

**English 20200-009:
Engaging English**
CRN: 17437, 3 credits
Fall 2024
Tuesday-Thursday, 12:00 – 1:15 p.m.

Instructor:

Dr. Harry Denny, Professor of English & Purdue OWL Director
Office: KRCH 230B (Inside OWL Admin Suite)
Email: hdenny@purdue.edu
Phone: (765) 496-2814
Office hours: 10:00 to 11:30, Tuesday-Thursday, or by appointment.

Course Description

This course invites students to explore the practices and conventions of doing intellectual work in the field of English Studies. Students will look to the field and its scholars and think about the forms of academic identity and community made possible by them. Students will uncover and examine the values and assumptions that guide how people in this field read and write and what rhetorics and processes guide our intellectual work as well as bind us as a community (or perhaps even a set of communities). Students will work to map, unpack, and understand themselves in relation to the wide range of knowledge and meaning making, producing, and exploring English Studies at Purdue. In other words, what makes being in English Studies unique from the other humanities or sciences, and how might we understand and complicate what it means to claim an identity in a field as diffuse as ours, where faculty are drawn to literary analysis, criticism, and theory; poetry and poetics; composition and the teaching of writing; literacy studies; critical theories of culture. All these currents and traditions (and resistance to them) come together and share English as our academic home.

This semester, our literature reading will be a survey of mostly non-fiction memoirs of people's journey to and through education. Data suggests somewhere between 32.4% and 40% of Purdue students are first-generation, defined as college students who are the first in their families to go to college and graduate. The books we read represent those perspectives. Some are dated but classical, some are more current. Some represent the struggles people have on the road to get to college or pay for it. Some represent the complications of being at college and how we get marked as different, as outsiders. If you're not the first in your family to go to college, please read with a mind for how these experiences challenge and push at your own. Regardless of whether you identify with the narratives we'll explore, let's also think of them as writing and how the literary and cultural critics might approach them. How would you tell these stories differently? What universal themes arise that we can take up and imagine in other contexts? You might have friends in other sections of this course; they likely represent the professional and disciplinary expertise that professor brings to the context. Let's honor what they do, and let's think about how we might use this course to prepare you to enter the department, its major. Let's engage English.

Texts

- Echo Brown. *The Chosen One*. Henry Holt, 2022.
- Barbara Ehrenreich. *Nickle & Dimed*, 2010.
- Stephanie Land. *Maid*. Hachette Books, 2020.
- Richard Rodriguez. *Hunger for Memory*. Bantam, 1983.
- Mike Rose. *Lives on the Boundary*. Penguin, 2005.

Learning Objectives

- Come to know that English Studies encompasses a wide range of intellectual commitments and that Purdue's department is an academic home to scholars who represent multiple responses to them.
- Bridge a notion of discourse communities/communities of practice as organizing schemes to understand the common and divergent ways of doing English Studies at Purdue.
- With this foundation, consider how intellectual context impacts on critical thinking and reading, genre, argumentation, prose, and style.
- Enable exploration and experimentation of these issues vis-à-vis faculty in the department.
- Create a research agenda that can be documented and presented in public outlets like the e-portfolio, undergraduate research day, a conference presentation, or a journal.

Learning Outcomes

- Name and collaboratively create an archive of the various methods, objects, and applications of English Studies.
- Map and study the conventions of intellectual inquiry associated with those practices/communities/schools/ways of doing English Studies.
- Apply those convention to an analysis of the texts we'll read during the course.
- Study up on, meet with or reach out to faculty about their individual connections to what it means to do English Studies and appreciate the intellectual and creative diversity of our department.
- Perform original research by mimicking or riffing on an individual faculty member's discourse community, or community of practice.
- Connect that research or writing to an authentic audience or outlet (or combination).

Assignments

Overview:

- Weekly engagement and discovery (15%)
- Coming to English Autobiography (20%) – Due August 29, noon, Brightspace.
- Faculty Profile (10%) – Present in class between September 19 and October 10.
- Faculty Lit Review (15%) – Due October 31, noon, Brightspace.
- Faculty Presentation & Memo (15%) – Write up due November 14, noon, Brightspace
- Application Essay (25%) – Due December 6 (Friday)
- Total: 100%

Weekly journal & active participation in class (15% of final grade, posted monthly (August/September, October, November)

- Private repository for thoughts, musings, questions, conflict.
- Complete readings, review drafts of peers' writing, speak up/out in productive ways
- Quizzes on readings
- Coming to class

Coming to English Autobiography (15% of final grade, 5% for process memo, bonus 5% for using the OWL)

- Develop an essay or narrative that captures your journey to this class/major and your historical relationship to reading, writing, or academic literacy. Don't overthink: Your audience is your classmates and me. Tell us how you came to be interested in English. Many of your peers don't like to read, write, or think critically in mixed company. You're comfortable with one or all of these, though it's not clear to me you're always comfortable with an audience. Since I'm a rhetorician and a critic, I'll push you to think about all these dynamics, but I want to hear your story, journey. Personally, I was always encouraged to be a writer, a precocious one at that. My parents read all the time, but I don't ever remember them sponsoring me to read on a consistent basis. My mom devoured romance and popular crime or procedurals (Clancy and Patterson, and the like). In the

past couple years, I've taught my dad to use his iPad and iPhone to read and listen to audio-books. My partner and I listen to books on road trips all the time, at the risk of playing to stereotypes of English professors.

- Size: After years of teaching this course, I can say that anything less than 3 pages (double spaced, MLA margins, conventional font) reads a thin, more than 10 pages reads as too much. For the first crappy draft, more prose makes for easier revising. Many of you write on screen, so the depth is sometimes hard to judge. Find somewhere to print (you know you have print credits, right?)
- Share your essay in class and with someone at the Purdue OWL. Its consultants are amazing. But be respectful: Don't sign up just for the credit and then waste their time. Plenty of other writer across campus want their help. After your session, share the write-up you get with me to get credit (upload it on BrightSpace) because I'll totally lose it.
- The process memo, which could be a paragraph or more, addresses your process and your assessment. If you struggled, I want to hear about it; if it was the best document you ever produced, I want to know how it happened. "It's good" is a little too weak.

Oral presentation and collaborative document development on faculty and conceptions of English Studies. (10%)

- Students will pick two professors to present on in class. 5 minutes, plus questions.
- I don't love to speak to audiences like some of you, but we're here to support you, and we're excited about your take on professors.

Literature review of a selected faculty member (15%)

- What they write, how they write, what influences do you notice, etc.
- The goal is to prep you to talk with the professor. You'd never want to show up at their office hours or a meeting clueless as to what they're about.
- 2-4 pages, more if you need it.

Meet with and write up your thoughts about a faculty member (15%)

- Based on shared discussion and individually-driven questions.
- Imagine this class as your audience, imagine your future in the major, what would you like your peers to know about this person? What classes do they teach? What are their go-to resources of information in their area of research? What advice do they have for undergraduates as they move through the department or their program?

Application essay (25%)

- Propose and then take up a genre, period, practice, or way of doing English Studies that you've noticed or become intrigued by. Alternatively, plan a project out if the literacy, discourse, or practice doesn't lend itself (given time constraints) that you can do independently in a future semester. You could propose different readings for this course, or you could take what we read and connect it to pop culture representations. Film has dozens, if not hundreds of these engagements of working-class/first gen experiences in college. You might create poetry or fiction that's original.
- When you propose, you'll share with me what you imagine the scope of your final project ought to be. A poetry collection is different from a short story or a critical analysis. Let's negotiate.
- Essay presentation during "Quiet Week" and Final draft during finals weeks, during our exam period, on Brightspace.
- Alternatively, imagine a real outlet for your research. On campus, that could be the annual Undergraduate Research Conference, or even the journal that publishes from it. You might envision an actual academic conference to which you might apply.
- And don't forget a process note.

Grading

- Grades in the “B” range for the course represent “strong” performance, including substantive revision (incorporating classmate and instructor feedback), sound understanding and application of theories and methods, strong argument, and well-edited prose. Reading quizzes indicate mostly careful reading and understanding of assigned texts. Any meta-texts are also insightful for a writer’s process and self-awareness. Presentations are strong, but slight important elements of the topic.
- Grades in the “A” range represent “outstanding” performance, including deep revision (incorporating classmate and instructor feedback that transforms drafts), clear understanding and application of theories and methods, cogent argumentation, and generally error-free prose. Reading quizzes suggest outstanding reading and understanding of assigned texts. Any meta-texts are sophisticated studies of a writer’s process and self-awareness. Presentations are very effective and leave few if any gaps in the assigned topic.
- Grades at or below the “C” range represent inconsistent performance, including uneven revision (failure to incorporate or address instructor feedback), weak or inappropriate understanding and application of theories and methods, flawed argumentation, and weak control of editing. Quizzes are spotty or inconsistent evidence of reading and understanding of texts. The meta-text is missing or inadequate. Presentations verge on ineffective, incomplete, and leave the audience wondering about significant elements of the assigned topic.

Policies

Attendance & Deadlines

- Attendance is critical. Missing sessions undermines our sense of community that just can’t be duplicated. Adhering to deadlines is also crucial. However, life intrudes from time to time, and I understand that reality.
- Please be aware that postings need to be done no later than the deadlines outlined above or in the schedule, so also factor access to technology into your schedule. Assume, as I always do, that when you most need technology, it will fail you. In other words, have a back-up plan to your internet access.
- If you cannot participate or meet a deadline because of a religious observation, please let me know, and we’ll negotiate equitable due dates.

Disability and Special Circumstances

- If you have a learning disability, you are under no obligation to inform me, but knowing that information can help me make your learning experience better. If you suspect you may have undiagnosed issues and want help, I can provide appropriate, confidential contact information. If you’ve had an accommodation made with the DRC, they will reach out, but often their letters don’t help me help you.

Academic Integrity

- Plagiarism and academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. However, you’ll be doing quite a bit of writing in class and individual enough in nature that such cheating will be difficult—I’ll get very familiar with your voice and natural means of expression. Also, be aware that your prose needs to be in your voice—if someone else edits your work, in certain cases your writing no longer is “yours.” Passing it off as yours is still plagiarism. In most cases, plagiarism is unintentional or happens because of anxiety. Rather than get yourself in trouble, talk to me, and we can work through the problems.
- ChatGPT, or artificial intelligence with large language models has created quite a bit of angst on campus, for your peers, for your professors, and maybe even for you. The technology has quite a bit of promise to help writers who get in a bind, so we’ll talk about how to, when to, and whether to use the technology in your own learning process. I don’t love that it flattens all voice and audiences, but that’s my bias as a rhetoric/writing professor. I want you to learn to understand

literacy, reading and writing, as a broad activity that represents innumerable genres and communities of practice, not just in English, not even considering the broader humanities, social sciences, arts, and STEM disciplines. This instructor cares about you as a writer and budding English major; I plan to be actively engaged in learning and studying with you, so I hope to help foster your personal relationship with knowledge and your representation of it. If you want to check out or use LLMs, let's do it as a class and see what it gets right, wrong, and how it goes afoul of teaching and learning in college.

- **A bit of a warning:** Talk to your other professors about how they feel about the technology in their classes. Some faculty, some departments have very different relationships to the issue of LLMs than we will have in this course.
- Academic integrity is one of the highest values that Purdue University holds. Individuals are encouraged to alert university officials to potential breaches of this value by either emailing integrity@purdue.edu or by calling 765-494-8778. While information may be submitted anonymously, the more information is submitted the greater the opportunity for the university to investigate the concern. More details are available on our course Brightspace table of contents, under University Policies. Please note: If you get accused of an academic integrity violation and the judicial board finds that you just need to know more, guess where you wind up? With me and the Purdue OWL because we care about help writers get better.

Essay style and conventions

- All class assignments and projects must be word-processed unless otherwise noted. Handwritten or informally produced documents will not be accepted. Please number your pages and follow MLA or Chicago citation and format guidelines as detailed on the Purdue OWL. If MLA or CMOS are styles that you'll never use in your professional life, talk to me and we'll figure out another that will help you down the road.

Conduct

- Students are expected to adhere to the university's code of conduct. While I will encourage wide diversity in opinions and talk, everyone must be allowed to have a voice. On the flipside, being a passive, withdrawn presence in our community is not appropriate. Though some courses on campus don't enable students to have much agency, this course will prize everyone's engagement and talk (whether face-to-face or online). Students should not expect me to just transmit what I want or impart knowledge; I'm here to get you to express and hone your thinking, writing, and speaking. Please don't assume everyone agrees with you or has your life experiences. We will frequently discuss how people opposed to ideas come to them, assuming some of "those people" likely are in class and just don't embody what they're thinking. Students who don't actively participate may pass, but they will likely get a low grade. If you're a quiet and shy person, use our activities on BrightSpace as an outlet.
- Purdue University is committed to maintaining a community which recognizes and values the inherent worth and dignity of every person; fosters tolerance, sensitivity, understanding, and mutual respect among its members; and encourages each individual to strive to reach his, her, or their potential. In pursuit of its goal of academic excellence, the University seeks to develop and nurture diversity. The University believes that diversity among its many members strengthens the institution, stimulates creativity, promotes the exchange of ideas, and enriches campus life. A hyperlink to Purdue's full Nondiscrimination Policy Statement is included in our course Brightspace under University Policies.
- Mental Health/Wellness: A link to CAPS is on the Brightspace listing of resources of Student Services and Resources section. Purdue University is committed to advancing the mental health and well-being of its students. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of mental health support, services are available. For help, such individuals should contact [Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#) at 765-494-6995 during and after hours, on weekends and holidays, or by going to the CAPS office on the second floor of the Purdue University Student Health Center (PUSH) during business hours.

Schedule

Week	Tuesday	Thursday
1	August 20 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions, review syllabus, assignments • Register with Purdue OWL, if you haven't 	August 22 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions again, BrightSpace overview, freewriting on "Coming to English" • Sometime before your essay is due, do a consultation at the Purdue OWL.
2	August 27 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common practice: The workshop or peer review in English • Bring a draft of your "Coming to English" narrative essay 	August 29 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literacy(ies) and Communities of Practice in English studies: Toward a vision of how to do English at Purdue • Final draft of "Coming to English" (by Friday)
3	September 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Wilder, "Get Comfortable with Uncertainty." • Quiz on BrightSpace 	September 5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Wolfe, "Invention in the Gateway Literature Course." • Quiz on BrightSpace
4	September 10 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigating "found" resources around English studies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Department Websites ◦ Course listing (See Bright Space) 	September 12 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Mike Rose, first half. • Quiz on BrightSpace
5	September 17 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Mike Rose, second half. • Quiz on BrightSpace 	September 19 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group 1 faculty presentations
6	September 24 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Richard Rodriguez, first half. • Quiz on BrightSpace 	September 26 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group 2 faculty presentations
7	October 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Stephanie Land, first half • Quiz on BrightSpace 	October 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group 1 faculty presentations
8	October 8 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No class – Fall Break 	October 10 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group 2 faculty presentations.
9	October 15 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Stephanie Land, second half. • Quiz on BrightSpace 	October 17 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catch up, TBA
10	October 22 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Ehrenreich, first half • Quiz on BrightSpace 	October 24 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop on faculty-writer lit reviews
11	October 29 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Ehrenreich, second half • Quiz on BrightSpace 	October 31 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop application essay ideas • Lit reviews due by noon
12	November 5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read: Echo Brown, first half. • Quiz on BrightSpace 	November 7 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Echo Brown, second half • Quiz on BrightSpace

13	November 12 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty presentations 	November 14 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty presentations Faculty memo due on BrightSpace, noon
14	November 19 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Application workshop 	November 21 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Application workshop
15	November 26 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No class 	November 28 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thanksgiving
16	December 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Application Presentation 	December 5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Application Presentations
17	Finals week	