

English 517: Unreliable Narration and Narrative Ethics

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Meeting Time and Place	This class will be held Wednesdays, 9-11:45, in SS1015.
Office Hours:	Thursdays 1-2 pm via Zoom; if you can't make it then, email me set up alternative time.

Course Description

This course will begin by introducing an approach to literary texts called “narrative ethics,” which grows out of narrative theory more generally. We’ll spend the rest of the course focusing on a kind of narrative that presents a particularly rich field for this approach: unreliable narration. We’ll explore how unreliability works both in general and in particular texts. What kind of ethical relationships do these unreliable narratives establish between authors, narrators, characters, and readers? How does unreliability enable or limit an author’s ability to engage its audience in thinking about issues like class, gender, race, and historical trauma? Does filmic unreliability present different ethical possibilities and challenges than literary unreliability? Along with the primary texts, we’ll read both literary theory and critical articles that analyze the particular texts we’ll be reading. We’ll use this theory and criticism not just as vehicles for particular views but as models for our own academic writing. Assignments will include discussion board posts, a teaching essay or analysis of a scholarly journal, and a conference paper; everyone will also have the chance to lead the class in an active learning activity.

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- ✓ Define and apply terms and concepts from narrative theory having to do with unreliable narration, e.g., authorial and narrative audience, implied author, ethos, Chatman’s and Phelan’s competing models of narrative communication, etc.
- ✓ Produce an interpretation of a literary text that engages in narrative ethics;
- ✓ Develop a mental map and strategies for entering a critical conversation;
- ✓ Gain practice writing a possible conference paper and abstract;
- ✓ Integrate feedback on a piece of writing to strengthen your revision as a way to develop the practice of successful literary scholars

Required Primary Texts (Available at the bookstore)

Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Remains of the Day*

Martin Amis’ *Zone of Interest*

Colson Whitehead’s *The Underground Railroad*

Short Stories and Theoretical/Critical Texts

These will be available on D2L under “Readings.”

Films (On reserve at the library)
The Usual Suspects, dir. by Bryan Singer

<u>Course Requirements</u>	<u>Percentage of Final Grade</u>
Class Participation (including class discussion, workshop letters, and participation in the workshop).....	15%
Discussion Board Posts.....	15%
Talk Analysis.....	10%
“Yes and” or “Yes But” Essay (1200-1400 words).....	25%
Conference Paper, Supplementary Material, and Draft (2900-3200 words)	35%

Grading System

You must complete all written work to qualify for a passing grade.

- The Department of English uses the percentage conversion scale below. Your final grade will be converted to the University’s official 4-point scale at the end of term. The interpretation of the undergraduate university grading system can be found at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/f-1.html>. These are the grade ranges and specific numeric values assigned to letter grades. Although the A+ is solely an honorific that entails no additional points in the four-point system, I will use this mark to distinguish superlative work that exceeds expectations in style, intellectual depth and breadth, sophistication, creativity and originality.

90 + %	A+
85 – 89 %	A
80 – 84 %	A–
77 – 79 %	B+
74 – 76 %	B
70 – 73 %	B–
67 – 69 %	C+
64 – 66 %	C
60 – 63 %	C–
55 – 59 %	D+
50 – 54 %	D
0 – 49 %	F

- Sometimes I’ll assign a split grade (e.g., B-/C+). To find the numerical equivalent, I use the grade in between, e.g., 69.5.

Course Components (Please see “Assignments” on D2L for more details on each of them):

- Class Participation/Peer Feedback

We'll discuss how we can make the classroom a safe and comfortable intellectual place since the class depends on everyone's participation. You are expected to attend class with all the readings assigned that day carefully read, prepared to take part in the small and large-group discussions and the activities we'll be doing (this is part of the participation grade). We will all try to make this as equitable a space as possible, where everyone contributes. Because this class meets only once a week, it is very important that you plan on attending every class session.

As described below, you'll also be asked to participate in and contribute letters to the peer workshop that will take place at the end of the term. If you are unable to participate in the workshop, you will receive a one-letter-grade deduction from your conference paper, e.g., from an "A-" to a "B-" (If you still write letters to the members of your workshop group but do not attend, you'll receive a 2/3 grade penalty).

- Talk Analysis
Students will be asked to attend an academic talk this term (either virtual or live) and submit a rhetorical analysis of it. I'll provide information about possible talks to attend; if you want to write about one that I haven't listed, you'll need to get approval from me beforehand.
- Discussion Board Posts
These posts will reflect on the readings and/or questions that come up during class discussion and enable you to see how your classmates are responding to it. You have a choice of how many to submit: submit three that meet expectations and you will receive an A- for that portion of your grade; submit four discussion board posts and receive an A. You must put up two before Wed., Oct. 20, and only one can count for credit that is posted in the last week of class. Your discussion board posts will not be individually graded, but I and your classmates will be reading them with great interest. If they meet the requirements for a good post, you'll get full credit for them. If I detect a problem, I'll let you know so you can either revise or take less than full credit.
- "Yes And" or "Yes But" Essay
The short essay will ask you to offer a brief interpretive argument about one of the primary texts we will have read so far that builds on or modifies an existing interpretive argument about it. The interpretation you grapple with can come from someone else's discussion board post, a scholarly article we've read for class, or one you find on your own. This short essay will prepare you for writing the conference paper, in which you will need to enter a critical conversation.
- Conference Paper, Including Supplementary Materials and Draft
The final project in this class will be the production of a conference paper. You will also provide some supplementary material: an abstract and the name of two conferences that you could apply to with your paper (actual application is encouraged but not required). Before your final submission of the paper, you'll submit a draft to a group of your classmates, and we'll have a peer workshop. To prepare for that peer workshop, you'll write letters to the members of your peer workshop group addressing their drafts.

Late Assignments

You have the option of turning in one assignment up to three days late without penalty, except the draft of the conference paper. If you turn in an assignment more than three days late, or if you turn in a second assignment late, your grade on the work will be lowered by a third of a grade for each late day (i.e., an “A” paper that is one day late will receive an “A-,” two days late a “B+,” and so on; weekend days are counted in this total).

Conduct:

When participating in class, please keep in mind that we all bring a diversity of knowledge, lived experiences, and blind spots to the table. Engaging in lively discussion and debate is one of the most rewarding parts of the university experience; we’ll establish class norms together, but please remain collegial at all times when interacting with your fellow students and instructors, even if you find yourselves disagreeing. Racist, sexist, homo/queer/transphobic, or otherwise inflammatory remarks will not be tolerated in the classroom, however it will not be assumed they were made knowingly or intentionally.

Students, employees, and academic staff are expected to demonstrate behavior in class that promotes and maintains a positive and productive learning environment. For more details, see 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>

Internet and Email Use:

The use of laptop and mobile devices in class is just fine when used in a manner appropriate to the course and classroom activities. However, you need to refrain from accessing websites and resources that may be distracting to you or for other learners during class time, however tempting. Students are responsible for being aware of and following the University’s Internet and email use policy, which can be found at <https://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/electronic-communications-policy.pdf>

Recording:

Our classes will likely be recorded in order to enable students who had to miss a session because of sickness or an emergency to watch them. These recordings will be used to support student learning only and will not be shared or used for any other purpose.

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, including material from a blog site or other unofficial sources from the web, 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.