

## LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGE 2023-2024

### LBCL 393: Modes of Expression and Interpretation II

Section A:	TJ 10:15-11:30	A. DOMANSKI
Section B:	MW 16:15-17:30	K. STREIP

This document is your primary reference for Modes II: read it and reread it. It contains not only the list and schedule of readings but also valuable information about assignments, evaluation, rules and regulations that pertain to this course, and practical advice to help you succeed. Any amendments will be announced in class.

#### **COURSE CONTENT. WHAT WILL I LEARN?**

Modes II will introduce you to a range of influential works, mostly literary, written between the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

As the title of the course suggests, we will apply various techniques of “interpretation” in order to make sense of the works you read at different levels. We will pay special attention to how the rhetorical and formal aspects of a text (“expression”) shape its meaning. The two papers you will write for the course (see below) are designed to help you master the key skills involved in textual interpretation.

#### **COURSE FORMAT. HOW WILL I LEARN?**

Modes II is taught as a seminar in which the assigned texts are actively discussed and analyzed. Emphasis is on primary texts, though secondary sources are required in the final term paper and may be useful in the preparation of oral presentations. The discussion format has several important implications:

##### **1. Attendance is mandatory.**

Class discussion is the main component of all Liberal Arts courses. For this reason, attendance at seminars is mandatory. We will take attendance regularly and may give you a final grade of “F” if you miss more than four classes per semester, even if you have completed all the assignments. To accommodate life’s surprises, we allow you two “free” absences per term. If you find yourself having to miss more classes, you will have to justify these extra absences, in one of two ways: 1. by providing an official medical note; 2. by filling in Concordia’s Short-Term Absence form: <https://www.concordia.ca/students/absence-form.html>. It is your responsibility to keep track of your absences, notify us ahead of time when you know that you’ll miss a class, and provide official justification in a timely manner. All unjustified absences will reduce your final grade in the course. Note that even if you are absent, your Commonplace Book entries for the day (see below) are still due by the beginning of that day’s class.

Join the class on time, to avoid distracting others and disrupting the discussion. If you are more than 15 minutes late, you will be marked as absent. If you have a valid reason for being consistently late, let us know, so that you are not unnecessarily penalized.

Remember that important information is often communicated at the beginning of class.

Whether you are late or had to miss an entire class, make sure to find out from other students whether important announcements were made or materials distributed. Make sure you have a reliable “note buddy” who can brief you on what we talked about in a class you had to miss and whose note-taking style is compatible with yours.

## **2. Participation is essential.**

Active participation in class discussions is the single most important thing you will do at the Liberal Arts College. These discussions are as illuminating and exciting as you make them, and therefore each of you is responsible for fostering and enriching the conversation. Come to class ready to share your own tentative interpretations, puzzled questions, or provocative interrogations of the text in an open and respectful dialogue. Some students will already be confident and comfortable with public speaking, others will not: that’s normal. If you’re part of the latter group, you may feel uncomfortable at first, but don’t let that hold you back. If you force yourself to speak up at first, you will find your skill and confidence increasing from week to week. By the time you leave the College, you will be able to articulate and defend your point of view with enviable proficiency and poise.

## **3. Preparation is the key to doing well in the course.**

You cannot discuss a text you haven’t read: careful and thoughtful reading of the assigned texts before each class is therefore essential. Participation will be evaluated based on the substance, quality, and consistency of your contributions to seminar discussions.

And here are two more ways you can help foster a good discussion:

### **1. Obtain the correct books and materials, and bring them to class with you.**

All the works you read in Modes II exist in multiple translations and/or editions. (The full list, with all the details you need, is in a separate section below.) We select and assign specific translations and editions based on their accuracy, readability, helpfulness, and cost (we don’t want to bankrupt you!). If you already have a different edition, or if you find it easier to read texts in a language other than English, that’s just fine. For class, though, either borrow from the library a copy of the assigned edition or sit next to someone who has the “right” text. The texts we read always give rise to lively discussions of much broader issues, which makes it all the more important to be able to verify and clarify the precise wording, so that our interpretations are rooted in the actual text and not, as often happens, in preconceived ideas about it.

Though copies of all the books on the syllabus can be borrowed from the LAC library, most students prefer to have their own. When you have your own book, you can freely scribble in it. The notes you make in the book as you read the text in preparation for the class, as well as those you add in class as we read closely and comment on specific passages, are your best study aids and will help you do well in the exams and the course as a whole. So be sure not just to read the assignment *before* the class but also to have the text with you *in* class, so that you can follow the discussion.

Students sometimes try to minimize the cost of books by using free translations available online. This is understandable, but we wouldn’t recommend it, for a number of reasons: 1) some of those translations are fine, but others are questionable: without knowing the actual texts, it’s hard to tell which ones you can trust; 2) freely available translations may be quite old, written in an archaic language and style which will make your life very hard; 3) very few online translations are equipped with expert introductions and explanatory notes, which are such a

helpful feature of the editions we recommend; 4) because this is a largely electronics-free course (see below), you can't bring the online text to class with you.

## 2. Switch off and put away your electronic devices.

Phones must be turned off and stored in your bag during class. If an emergency requires you to receive notifications during class, you must tell your instructor before the class.

We strongly advise you to take notes by hand, preferably on paper; research shows that this greatly increases comprehension and retention of material. If there are special reasons why you have to use a laptop instead, you must get your instructor's permission first. But remember that a laptop or tablet may be used in class only for notetaking: no programs except word processing ones may be open on your device. Any other use is strictly forbidden because it is distracting to all participants in the class – including you! – in addition to being just plain rude. Failure to respect these rules will result in a complete electronic ban.

## ASSIGNMENTS

Your final grade in the course will be based on the following elements:

Class preparation and participation	10 %
Commonplace book, used throughout the year and submitted for grading after the final class of each term	10 %
Oral presentation	5 %
Short formal proposal for the compare-and-contrast essay	0 %
Compare-and-contrast essay, due at the end of the Fall term	20 %
Midterm examination (in December)	15 %
Short formal proposal for the research essay	0 %
Research essay, due at the end of the Winter term	25 %
Final exam (in April)	15 %

You cannot receive a passing final grade if you have not submitted all the assignments.

The two formal proposals are not graded but must be handed in and approved by your professor before you can submit the essay itself.

Your two essays are designed as steps towards acquiring the skills essential to the interpretation of literary texts. Detailed instructions will be provided ahead of time, but here's what to expect.

1. In the first essay, you will use close reading as the main interpretation tool, as you compare and contrast two different texts (7-10 pp.).

2. For the second paper, you will write a research essay (12-15 pp.) which will still rely

largely on your own analysis, but now you will be asked to engage with secondary sources as well.

The midterm and final **exams** are held in person. They are identical in format, differing only in coverage: the midterm tests how carefully you have read Fall term texts, while Winter texts are covered in the final exam. Each exam lasts three hours and has two sections: 1) ten passages are offered, out of which you choose five and offer for each a brief interpretation based on both close reading and your knowledge of the text as a whole; 2) from the suggested essay topics you choose one, then write an essay in which you bring together three different texts, examining them from the angle suggested in the essay prompt.

### **COMMONPLACE BOOK**

For centuries, people have compiled **commonplace books** by copying into them especially striking or meaningful passages from their readings, often adding personal comments of their own. In putting together your own commonplace book, you will:

- Choose a short passage (typically, a couple of sentences of prose or a few lines of verse, though this is ultimately up to you) from the assigned readings for each class. Feel free to add more passages if you want, but you don't have to.
- Copy the quotation into your notebook, making sure to identify its place in the text (use appropriate citation forms, i.e. page numbers for prose texts).
- Comment on your choice in 2-4 sentences: what made you choose *this* quotation? Don't overthink or overcomplicate; use your own authentic voice.
- Provide a question or two, derived from your chosen passage(s), which you would like the class to discuss together.
- Some students decorate their commonplace books with drawings, collage art, or simple doodles in the margins. Others add to it more "academic," elements, such as definitions of a few unfamiliar words from the day's readings. Once you have covered the basic assignment, you can add whatever else you want, or leave things simple: it's entirely up to you.

As the semester progresses, you will start to see patterns in the language and preoccupations of the readings. You may then see a passage as important because it reminds you of another one you have previously recorded while offering a different take on the same topic. In helping you draw such connections, the commonplace book will serve as an excellent revision tool in preparation for end-of-term exams. It can also help you with ideas for your papers.

Because another of the commonplace book's purposes is to equip you for the day's discussion and provide food for thought for the whole group, your quotations, comments, and questions must be ready by the beginning of class. Always have your commonplace book with you, in case you are asked to share your entry with the class. This will happen fairly often, and failure to produce a commonplace book entry when asked will affect your participation grade. You are welcome to keep a digital commonplace book, in which case you must remember to bring a printout of the day's entry with you.

We will collect and grade commonplace books, whether physical or digital, at the end of the final class in each term. This is a firm deadline for which there will be no extensions. You will not be graded on the number of quotes from each reading (beyond the required minimum) or the length of your reflections, but rather on the care with which you have chosen your passages

and the depth of your engagement with the texts, evidence of which will be provided in part by your short reflections and questions. While grammar and syntax won't be marked, we ask that you write clearly, avoid basic errors to the best of your ability, and try not to miscopy the passages you include.

You will sign up for your **oral presentation** at the beginning of the year, but you need not present in the Fall term; you can wait until Winter if you like. In consultation with your professor, you will choose an aspect of the text we read on the day when you'll be presenting, which you will explore in a reasonably focused way. You must conclude by offering to the class a couple of stimulating and open-ended discussion questions. Good questions give the class discussion a strong sense of purpose and direction; make sure yours derive naturally from your material, otherwise you'll confuse your classmates. You have ten minutes for your talk, give or take one minute: time yourself at home beforehand.

You will meet with your instructor at least a week before your presentation, to discuss your ideas and possible approaches. Bring with you a very short outline of what you plan to do, which should ideally include a list of the textual passages you want to bring up, your discussion questions, and information about technical aids you plan to use, if any (depending on your topic, these could be handouts, slides, video or audio clips – or nothing). After the presentation, you will hand in the final outline, notes, or script you used.

Your presentation will be assessed on content (informative, perceptive, showing solid close reading skills and complex thinking), delivery (clear structure, appropriate diction, ability to keep the audience interested, helpful page references which make it easy to identify quoted passages, etc.), timing (a presentation that is too short will inevitably be superficial; one that goes on too long suggests you have trouble distinguishing between what's important and what isn't), and the quality of your discussion questions (avoid questions which are too directive or, even worse, invite simple yes-no answers; make your questions more exploratory and open-ended).

We will circulate sign-up sheets for presentations in class in the first week or two. Afterwards they will be posted on your instructor's office door or in Moodle.

Your **participation** is evaluated based on the substance, quality, and consistency of your participation in seminar discussions. (Mere attendance, i.e. sitting in class silently, does not count towards this element of your grade.) At the end of each semester, you will be asked to assign yourself a participation grade. Your two self-evaluations will be used to determine your final participation mark for the course. If your self-assigned marks diverge drastically from what we have observed (by being either too high or too low), we reserve the right to adjust them.

All ideas presented in your assignments, as well as the words used to express them, must be your own. All borrowings from external sources must be properly acknowledged, with full and accurate citation. Failure to do so constitutes **PLAGIARISM**, which is a serious academic offence: it is strictly prohibited and will result in serious academic sanctions. A professor who suspects a student has plagiarized an assignment is required to turn the matter over to the relevant authorities of the Faculty of Arts and Science. Students found guilty of plagiarism can receive a 0% for the assignment or a grade of "F" for the whole course; in especially serious cases, they can even be suspended or expelled from the university. Make sure that you are familiar with Concordia's Academic Code of Conduct, as well as ways to avoid inadvertent plagiarism:

<https://www.concordia.ca/conduct/academic-integrity/offences.html>.

The plagiarism ban includes the most recent **AI technologies**. The Liberal Arts College is committed to humanist education and to training critical and creative thinkers and writers. Accordingly, the use of artificial intelligence by students to generate text for any course assignment, in part, whole, draft or finished form, is strictly forbidden.

While tools such as Chat GPT, Bard, or any other text-generating AI technology might be integrated as educational tools by your course instructor in precisely defined contexts and towards specific pedagogical goals, such text-generating technologies may not be used in any way by students without explicit permission from the instructor.

Unauthorized use will be considered plagiarism, with sanctions ranging from a failing grade to expulsion from the Liberal Arts program.

## WHAT DO MY GRADES MEAN?

In evaluating your work, we will look for evidence of careful reading of the primary texts; a clear, cogent argument; and elegant prose.

Your grades will fall into one of the following categories:

A = Excellent

B = Good

C = Satisfactory

D = Inadequate

F = Unacceptable

More than one adjacent category may be used, indicating a borderline grade, for example A-/B+, B/B-, D+/C-.

What this means in more detail:

A+            Extraordinary work that greatly exceeds the requirements of a second-year paper. This grade is rarely awarded.

A             Excellent work: very insightful analysis, with each claim extensively backed by specific and carefully analyzed textual evidence; clear and persuasive thesis that goes beyond the ideas discussed in class; logical structure; elegant, varied prose; no typographical or grammatical errors. In a research paper, secondary sources are expertly handled and well-integrated into the argument.

A- to B+	Very strong work: insightful and clear, but in need of more elaboration, greater conceptual depth, additional clarification and/or additional textual evidence, revision, or proofreading.
B to B-	Good work. Shows a solid understanding of the text and seminar discussions, but requires deeper engagement with textual evidence, more substantial revision, clarification, or proofreading.
C+ to C-	Average to poor work. Shows a shaky grasp of the text, lacks a clear or insightful thesis, and requires extensive revision, clarification, or proofreading; textual evidence is scant or poorly used.
D+ to D-	Inadequate work. Shows only a basic grasp of the material and/or the assignment; argumentation is minimal or absent; textual evidence is mostly absent; major structural or writing problems make the work difficult to read.
F	Unacceptable or non-existent work.

## HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR PROF

We are teaching this course because we love the materials and hope that studying them will enrich your lives. Yes, we do assign grades, but that is not the most important part of our job. Instead, we want above all to help you become astute and perceptive interpreters of texts and use the works we read to see the world from a variety of angles, think outside the box, and acquire compelling new perspectives on what it means to be human. We will not tell you *what* you should think about the works you read but aim to teach you *how* to read them in ways that will be truly yours while remaining respectful of the original authors and audiences and the cultures they inhabited. In short, we aim to be the best learning facilitators you can hope for. But the learning itself is ultimately your responsibility. We cannot do it for you, nor can we force you to learn; after all, you learn for yourselves, not for us. We will bring to class our expertise and enthusiasm and will use all reasonable resources to help you succeed. Whenever you need help, we will be patient and supportive coaches. Find out where our offices are (see below) and visit us often: we love to chat with you!

A few practical tips:

- We will use email or Moodle to send announcements or updates: make sure we have your principal email address and check your Inbox regularly.
- Keep on top of the schedule of assignments and plan ahead. If you give us a draft of an assigned essay two weeks (or more) before the actual deadline, we will give you feedback on it and suggest ways to make it better. Many students find this service invaluable, but you have to be well-organized in order to benefit from it.
- Because the readings in Modes II are substantial, it is important that you do your work for the course regularly. If you keep up with the readings and written assignments, you will almost certainly do well. But if you fall too far behind, you may find it almost impossible to get back on track and pass the course successfully. Should you find yourself struggling, let your instructor know at once and ask for help: don't wait until it is

too late!

- If you have been diagnosed with a disability requiring special accommodation, such as more time for essays or exams, contact the Access Centre for Students with Disabilities as soon as possible: <https://www.concordia.ca/students/accessibility.html>. The ACSD advisors will coordinate with us to help you do well.
- The course is challenging but very satisfying if you put in the work. Enjoy the ride!

Here's where to find **our offices**:

Agnes Domanski (Section A): Room # 307 (3<sup>rd</sup> floor)

Katharine Streip (Section B): Room # 107 (main floor)

We will post our office hours on our doors, but you may be able to meet us at other times too.

## **THE TEXTS YOU WILL READ AND THE BOOKS YOU NEED, IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER**

### **Fall Semester**

1. Course Reader (available from the Concordia Book Stop).
2. Pope, "An Essay on Man," Epistles 1 and 2. Included in the Course Reader.
3. Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, Books 1 and 4 (Penguin Classics).
4. Diderot, *Rameau's Nephew*, trans. Tancock (Penguin Classics).
5. Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Pluhar (Hackett). Sections 1-22, pp. 43-95; sections 23-9, pp. 97-126; sections 46-9, pp. 174-88; section 59, pp. 225-30. Included in the Course Reader.
6. Romanticism and its transformations. Selected texts by Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats. Included in the Course Reader.
7. Shelley, *Frankenstein* (Penguin Classics).
8. Goethe, *Faust*, Part 1, trans. Luke (Oxford World's Classics). Selections from *Faust*, Part 2, included in the Course Reader.
9. Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (Oxford World's Classics).
10. Stendhal, *The Red and the Black*, trans. Gard (Penguin Classics).
11. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, trans. Hannay (Penguin Classics).

<b><u>Wk</u></b>	<b><u>Tuesday</u></b>		<b><u>Thursday</u></b>	
1	Sept. 5	Pope, "An Essay on Man," Epistle 1	Sept. 7	Pope, "An Essay on Man," Epistle 2
2	Sept. 12	Swift, <i>Gulliver's Travels</i> , Book 1	Sept. 14	Swift, cont'd, Book 4



3	Sept. 19	Diderot, <i>Rameau's Nephew</i>	Sept. 21	Diderot, cont'd
4	Sept. 26	Kant, <i>Critique of Judgment</i>	Sept. 28	Kant, cont'd
5	Oct. 3	Kant, cont'd	Oct. 5	Romanticism I: Wordsworth
6	Oct. 10	<b>Mid-Term Break</b>	Oct. 12	<b>Mid-Term Break</b>
7	Oct. 17	Romanticism II: Coleridge	Oct. 19	Romanticism III: Shelley
8	Oct. 24	Romanticism IV: Keats	Oct. 26	M. Shelley, <i>Frankenstein</i>
9	Oct. 31	M. Shelley, cont'd	Nov. 2	Goethe, <i>Faust</i>
10	Nov. 7	Goethe, cont.	Nov. 9	Austen, <i>Pride and Prejudice</i>

\*\*\*\*\* PROPOSAL for COMPARATIVE PAPER due Nov. 14 \*\*\*\*\*

11	Nov. 14	Austen, cont.	Nov. 16	Stendhal, <i>The Red and the Black</i>
12	Nov. 21	Stendhal, cont.	Nov. 23	Stendhal, cont.
13	Nov. 28	Kierkegaard, <i>Fear and Trembling</i>	Nov. 30	Kierkegaard, cont.

\*\*\*\*\* COMPARATIVE PAPER and COMMONPLACE BOOK due Dec. 4 \*\*\*\*\*

### **MID-TERM EXAMINATION**

#### **Texts for the Winter Semester**

1. Melville, *Moby Dick* (Penguin Classics).
2. Whitman, "Song of Myself," in *Leaves of Grass* (Penguin Classics).
3. Dickinson, selected poems. Included in the Course Reader.
4. Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (Modern Library).
5. Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, trans. Wall (Penguin Classics).
6. Baudelaire, selected poems and prose poems. Included in the Course Reader.
7. Eliot, *Middlemarch* (Oxford World's Classics).
8. Dostoevsky, *Notes from Underground*, trans. Pevear & Volokhonsky (Vintage).

9. Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (Bantam).  
 10. Chekhov, *The Cherry Orchard*, trans. Carnicke (Hackett).  
 11. Rilke, selected poems. Included in the Course Reader.

<u>Wk</u>	<u>Tuesday</u>		<u>Thursday</u>	
1	Jan. 16	Melville, <i>Moby Dick</i>	Jan. 18	Melville, cont'd
2	Jan. 23	Melville, cont'd	Jan. 25	Melville, cont'd
3	Jan. 30	Whitman, "Song of Myself"	Feb. 1	Whitman, Dickinson
4	Feb. 6	Dickinson	Feb. 8	Douglass, <i>Narrative</i>
5	Feb. 13	Douglass, cont'd	Feb. 15	Flaubert, <i>Madame Bovary</i>
6	Feb. 20	Flaubert, cont'd	Feb. 22	Flaubert, cont'd
7	Feb. 27	<b>Mid-Term Break</b>	Feb. 29	<b>Mid-Term Break</b>
8	Mar. 5	Baudelaire	Mar. 7	Baudelaire
9	Mar. 12	Eliot, <i>Middlemarch</i>	Mar. 14	Eliot, cont'd
10	Mar. 19	Eliot, cont'd	Mar. 21	Eliot, cont'd
11	Mar. 26	Dostoevsky, <i>Notes from Underground</i>	Mar. 28	Dostoevsky, cont'd

\*\*\*\*\* PROPOSAL for RESEARCH ESSAY due March 26 \*\*\*\*\*

12	Apr. 2	Conrad, <i>Heart of Darkness</i>	Apr. 4	Conrad cont'd
13	Apr. 9	Chekhov, <i>Cherry Orchard</i>	Apr. 11	Rilke

\*\*\*\*\* RESEARCH PAPER and completed COMMONPLACE BOOK due April 15 \*\*\*\*\*

### **FINAL EXAMINATION**