

Spring 2022

ENGLISH 4762/5762: Neuroscience and Literature

Thematic title: Disability and Narrative

TTh 9:30 AM – 10:45 AM

Schroeder Complex 132

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Office Hours: TTh 12:30 PM – 2 PM or by appointment

From the Shakespearean soliloquy (famously credited by Yale’s Harold Bloom with “the invention of the human” as such) to James Joyce’s stream-of-consciousness narration, and beyond, literature has long been fascinated by the inner workings of the mind, and the so-called “cognitive turn” in literary studies of the 2000s created a vast subfield devoted to understanding these representations with more specificity and in more detail. Marquette’s new “Neuroscience and Literature” course, included in the Cognitive Science interdisciplinary major, draws on this critical archive to explore how literature understands consciousness, particularly in the way literature has posited disability and neurodivergence. Narratives about disability follow predictable and often quite hurtful patterns, typically centering compulsory optimism around concepts like “cure” and “inspiration,” or else fixating on inexorable decline—but emerging narratives about neurodivergence also register the efforts of social and political movements to expand awareness about the lives of people whose minds and brains are not neurotypical, and to change social structures, especially in education and medicine, in order to improve the quality of those lives. In literary terms, representing neurodiversity raises questions such as: What narrative strategies do writers use to represent various ways of perceiving the world? What are autistic voices, or amnesiac voices, Tourettic voices, sociopathic voices? Do these differ, and in what ways, from so-called neurotypical voices? How do fictional voices compare to autobiographical ones? How does centering neurodivergence impact the way we tell and understand stories? Modules in the course will pair scientific and therapeutic writing with literary examples that center the lived experiences of disabled people.

LEARNING GOALS

Cognitive Science Learning Outcomes

Cognitive science is the study of the mind – thought, learning and mental organization – through the integrated use of methods and concepts from various disciplines, including psychology, philosophy, computer science, artificial intelligence, neuroscience, mathematics, linguistics, biology and anthropology.

English Department Learning Outcomes

- Articulate how the imaginative constructs of poetry, drama, and prose (fiction and nonfiction) illuminate fundamental questions of human experience.
- Define critical theories/methods of reading.
- Identify rhetorical tactics within texts.
- Analyze the function of rhetorical tactics within texts.
- Argue for interpretations and evaluations of texts.
- Reflect on the validity of personal bases for evaluating texts in light of textual, historical, and cultural evidence.
- Construct well-written texts in a variety of genres and/or media.
- Deliver effective multi-media presentations.
- Demonstrate effective strategies for collaboration with peers.

ENGL 4762: “Disability and Narrative” Learning Outcomes

- Identify and understand the complex interrelationships among cognitive science, disability, and literature;
- Apply techniques of literary analysis to various works of literature and literary theory;
- Demonstrate understanding of the cultural and historical contexts in which various works of literature about disability have been written;
- Explore the relationship between disability, lived experience, academic theory, and artistic creation;
- Use literary study to develop skills for careful reading and clear writing;
- Read and discuss literature on the levels of both form and content.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES AND PERSONAL EMERGENCIES

Everyone at Marquette recognizes that this is an extremely difficult time which may be filled with different sorts of uncertainty as we move forward with the academic year. Your safety, health, and well-being are our primary concern and we want to be able to support you in any way that we can.

The university also understands that you may be facing personal obstacles that may make it difficult to meet your typical academic goals. Please refer to the Student Resources page on the Marquette COVID-19 Response webpage for information and resources on basic needs such as housing, food, financial aid, and medical and mental health; the webpage also offers information on official University communications, access to technology, and student services. Faculty and staff are also here for you.

If you feel like your performance in the class is being impacted by your situation outside of class, please don't hesitate to talk with me. I want to be a resource for you. You are not alone.

COVID-19 POLICY

Everyone in this class will be expected to follow the current COVID-19 policies in effect on campus, including current guidance on masks.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Ian McEwan, *Saturday*

Kurt Vonnegut, *Galapagos*

Octavia E. Butler, *Bloodchild and Other Stories*

Julie Dachez and Mademoiselle Caroline, *Invisible Differences*

Susanna Clarke, *Piranesi*

Any edition of the texts should be suitable for our study.

Additional course material will occasionally be distributed via D2L.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Participation	25%
Sandbox Posts	20%
Final Paper (10-15 pages)	
Pitch	5%
Proposal	10%
Abstract	5%
Final Paper Presentation	15%
Final Paper	20%

As you can see, this course is built around a long final research paper or project, including a presentation of your research during the last two weeks of class. The project included scaffolded assignments to (hopefully) allow you to produce this work without needless anxiety or frustration, and support for the project will frequently be provided in class. Please see the final page of this syllabus for more information on this assignment, including the different modes of project that are available, and please come to me if you have any questions or concerns.

Graduate students will have slightly different expectations; we can discuss this as a group.

GRADING

Grades will follow the following rubric:

* To earn a **C**, you must clearly restate the meaning or project of a text in your own terms. A C essay may volunteer an original argument, but will likely lack evidence or analysis of its sources. C essays are clearly written, though they might display some grammatical weakness.

* To earn a **B**, you must begin to raise important questions about the text under consideration and to use those questions to drive your own interpretive agenda. A B essay typically advances an original argument and provides solid analysis of the text(s) under consideration. B essays are clear, concise, and free of grammatical errors.

* To earn an **A**, you must construct an essay that does more than simply comment on the work of others; you must forward, counter, or transform what they have to say. An A essay advances an original argument that builds toward a climax and makes a persuasive case for its own significance. A essays are clearly written, and often eloquent.

* A **D** means that you have not written in clear prose or that you seem to have deeply misunderstood the text. An **F** means that you did not fully or seriously engage the assignment.

* **A-**, **B+**, **B-**, **C+**, and **C-** grades fall squarely in the gaps between the above categories.

Grades are not awarded on an artificial curve or in competition with each other. There is no reason that every student cannot receive an A in this course.

UNGRADED ASSIGNMENTS

Your makeup posts and sandbox posts will be graded on an extra-credit / pass / low-pass / fail basis:

- Fulfilling all the requirements of the assignment will earn you full credit;
- Failing to do so will earn you half-credit (at best) or no credit (at worst);
- Going beyond the terms of the assignment in an especially ambitious or creative way can earn you extra credit.

ATTENDANCE AND CLASS PARTICIPATION

Class discussion is an essential component of this seminar; class discussion, not lecture, will be the primary means by which we will investigate these texts together. It is crucial that you come to class every day having read the required material and prepared to discuss it.

Consequently, attendance in this class is mandatory. You should plan on attending every class. Please talk to me (in advance if possible) if you ever find you will need to miss a class meeting. Students who miss class on a given day will be expected to make that work up via a post on D2L in order to have the absence excused.

The course adheres to Marquette University's attendance policy, which can be found on the Internet at <http://bulletin.marquette.edu/undergrad/academicregulations/#attendance>. You are allowed **four unexcused absences** over the course of the spring semester. Upon the fourth unexcused absence, you may receive a WA (Withdrawn—Excessive Absences) for the semester.

Merely being present in class is insufficient for an “A” in class participation. Each student is expected to *participate in* and *contribute to* our discussions. Just being in the room is not enough.

QUIZZES

I do not like to give reading quizzes; I think they infantilize the college-level scholar. However, this is by necessity a very reading-intensive class; if it seems to me that people are not keeping up with the reading, pop quizzes may become necessary despite my philosophical objections. You have been warned.

FORMAT OF WRITTEN WORK

Much of your written work in this course is published using D2L's forums. You should compose your work in a word processing program, not in your browser, and then copy and paste it into the appropriate discussion forum when the post is finished. Composing your work in a word processing program will make it easier for you to save a copy of the work on your own hard drive, as well as prevent you from losing your work if your browser crashes, resets, or otherwise fails to successfully upload the material.

All papers should be typed in twelve-point font, double-spaced with one-inch margins, saved in a format Microsoft Word can open. Your filename should contain *your name* in it, for example, yourlastname-firstpaper.docx.

I expect you to *edit* and *proofread* all written work.

Please give each piece of writing an original title, and include your name, the name of the assignment, and the due date in a header on the first page. **All sources relied upon for the writing of your paper, including the primary text, must be appropriately cited.**

PAPER SUBMISSION

Components of the final project should be submitted via the D2L Dropbox. Please see below regarding extensions, and please keep in mind that early submission of work is totally acceptable.

Your other written work will be submitted via the D2L forums. These papers will have variable due dates driven by your own interests and response. **It is thus your responsibility to make sure you are properly keeping up with this portion of the course in a timely fashion.**

Except in very unusual circumstances, work will not be accepted by email.

EXTENSIONS

Although the assignments in this course have a sufficiently long timetable to allow you to plan and complete all work in a timely manner, I nonetheless recognize that emergencies do happen, especially in the context of the pandemic. **If you find that you will not be able to make a deadline, please contact me as soon as you can to arrange an alternative due date.** There is no need to concoct an elaborate story to justify this, or to lie to me; simply tell me the truth about what's going on and we can work out an alternative that works for you.

TECHNOLOGY IS TERRIBLE: PLAN AHEAD!

The Internet goes down. Files become corrupted. Computers crash. These are predictable facts of twenty-first century life, not emergencies. For this course, for all your courses, for the rest of your career and your life in this world you need to develop work habits and strategies that take into account the basic, inescapable unreliability of computers. Start your assignments well in advance of the due date; save them often, while they are still in process; save backup copies of essential documents like your papers, including copies off-site using a service like Carbonite, Dropbox, or Google Drive. Even just periodically emailing your papers-in-process to yourself will prevent you from losing your paper to a computer crash at the last minute.

SANDBOX POSTS AND D2L

Over the course of the semester I will ask you to post a freeform response in the designated “sandbox” forum approximately once per major text. This does not have to be a formal written post, but can also take the form of a podcast, short video, a work of art or music, a short story or fan fiction, a comic, or more; any response of any sort is fine, provided it is thoughtful and substantial. These can even be done collaboratively. By the end of that segment, I will ask you to respond to at least two other sandbox posts. The idea is to respond collectively to the material we are studying together in a way that is not stifling, anxious, or overstructured by academic expectations that cannot really apply to this odd and altered educational context; my hope is to strip away grading strictures that can only be dysfunctional in the current moment and foster instead more multifaceted, more generous, and hopefully richer intellectual encounters, driven by your interests.

The sandbox posts are an excellent place for people who may feel inhibited by in-class discussion to share their opinions and responses with the class. I will be reading it before every meeting of the course and I ask you do the same. You may choose either to begin a discussion thread on a new topic or to respond to a post composed by one of your classmates.

Before class on Thursday, every student is required to take the following actions:

- * **upload a picture either of their face or a representative symbolic image to their D2L profile;**
- * **post an “About the Author” about themselves in the designated forum.**

Students may also, if they choose, post an initial post in the “Disability and Narrative” forum.

As noted above, students will post one sandbox response each week for each major text we study in the course, missing one of the six without penalty. You may do the other for extra credit. Additional posts beyond that number, and posts that respond substantively to other students’ arguments, will be looked upon very favorably when I calculate your final grade

LAPTOP POLICY

As Marquette moves towards a paperless learning environment, in-class use of laptops, Kindles, iPads, etc. becomes ever more important for access to electronic versions of our texts and for notetaking. However, students *must* refrain from non-class-related computer use, including email, instant messaging, Facebook, Twitter, and the like. **Please do not abuse this privilege or distract your fellow students.** I reserve to right to ban individual technological devices if this becomes a problem. Except in unusual cases of personal emergency, cleared with me at the start of class, no use of cell phones will be permitted during class time; please turn off your ringers and put them out of sight.

EMAIL

Students in this class are required to check their official Marquette email account—whatever account D2L sends its emails to—at least once the evening before a scheduled class meeting, in case there are any last-minute announcements or disruptions. I endeavor to respond to all emails

within 24 hours, usually much less—but please do not send me urgent emails regarding your assignments on the night before they are due and expect an immediate reply.

CONFERENCES

All students are asked to meet with me in at least two short one-on-one conferences in my office, via Zoom, or at an appropriately socially distanced outdoor location, once before Spring Break and once after. Weekly signups will be available on D2L.

Please know I am very happy to meet with you individually to discuss either graded work or work-in-progress in excess of this requirement as many times as you like. Simply come to my weekly office hours, or email me to set up an appointment.

FLEXIBILITY

If it will benefit the class, changes may be made to any of the above.

WRITING CENTER

Students are strongly encouraged to make use of the Writing Center, located in Raynor Library Room 240, at any stage of the writing process.

Please visit the Writing Center website at <http://www.marquette.edu/english/writingcenter/> to find out how to schedule an appointment and to access the studio's online resources.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Students with disabilities who believe they may require accommodations in this course should contact me early in the semester so your learning needs can be appropriately met. I am of course more than happy to work with you to make sure you are successful in this course and to make this course most accessible for you. However, without documentation, I am limited in what I am able to do. Therefore, in order for me to help you most effectively, I need you to be proactive in contacting the Office of Disability Services (located on the fifth floor of the 707 Building). ODS can be reached by phone at (414) 288-1645 or by email at ods@marquette.edu.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Students are expected to abide by the academic honesty policy outlined in your undergraduate bulletin. I urge you all to examine this material and consult me with any questions you may have about plagiarism or academic integrity *before* it becomes an issue. Ignorance of what constitutes plagiarism is not an acceptable excuse for plagiarism. **Academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated and will result in a failing grade for the course.** No exceptions or special dispensations will be made.

Marquette students now sign an Honor Pledge, which states:

- *I recognize the importance of personal integrity in all aspects of life and work.*
- *I commit myself to truthfulness, honor, and responsibility, by which I earn the respect of others.*
- *I support the development of good character, and commit myself to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity as an important aspect of personal integrity.*

- *My commitment obliges me to conduct myself according to the Marquette University Honor Code.*

Full details of Marquette’s academic integrity policy are available on the Internet at <http://www.marquette.edu/provost/academic-integrity.php>.

On a personal level, I (like everyone) hate being lied to. Please, do not feel you need to concoct elaborate excuses. Simply be honest with me about whatever is going on and we will work it out.

ACADEMIC FREEDOM

We all enter this classroom with preexisting political, ethical, philosophical, and intellectual commitments. You are all required to engage the material—but you are absolutely *not* required to agree either with any of the writers we will discuss, or with me, in whole or in part.

DISCLOSURE AND VULNERABILITY

A course about disability can and should be a safe space to talk openly and honestly about the place of disability and ableism in our lives. I have scheduled time for the second day of class for us to think deliberately together about ways to make these conversations comfortable for all, and will ask us to generate a set of guidelines to help us think about how to talk to each other about topics that can prove to be sites of vulnerability and hurt. In general, though, I would suggest that people think carefully about what from their own lives they choose to disclose to the class, as well as remember that our approach to this material (in accordance with the guiding ethos of disability studies as an academic discipline) will seek to honor and affirm disabled lives. I would also ask that we be forgiving when people make do mistakes (as we all inevitably will).

RESPECT

This classroom is a community. It is crucial that we treat each other with the appropriate level of courtesy and respect. No one should be made to feel unwelcome here. Failure to treat other students with the respect they deserve will **severely** impact your class participation grade.

KEEP THE LINES OF COMMUNICATION OPEN!

I want this class to be a meaningful and valuable experience for you, both in its own terms and in service of the development of your larger college experience. If you have any ideas, suggestions, or concerns about the way things are going, my door is always open. I put this statement on every syllabus, but I think it is especially important in a semester that is likely to be as chaotic and disorienting as this one. Please, keep me in the loop about what is going on with you in the world outside our classroom, and help me to make this class as successful as it can be.

PRELIMINARY SCHEDULE

Any changes to this schedule will be announced in class as they become necessary.

Students should come to class prepared to discuss the listed texts or chapters.

DAY	DATE	ASSIGNMENT
T	Jan. 25	FIRST DAY OF CLASS Introduction to the Course

Th	Jan. 27	Michael Bérubé, “Disability and Narrative” [D2L] roundtable discussion: How to Talk About Vulnerability, Together
T	Feb. 1	Ted Chiang, “Hell Is the Absence of God” [D2L]
Th	Feb. 3	Alice Hall, “An Introduction to Disability Studies” [D2L] Helen Meekosha and Russell Shuttleworth, “What’s So ‘Critical’ about Critical Disability Studies?” [D2L] Sami Schalk, “Critical Disability Studies as Methodology” [D2L]
T	Feb. 8	Ian McEwan, <i>Saturday</i> (part one)
Th	Feb. 10	Ian McEwan, <i>Saturday</i> (part two) <i>Scientific American</i> : “The Enigma of Huntington’s Disease” [D2L]
T	Feb. 15	Ian McEwan, <i>Saturday</i> (part three and four)
Th	Feb. 17	Ian McEwan, <i>Saturday</i> (part five) Wexler and Rawlins, “Prejudice in a Portrayal of Huntington’s Disease” [D2L]
T	Feb. 22	PAPER PITCH DUE Meet in Raynor Library for research talk with Max Gray.
Th	Feb. 24	Kurt Vonnegut, <i>Galápagos</i> (first half of part one)
T	Mar. 1	Kurt Vonnegut, <i>Galapagos</i> (second half of part one)
Th	Mar. 3	Kurt Vonnegut, <i>Galapagos</i> (whole book) Alice Wexler, <i>Mapping Fate</i> (excerpt) New York Times: “Haunted by a Gene”
T	Mar. 8	Octavia E. Butler, “The Evening and the Morning and the Night” Gerry Canavan, “Life Without Hope? Huntington's Disease and Genetic Futurity” [D2L]
Th	Mar. 10	RESEARCH DAY / MEET AT LIBRARY
T	Mar. 15	SPRING BREAK—NO CLASS
Th	Mar. 17	SPRING BREAK—NO CLASS
T	Mar. 22	Sami Schalk, “Experience, Research, and Writing: Octavia E. Butler as an Author of Disability Literature” [D2L] Sami Schalk, “Interpreting Disability Metaphor and Race in Octavia Butler's "The Evening and the Morning and the Night"”
Th	Mar. 24	Josh Lukin, “Disability and Blackness” Robert McRuer, “Compulsory Able-Bodiedness” Octavia E. Butler, “Positive Obsession” and “Furor Scribendi” PROPOSAL DUE
T	Mar. 29	Octavia E. Butler, “Speech Sounds”

Th	Mar. 31	<i>pick two from</i> Bloodchild and Other Stories: “Crossover,” “Near of Kin,” “Bloodchild,” “Amnesty,” or “The Book of Martha”
T	Apr. 5	Julie Dachez and Mademoiselle Caroline, <i>Invisible Differences</i> (first half)
Th	Apr. 7	Julie Dachez and Mademoiselle Caroline, <i>Invisible Differences</i> (second half) Interviews with Julie Dachez
T	Apr. 12	WORKSHOP/ CONFERENCES
Th	Apr. 14	EASTER BREAK—NO CLASS
T	Apr. 19	Susanna Clarke, <i>Piranesi</i> , parts 1 and 2 Justin Jordan, “Susanna Clarke: ‘I was cut off from the world, bound in one place by illness’” [Web]
Th	Apr. 21	Susanna Clarke, <i>Piranesi</i> 2, parts 3 and 4
T	Apr. 26	Susanna Clarke, <i>Piranesi</i> 3, whole book Jodie Noel Vinson, “ <i>Piranesi</i> Is a Dispatch from the Kingdom of Chronic Illness” [Web] COVID-19 and disability [in class]
Th	Apr. 28	GRADUATE STUDENT PRESENTATIONS
T	May 3	PRESENTATIONS
Th	May 5	PRESENTATIONS
T	May 10	PRESENTATIONS LAST DAY OF CLASS
F	May 13	FINAL PAPER/PROJECT DUE BY 5:30 PM

FOLLOW FAME: FRIENDS AND ALUMNI/AE OF MARQUETTE ENGLISH

On Facebook (page): www.facebook.com/marquettefame

On Facebook (group): www.facebook.com/groups/496438583889194
(search for “Undergraduate English at Marquette”)

On Twitter: @MarquetteENGL

While our ability to see each other in person may still be somewhat constrained this semester, there will be opportunities for department events and meetups that will be advertised through these outlets. I hope you can attend!

FINAL PAPER GUIDELINES

Just over 50% of your grade in this class ultimately derives from your final paper. In this respect this course is being organized much more like a graduate seminar than a conventional undergraduate class—which necessarily puts the impetus on you to manage your time effectively to produce a successful research paper. To help, I've attempted to break up the process into a set of discrete tasks that populate the second half of the semester:

Pitch: When You're Ready, but by February 22

Proposal Due: Thursday, March 24

Workshop: Tuesday, April 12

Presentations: Thursday, April 28 – Tuesday, May 10

Final Paper Due to Me and Abstract on D2L: Friday, May 10, by 5:30 PM

You have three options for your paper:

OPTION #1 A traditional 10-to-15-page scholarly paper on some aspect of the material studied in the course.

OPTION #2 A creative project like a short story, a short essay, a short comic, or a short film, roughly the labor equivalent of a 10-to-15-page academic paper.

OPTION #3 A curational project (a video, a podcast, a website, or some other mode of academic curation), also roughly the labor equivalent of a 10-to-15-page academic paper.

**** NOTE: Group projects are acceptable for option 3, with permission!**

- The “**pitch**” stage of the paper simply means running your idea by me in whatever form seems most helpful to you (a conference, an email, an after-class discussion, etc.)
- The **prospectus** is a half-page to full-page anticipation of the major thrust of your argument as you anticipate it taking shape. It has three parts:
 - a paragraph or two laying out the aspect of the course you plan to discuss;
 - a paragraph articulating a *central claim* which clearly and succinctly describes your planned intervention into the field;
 - a short prose description and/or short bibliography that lays out the archive of evidence on which you will rely to prove your central claim.

For the creative option, the prospectus will be more like an account of what has influenced you, and a blueprint of what you hope to create.

- You will **present** your project to the rest of the class at the last two weeks of class. You will be given approximately fifteen minutes to summarize what you are creating, and take some questions from your classmates.
- You should think of your project as the pointed answer to a controversial question about literature, cognition, and disability, taking a position on some aspect of the the course you think is interesting and important. For the creative project, your work might be a twist on one

of the works we studied in class, or take up a thematic question or a narrative point of view you wish one of the works had considered. For the curational project, you might expand the work we did in class by looking at a text we didn't study, or critically examine one or more of our texts in more detail than our discussions allowed. A curational project could also be directed at educating people outside our course about the material we studied.

- For more information on developing a successful central claim, I would recommend consulting this document from the Duke University Writing Studio:

<https://twp.duke.edu/sites/twp.duke.edu/files/file-attachments/developing%20a%20central%20claim%281%29.pdf>

I am also of course very happy to discuss your papers-in-progress with you at any stage of the writing process, from pitch to finished product.

I cannot stress enough how open I am to your personal interests and approaches. I want this paper to be something you are excited about and enjoy writing, not a chore.

- Your final **10-to-15-page** project is due to me on **Friday, May 13, by 5:30 PM**. Alongside this you should also prepare a short, paragraph-length **abstract** describing your research conclusions and post this in the dedicated thread on D2L.

The Duke University Writing Studio also has a helpful page on how to write an abstract, which you can find here:

<https://twp.duke.edu/sites/twp.duke.edu/files/file-attachments/abstract.original.pdf>

Again, please don't hesitate to contact me for whatever guidance I can provide at any stage of the writing process. I'm really looking forward to reading these.

Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your opponent, depending upon the quality of your ally's assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress. —Kenneth Burke, “The Philosophy of Literary Form”