The question arises: *Can any piece of writing be called allegorical?* Can we call poems, novels, television shows, films, and comics allegorical? What about student essays? This course will investigate these problems while guiding students through practices of close reading, textual analysis, and critical writing.

This course will take place **online** via Desire2Learn (D2L), Zoom, and Slack. To best succeed in the course, students are encouraged to participate in all asynchronous learning tasks, course readings, and assignments using D2L, in addition to synchronous Zoom seminars, Slack discussions, and office hours.

Students will attend synchronous Zoom classes from **11:00 – 11:50am on Mondays and Wednesdays, and Slack discussions from 11:00 – 11:50am on Fridays**. Often, but not always, Monday classes will comprise a 50-minute lecture, while Wednesdays and Fridays will involve seminar-style discussion about the texts under consideration that week. This pattern may change; so be sure to consult the course schedule.

I will hold online office hours every week on Mondays and Wednesdays from 1 – 2pm (MST), **by appointment only**. Please set up appointments with me via email. Students are encouraged to attend office hours for assistance with their critical thinking and academic writing, and with any questions they may have regarding the course readings.

When unable to participate in the live Zoom seminars or Slack discussions for whatever reason, please inform me in advance. Note that you can access Slack at any time and contribute to discussions after the fact (for full marks, if you've arranged to do so with me ahead of time).

The course is designed to develop students' skills in critical reading and effective, logical writing. Students will produce at least 2000 words of formal, academic writing during the semester. Finally, there will be a registrar-scheduled exam.

TEXTS AND READINGS:

The following course texts (unless otherwise stated) are purchasable from the University of Calgary Bookstore:

Abel, Jordan. *Injun*. 2016.

Bervin, Jen. *Nets*. 2004.

Docter, Pete (director). *Inside Out*. Pixar, 2015. [Purchasable or rentable on *iTunes* or *YouTube*]

Kafka, Franz. *The Metamorphosis*. 1915.

L'Abbé, Sonnet. *Sonnet's Shakespeare*. 2019.

Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*. 1987.

The following readings are available on D2L or elsewhere online:

"Allegory of the Cave" from Plato's *Republic* (D2L)

"Parables of the Cave" from Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic* (D2L)

Excerpts from Dante's *Inferno* (D2L), *Convivio*, and "Letter to Can Grande" (*Princeton Dante Project*)

"Via" by Caroline Bergvall (D2L)

"On the Concept of History" by Walter Benjamin (D2L)

A series of academic essays and critical writings will also be available on D2L.

I will post a detailed reading list and course schedule before the first seminar.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES:

In this course, students will:

- 1) develop a practice of close reading, which requires a student to realize that a text is constructed and not a transparent reflection of reality;
- 2) generate interpretations of allegorical texts we read in class by engaging with a range of technical terms and critical tools;
- 3) learn how to write a strong, well-supported, and clearly written academic essay, which involves understanding the notion of writing as a process that requires multiple stages of composition;
- 4) learn how to cite their sources according to MLA style, and learn about what constitutes plagiarism;
- 5) develop library research skills, such as how to locate books and articles electronically and in print, and learn how to use such resources responsibly and thoughtfully; and
- 6) engage with other scholars by responding to critical texts about ongoing conversations in the discipline.

ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION:

1. Course Encyclopedia: We will be reading some difficult texts in this class. One of the reasons for this difficulty will be the plethora of unfamiliar allusions, references, names, and places that pepper our reading experience. To assist us with these difficulties, we will, as a class, compile an encyclopedia to which we can all refer. As you read, look up terms you do not recognize and add these references to the encyclopedia on D2L. In your post, please explain this allusion, literary term, reference, or name, or theme; offer some context or summary; and make an argument as to why this reference appears in that week's reading. Each entry should be a minimum of 300 words but should not exceed 500 words. Each student should contribute to this encyclopedia three times over the course of the semester. **Each entry is worth 7% of your final grade, for a total of 21%.**

2. Critical Exploration: Use your library research skills to find a critical article about one of our course texts using the Library website and write a 1-2- page response to it. Your response should present an argument about what a part of this text (one of its theses, a paragraph, or a page) "means." Look up unfamiliar words, attempt to parse difficult sentences, and/or describe one or more theoretical terms you discover there in greater detail than in your Course Encyclopedia entries. Your exploration will offer an answer to one or more questions that you ask yourself about the text as you read. In other words, attempt to clarify something you do not immediately understand about the text. Cite any sources you use in-text and on a Works Cited page according to MLA style. **This assignment is worth 14% of your final grade.**

3. A 1500-1800- word essay on any two primary texts from the course: Your essay should compare these works with the assistance of at least one secondary source. You can use the source you wrote your critical exploration on, or you can pick another. Halfway through the course, a list of potential essay questions will be posted on D2L. Your essay should answer one of these questions by: making an argument in an introductory paragraph; supporting this argument in a series of body paragraphs in which you will embed quotes from, and interpretations of, these texts; and offer a concluding paragraph that restates your thesis and offers avenues for further thought. Cite every source in-text and on a final Works Cited page according to MLA style. **This assignment is worth 25% of your final grade.**

4. Reading Quizzes: There will be 5, asynchronous, multiple-choice reading quizzes scheduled over the course of the semester. You will take these quizzes on D2L. Each will be short—composed of approximately 5 questions—and should not take more than 30 minutes to complete. These quizzes will test your reading knowledge and your knowledge of key literary terms and concepts, and will orient you for our in-class discussions. **These quizzes are worth a total of 10% of your final grade.**

5. Discussions and Slack Chats, worth 10% of your final grade: You should attend class and contribute to seminar-style discussions and Slack chats regularly. Come prepared to talk or write about the readings and ask questions about what you do not understand (and feel free to chat amongst yourselves, as well).

6. A registrar-scheduled exam, worth 20% of your final grade, will take place during the official exam period.

Students will have received at least 40% of their final grade, with feedback, by December 8, 2021.

Assignments are to be submitted to the dropboxes located in our D2L shell (except for your Course Encyclopedia entries, which should be posted to the D2L Discussion Board).

All assignments do not have to be completed to receive a passing grade. However, failure to attend the final examination or to submit the research paper will make passing the course extremely difficult. There will be no extra-credit assignments in this course. Assignments submitted after the deadline will be penalized with the loss of a third of a letter grade (an A- to B+) for each business day that the assignment is overdue. *No assignments will be accepted one week past the assignment deadline without the prior consent of the instructor.*

LEARNING TECHNOLOGIES AND REQUIREMENTS:

In order to engage successfully in their learning experiences at the University of Calgary, students taking online, remote and blended courses are required to have reliable access to the following technology:

- A computer with a supported operating system, as well as the latest security and malware updates;
- A current and updated web browser;
- Webcam (built-in or external);
- Microphone and speaker (built-in or external), or headset with a microphone;
- Current antivirus and/or software enabled;
- A secure and reliable broadband internet connection.

This is a synchronous, online course taught via D2L, Zoom, and Slack. There is a D2L site for this course that contains required readings and other relevant class resources and materials (see: d2l.ucalgary.ca). You will receive a link to our Slack space after the introductory lecture.

GUIDELINES FOR ZOOM AND SLACK SESSIONS:

Zoom is a video conferencing program that will allow us to meet at specific times for a “live” video conference, so that we can have the opportunity to meet each other virtually and discuss relevant course topics as a learning community. Slack is an interface that allows us to meet for text-only discussions about the readings.

To help ensure Zoom and Slack sessions are private, do not share the Zoom link or password with others, or on any social media platforms. Zoom links and passwords are only intended for students registered in the course. Zoom recordings and materials presented in Zoom, including any teaching materials, must not be shared, distributed or published without the instructor’s permission. Please also treat the link for our Slack discussions as private.

The use of video conferencing programs relies on participants to act ethically, honestly and with integrity; and in accordance with the principles of fairness, good faith, and respect (as per the [Code of Conduct](#)). When entering Zoom or other video conferencing sessions (such as MS Teams), you play a role in helping create an effective, safe and respectful learning environment. Please be mindful of how your behaviour in these sessions may affect others. Participants are required to use names officially associated with their UCID (legal or preferred names listed in the Student Centre) when engaging in these activities. Instructors/moderators can remove those whose names do not appear on class rosters. Non-compliance may be investigated under relevant University of Calgary conduct policies (e.g. [Student Non-Academic Misconduct Policy](#)). If participants have difficulties complying with this requirement, they should email the instructor of the class explaining why, so the instructor may consider whether to grant an exception, and on what terms. For more information on how to get the most out of your zoom sessions visit: <https://elearn.ucalgary.ca/guidelines-for-zoom/>.

If you are unable to attend an online session, please contact me to arrange an alternative activity for the missed session (e.g., to review a recorded session). Please be prepared, as best as you are able, to join class in a quiet space that will allow you to be fully present and engaged in Zoom sessions. Students will be advised by their instructor when they are expected to turn on their webcam (for group work, presentations, etc.).

I will record Lecture classes for the purposes of supporting student learning – such as making the recording available for review of the session or for students who miss a session. Students will be advised before the instructor initiates a recording of a Zoom session. These recordings will be used to support student learning only *and will not be shared or used for any other purpose.*

OTHER IMPORTANT COURSE INFORMATION:

Conduct:

Students, employees, and academic staff are also expected to demonstrate behaviour in class that promotes and maintains a positive and productive learning environment. As members of the University community, students, employees, and academic staff are expected to demonstrate conduct that is consistent with the University of Calgary Calendar, the Code of Conduct and Non-Academic Misconduct policy and procedures, which can be found at: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

Policy on use of electronic devices:

Please refrain from accessing websites and resources that may be distracting to you or for other learners during class time. Students are responsible for being aware of the University's [Internet and email use policy](#). Electronic devices are not permitted during the Final Examination.

Grading System:

See the University of Calgary grade conversion table below. I will usually assign a percentage grade to your work and then convert this percentage to a letter grade.

90 + %	A+	4.0	67 – 69 %	C+	2.3
85 – 89 %	A	4.0	64 – 66 %	C	2.0
80 – 84 %	A–	3.7	60 – 63 %	C–	1.7
77 – 79 %	B+	3.3	55 – 59 %	D+	1.3
74 – 76 %	B	3.0	50 – 54 %	D	1.0
70 – 73 %	B–	2.7	0 – 49 %	F	0

Although the A+ is solely an honorific that entails no additional points in the four-point system, the course instructor will employ this mark to distinguish superlative work that far exceeds expectations in style, correctness, intellectual depth and breadth, sophistication, and originality. There is no D- grade.

Academic Integrity:

This course, like all courses at the University of Calgary, holds students to high standards of honest and responsible scholarship. Please consult the [Academic Integrity website](#) for a detailed description of university policies, which will be enforced in this course. Cases of suspected academic misconduct will be referred to the Associate Dean of Arts for a ruling.

Plagiarism is a type of academic misconduct. Plagiarism occurs when a student presents the ideas, expression of ideas, or work of another person as their own. Another equally serious form of plagiarism occurs when a student submits something they have written themselves for credit in two or more courses without first securing written permission from all those course instructors. Consequences for plagiarism include failure on the assignment, failure in the course, and possible suspension or expulsion from the university. Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense.

Deferral of term work and final examinations:

Should you require an extension for completion of term papers or assignments beyond the deadline of five days after the end of lectures, an [Application of Deferment of Term Work](#) must be completed. It is the student's responsibility to initiate this process with the instructor. The University also has regulations governing the [deferral of final examinations](#).

Grade appeals:

To pursue a Reassessment of Graded Term Work or a Reappraisal of an Academic Assessment, Consult the [University Calendar](#) and request advice from the English Department at engl@ucalgary.ca. Please note that

mere dissatisfaction with a grade is not sufficient grounds for an appeal.

English Department Website:

For more information about courses, programs, policies, events and contacts in the Department of English.

Scribe and Muse Club for English Students:

The [Scribe and Muse Reading and Writing Club](#) fosters and champions reading and writing through community service, leadership, and engagement. Our email address is smecuofc@gmail.com.

Writing support:

[The Student Success Centre](#) offers both online and workshop writing support for U of C students.

Academic regulations and schedules

Student Academic Accommodations:

The Student Accessibility Services website is available [here](#). University accommodation policies can be found at the following links:

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/b-6-1.html>

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/b-6.html>

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/b-6-2.html>

Program Advising and Student Information Resources is done through the Faculty of Arts Students' Centre. Office location: SS102; phone: 403-220-3580; email: ascarts@ucalgary.ca

Website: <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/undergraduate>

Instructor's Intellectual Property:

Course materials created by instructors, including presentations, posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments, and exams, remain the intellectual property of the instructor. These materials may not be reproduced, redistributed or copied without the explicit consent of the instructor. The posting of course materials to third party websites such as note-sharing sites without permission is prohibited. Sharing of extracts of these course materials with other students enrolled in the course at the same time may be allowed under fair dealing.

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy:

Student information will be collected in accordance with usual classroom practice. Students' assignments will be accessible only by the authorized course faculty and teaching assistants. Private information related to the individual student is treated with the utmost regard by the faculty at the University of Calgary.

Sexual violence policy:

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/sexual-violence-policy.pdf>

Other important information:

- [Wellness and Mental Health Resources](#)
- [Student Success](#)
- [Student Ombuds Office](#)
- [Student Union \(SU\) Information](#)
- [Graduate Students' Association \(GSA\) Information](#)
- [Emergency Evacuation/Assembly Points](#)
- [Safewalk](#)

Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI):

Please participate in [USRI Surveys](#) toward the end of the course. The feedback they provide helps us evaluate teaching, enhance student learning, and guide students as they select courses.