

*“Reading is not walking on the words; it’s grasping the soul of them.” Paulo Freire*

**St. Thomas Aquinas College**  
**English 203: Writing About American Literature**  
**Fall 2016**

**Instructor:** Dr. Robert Murray

**Class:** MW 4:05-5:30

**Office:** Spellman 105B

**Office Hours:** MW 10:00-11:00 and also by appointment anytime

**Campus Phone:** 845-398-4125 or 845-398-4083

**Email:** rmurray@stac.edu

**Required Books**

Nathaniel Hawthorne, *Selected Tales and Sketches*. Penguin Books.

Herman Melville, *Bartleby and Benito Cereno*. Dover Books.

Flannery O’Connor, *A Good Man is Hard to Find and Other Stories*. Harcourt Brace.

Lydia Davis, *Break it Down: Stories*. FSG Books.

**Course Description**

English 203: Writing About American Literature has two main goals: to introduce you to the work of four American writers and the traditions to which they belong and to help you develop such essential writing skills as analytical and interpretative thinking, organization, and clarity.

**Course Outcomes**

By the end of the semester, students in this class will be able to:

- Read critically, evaluate textual passages and inferentially draw conclusions about themes.
- Demonstrate an understanding of some aspects of the literary history of the United States.
- Write clear, correctly written essays that demonstrate the ability to support a claim through critical thinking.
- Explore, develop, and present your ideas through class discussions, analytical readings of the stories, and essays.

**Office Hours**

I strongly encourage you to come to my office for help of any kind, or to just talk about the issues of the class. I am in my office all week; please email me or call Mrs. Mary Ann Fitzpatrick at 398-4083 to set up an appointment.

### Communication

I prefer to communicate via email rather than phone. If you send me an email and do not receive a response within 24 hours, please re-send it.

*A note about email etiquette:* In every email correspondence with me (and really, with any instructor or in any professional setting), please include the following:

- A subject line that is informative (“Question about Essay 1” or “English 203”)
- A professional salutation (“Dear Dr. Murray”)
- A message that is well written (correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation) and polite
- A closing remark (“Thanks for your time”)
- A signature (i.e. your name)

*Be sure to check your stac.edu email every day* as I will frequently communicate with you regarding our schedule, assignments, etc. “I didn’t get your email” will not count as a legitimate excuse for not coming to class prepared.

### Essay Drafts

While I encourage you to meet with me outside of class to discuss your work, I ask you not to email me entire drafts to “look over” immediately before you hand them in. (That’s a fine moment to head to the Center for Academic Excellence to meet with a writing tutor.) Please feel free to come to my office with drafts for me to look over, but we will work more efficiently if you approach me in advance of the due date and with questions regarding *specific* parts of your draft.

### Attendance and Participation

Most class sessions will be run as discussions, and your contributions are vital to our collective learning process. This means you have to be here. There are four “sick days” which you should reserve for illness or emergencies, but otherwise you must show up because the education in a class like this is collaborative, interactive, and interdependent. People in this class — me included — rely on you to be here to add to the discussion and help us see certain things that, without you, we may not see.

Do not think that you have to have “*the* answer” to every question, or the definitive reading of a text in order to speak. At a certain level, we are all making our best guesses.

To prepare for this class, don’t “just do” the reading; **think very carefully about the reading**, so that you will have something to say (and this includes questions to ask) in class. Write in your texts as you read them, or take notes. Read confusing things at least twice, and out loud if necessary. Look up the definition of words you do not know; you probably carry a dictionary with you at all times anyway.

### Late Work

There will be due dates included on all writing assignments. You must turn the final copy of your essays in by that indicated time. However, you can elect to take a two-day

(note: that means two calendar days not two class days) grace period on any one paper — a no-questions-asked extension. If, at the end of that period, you are still having trouble completing the assignment, you must meet with me in person to go over an outline of your ideas and set a schedule for getting the paper done.

### **Electronic Use Policy**

In this class, **CELL PHONE USE IS NOT ALLOWED**. I will warn you – usually with a stern glance – if I see you using your cell phone. The next time I see you using your cell – regardless of whether or not I let you know I see you – I will zero out your entire participation grade. We meet twice a week for 1.5 hours; put away your phones and give your instructor and fellow students your full attention during our short time together.

Additionally, here is STAC's policy on cell phones and laptops: *Faculty members at St. Thomas Aquinas College have the discretion to regulate the use of electronic devices in their classes, and students should not use such devices without the expressed consent of the professor. This policy covers cell phones, PDAs, laptop computers, or any other device the use of which might constitute a distraction to the professor or to the other students in the class, as determined by the professor. Students with documented disabilities should discuss the issue of laptop use with their professor at the beginning of the semester.*

*When a professor designates a time during which laptop computers may be used, they are only to be used at the discretion of the faculty member and in accordance with the mission of the college. Professors can develop specific and reasonable penalties to deal with violations of these general policies. For more extreme cases of classroom disruption, refer to the College's Disruptive Student Policy.*

### **Academic Integrity**

There are various forms of plagiarism – from blatant theft, to submitting the same work for two different classes, to neglecting to acknowledge a source in your writing. We will discuss plagiarism during the course, but let me say up front: All work you do for this class must be your own original work (not the work of your roommate or some unknown online “expert”) and written specifically for *this* class. We will discuss MLA citation in class, and I will expect that in Essay 2 when you use outside sources that you correctly document them. Bear in mind that it is as easy for your instructors to find material via a Google search as it is for you; if you have taken material from an online source without properly documenting it, there is a good chance we will figure that out pretty quickly. *Evidence of plagiarism will result in a zero grade with no rewrite for the assignment and the possibility of further disciplinary action.*

Let me offer some advice based on many years of teaching: Don't let yourself get into a bind. Plagiarism nearly always occurs out of the sheer panic that results from one of two perceived crises: 1) I cannot do this or 2) I don't have time to do this. In the first case, you must see me because part of my job is to help you figure out how to do the work. In the second case, start your assignments early so you can allow time for writer's block, crashing computers, roommates in crisis, unexpected travel delays, and other such

catastrophes that might lead to desperate measures—and so that you can leave time to meet with tutors and your instructor. Remember that the worst piece of writing you can give me is better than anything you will find on the internet; it is your own work, it is risk free, and we will be able to discuss revising it for a better grade.

Additionally, here is STAC's formal policy on academic integrity: *Academic Integrity, a commitment to honesty, fairness, respect, and responsibility, is the foundation of the learning process. All members of the St. Thomas Aquinas College community are held to the highest standards of academic honesty. While we recognize the participatory nature of education, we take academic integrity very seriously, and the College policy on academic dishonesty details consequences that can include dismissal from the College. That policy can be found in both the Student Handbook and the College Catalog.*

*As a student in this class, you must demonstrate your commitment to academic integrity by submitting work which originates in your own imagination, analytical faculties, or your own knowledge, which you have done yourself, and which represents your very best efforts. When appropriate, your work should be supplemented and supported by other sources; however, you must always insure that these sources are properly cited using the recommended documentation system.*

#### **Accommodations Statement**

It is the policy of St. Thomas Aquinas College to accommodate students with disabilities in accordance with federal and state laws. Any student with a disability who needs an accommodation from the appropriate disability services committee (through the Office of Academic Advisement) must follow-up with the instructor about the logistics of implementing any accommodations.

If you, as a student with a documented disability, have difficulty accessing any part of the course materials or activities for this class, please notify the instructor immediately.

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### Schedule

**\*\*Syllabus Subject to Change According to Our Evolving Needs\*\***

**Please note:**

- 1. All reading assignments are due on the date under which they are listed.**
- 2. Always bring assigned texts to class.**

#### **Week 1**

*Wednesday, September 7*

Introduction to class; introduction to readings

#### **Week 2**

*Monday, September 12*

Introduction to reading literature and analytical reading

*Wednesday, September 14*

Reading due: Hawthorne, "The Hollow of the Three Hills"

#### **Week 3**

*Monday, September 19*

Reading due: Hawthorne, "The Ambitious Guest" and "Wakefield"

*Wednesday, September 21*

Reading due: Hawthorne, "The Minister's Black Veil"

#### **Week 4**

*Monday, September 26*

Reading due: Hawthorne, "Roger Malvin's Burial"

*Wednesday, September 28*

Reading due: Hawthorne, "The Birthmark"

#### **Week 5**

*Monday, October 3*

Reading due: Hawthorne, "Rappaccini's Daughter"

*Wednesday, October 5*

**Drafting Essay 1**

**Week 6**

*Monday, October 10*

***Columbus Day – No Classes***

*Wednesday, October 12*

**ESSAY 1 DRAFT DUE TODAY**

**Week 7**

*Monday, October 17*

**ESSAY 1 FINAL VERSION DUE TODAY**

Reading due: Melville, “Bartleby, the Scrivener”

*Wednesday, October 19*

Reading due: Melville, “Bartleby, the Scrivener” and “Benito Cereno”

**Week 8**

*Monday, October 24*

Reading due: Melville, “Benito Cereno”

*Wednesday, October 26*

**Drafting Essay 2**

**Week 9**

*Monday, October 31*

**ESSAY 2 DRAFT DUE TODAY**

*Wednesday, November 2*

**ESSAY 2 FINAL VERSION DUE TODAY**

Reading due: O’Connor, “A Good Man is Hard to Find”

**Week 10**

*Monday, November 7*

Reading due: O’Connor, “A Good Man is Hard to Find”

*Wednesday, November 9*

Reading due: O’Connor, “Good Country People”

**Week 11**

*Monday, November 14*

Reading due: O’Connor, “Good Country People”

*Wednesday, November 16*

**Drafting Essay 3**

**Week 12**

*Monday, November 21*

**ESSAY 3 DRAFT DUE TODAY**

*Wednesday, November 23*

**Thanksgiving Break – no classes**

**Week 13**

*Monday, November 28*

**ESSAY 3 FINAL VERSION DUE TODAY**

Reading due: Lydia Davis stories

*Wednesday, November 30*

Reading due: Lydia Davis Stories

**Week 14**

*Monday, December 5*

Reading due: Lydia Davis Stories

*Wednesday, December 7*

**ESSAY 3 DRAFT DUE TODAY**

**Week 15**

*Wednesday, December 14*

**ESSAY 4 FINAL VERSION DUE TODAY**