

**Course Number and Section:** ENGL 151 001

**Course Title and/or Topic:** “Critical Studies in Literature”

**Credits:** 3

**Term:** 2020-2021 Term 1 (Fall)

**Instructor:** Dr. Margaret Reeves

### **Course Description:**

In this section of ENGL 151, we explore ways of reading, interpreting, and writing about literature at an introductory level. In this course, students will learn how to move beyond merely subjective responses when talking or writing about a story or poem. For example, when we respond to stories, we often start with our subjective experience, as in “I liked this book,” or “I didn’t like that play,” but how do we produce more thoughtful and analytical responses to literary works? Being both thoughtful and analytical is what happens when we engage in the activity called “literary criticism.”

The word “criticism” in the phrase “literary criticism” does not mean expressing *disapproval* of literary texts such as novels, poems, or plays. Instead, we use forms of this word “criticism” in phrases such as “literary criticism” and “critical analysis” to indicate methods used to assess works of literature. These assessments involve interpreting and explaining the meaning of texts as well as understanding how and why these works of literature matter. When we undertake “critical studies in literature,” to quote the title of the course, we are engaging in critical analysis of literary texts.

During the past century, literary scholars have developed a number of useful approaches to literary criticism, to the point where we now have a full “toolkit” of critical strategies available to us. In this course, we will read a variety of literary works (primarily poems, short stories, and novels), and learn how to analyze them using some of these critical strategies. This course will enable students to develop skills in writing and talking about literature by employing a variety of methods, such as formalist, feminist, Marxist, postcolonial, and ecocritical approaches.

### **Course Format:**

Lecture materials will be posted every week online to enable asynchronous (self-guided) learning (see below); tutorials will be held online (on a weekly, synchronous basis) to address students’ questions and assist understanding of course concepts and texts. Discussion will be conducted online via *Canvas* (the online learning system used for each course at UBCO) in two ways: in conversation during the online synchronous tutorials held every Tuesday, and secondly, in writing using the Discussion feature on *Canvas*. Timed tests will be held at the end of each Module via *Canvas* on four occasions throughout the course, and writing assignments will be submitted electronically through Turnitin. There will be a timed, final examination at the end of this course.

Students are expected to read all materials as listed on the Reading Schedule before our Tuesday tutorials every week. Be sure that you are ready to join the course from the beginning so that you can attend the first virtual meeting of the class online, which will be held the first week of classes, early in September 2020.

### **Required Readings**

The readings will include two novels, short stories, and poems, as well as chapters that explain and define the critical approaches we will be applying to the literary works. Students are asked to purchase the two novels, *The Chrysalids* by John Wyndham and *The Marrow Thieves* by Cherie Dimaline, from the UBCO bookstore. All other materials, including the chapters, stories, and poems, will be made available in through the Library Online Course Reserve (LOCR) system that

students can access through the course's *Canvas* website. Links to any additional materials will be made available on *Canvas*.

### **Additional Required Resources**

1. *This Changes Everything*, a documentary film by Naomi Klein and Avi Lewis (to be accessed through the UBC Okanagan Library).
2. *The Routledge Dictionary of Literary Terms*, compiled by Peter Childs and Roger Fowler, Routledge, 2006 (available through Library Online Course Reserves via *Canvas*).
3. A printout of the MLA Citation Style Guide, 8<sup>th</sup> edition, produced by UBC Okanagan Library.
4. Links to additional required electronic and digital materials will be made available online in *Canvas*.

---

**Synchronous:** Some or all of the scheduled class hours are spent in a real-time, online virtual classroom, with the instructor and registered students in attendance; these class hours may be devoted to lecture, discussion, group work, or other real-time virtual learning activities. Consult your instructor for specifics.

**Asynchronous:** Refers to course instruction delivered in the form of materials that can be accessed and worked through at the student's own pace; these materials might include recorded lectures or power point demonstrations, required readings, etc. Consult your instructor for specifics.