

English 188  
Monsters and Society

Office: Radford

Phone:

Office Hours: Thursdays 3:00 til 6:00

e-mail:

Assigned Books: *Beowulf*, trans. Heaney; *The Repentant*, eds. Thomsen and Greenberg

**GOALS FOR TBIS COURSES, as spelled out on the English Department's web page.**

The Theme-Based Inquiry Seminars (TBIS) will help students strengthen their writing, reading, and thinking skills within an academic context that will prepare them for their future college work. The goals and objectives of the Theme-Based Inquiry Seminar program are the following:

**Writing process strategies.** Students will develop a set of strategies to generate ideas and to revise and edit their writing through successive drafts. In addition, students will engage in critical reflections of their texts and of their writing processes. Students will also become aware of how the relationships between audience, purpose, context, and genre shape the meaning and function of any text, including their own.

**Synthesis of sources.** Students will gain practice with analytical and argumentative writing, both of which necessitate an ability to integrate sources logically and grammatically; to use summary, paraphrase, and quotations appropriately and effectively; to use the appropriate documentation style; and to meet academic expectations of grammatical and mechanical correctness in final papers.

**Critical analysis.** Students will develop skills in critical evaluation and decision-making. This will involve evaluating one's own writing and the writing of peers and professionals. Students will also be faced with evaluating different sources of information, which may include print media, film, and the Internet, as well as primary sources.

**Collaborative work.** Students will learn to work cooperatively within groups to make decisions and to solve problems.

Objectives:

While this class will look at how and why we create the idea of the monstrous, we must not lose touch with the reality that this is in many ways a class concerned with composition. There will be three formal papers written for this class that will be graded and used to evaluate your progress as writers and thinkers, but there will also be other shorter written assignments and discussion projects that you will have to complete also.

The purpose of these assignments is to bring you into the discourse community that makes up the university. One of the most important skills that you will develop in the university is the ability to communicate with other members of your community in the appropriate tone and manner. This class will help you to understand the signs that groups use to mark their boundaries and beliefs; these signs, you will find, exist in many different forms, but they exist in all the different groups.

By looking at the ways (and reasons why) negative identities are created by and for particular individuals and cultures, I believe that we will be in a better position to assess and understand the ways that we are manipulated by our culture to accept certain people and ideas while alienating and diminishing others.

I hope that we will be better able to answer the important question, to whose advantage are there such demarcations in our society? By looking at the way the monstrous is created, we will all be better able to see how other ideas of these identities are created in our society. When we see political advertisements, it will be easier to understand what themes are being manipulated to create an identity for the voting community. When we see images of 9-11 being used by news organizations, we will see the ways that patriotism, fear, and courage are used to promote their broadcasts. And when we recognize that not every political leader that we disagree with is a monster, we will have a better understanding of why political leaders choose certain forms of discourse to convince us that we need to take a particular action.

By gaining an understanding of the ways that signs are manipulated, and by becoming more proficient communicators, both in written and verbal form, I hope that the students will be better prepared to succeed as students in the university community, and in the larger communities that they encounter.

#### Requirements:

This class meets just three times a week; each student needs to attend every class so all of the students and the instructor has the chance to hear from as many different points of view as is possible. In a true learning community, every participant has to contribute so the others are forced to deal with as many perspectives as is possible. If there is some reason that it is impossible to make a class, please contact me before class, or as shortly after class as is possible. If a student misses more than three classes, that student's grade will be lowered in proportion to the number of times that the student misses class. So, for every class that is missed after the initial three, the final grade for the semester will be lowered by 5%. If there is a reasonable explanation as to why class was missed, please know that I will be happy to hear your excuse, but this does not mean that your miss will be "excused." If there is a serious health problem, contact the Dean of Students and work with that department so all of your instructors can be notified of the health problem.

Please make sure that you are in the classroom when the class begins. This will be very important since all assignments that are to be handed in are due at the very start of class, and if they are not turned in then, they will be considered late.

Four formal papers will be written this semester, and there are a few simple rules for the format of these papers: double spaced, 12 point font, Times New Roman, no title page, your name, section number, and date in the upper left corner (all single spaced).

Each of these papers must conform to the assignment sheets that will be handed out for each paper that is due. If the paper is the correct length, is perfectly written, and shows deep, well thought out ideas, it can still be graded poorly if it does not fulfill the requirements of the assignment. So, if there are any questions about the intent of the assignment, make sure you talk to me, or the tutor, about the assignment. It is up to you to voice any questions that you have if things are not clear to you.

Along with the papers that you will hand in, you will be expected to add thoughtful discourse to the class. Your ideas are important and can add to your classmates' understanding of the world. Your input will also influence me, so make sure that you speak up in class and make your positions known.

**Grading:**

Papers One through Three, 20% of your final grade, each.

Paper Four, 25%

Class Participation, 15%

A: 100-94 / AB: 93-88 / B: 87-83 / BC 82-78 / C: 77-73 and so on.

Your papers will be graded in several ways: how well it answers the problems set up in the assignment, how clearly you present your ideas, how well you stick to the standards of modern English as used in college writing. A wonderfully written paper that has nothing to do with the assignment will not earn a passing grade. Conversely, a paper that answers the assignment that is written in a way that cannot be understood will, also, not earn a passing grade. One of the ways that you can assure yourself a good grade is to use the Writing Center and me to give you help and advice on your papers.