

Suggested Introductory English Lit. Course

OPEN ACCESS

Manuscript ID:
ENG-2022-10034759

Volume: 10

Issue: 3

Month: June

Year: 2022

P-ISSN: 2320-2645

E-ISSN: 2582-3531

Received: 17.02.2022

Accepted: 02.04.2022

Published: 01.06.2022

Citation:
Dohal, Gassim H. "Suggested Introductory English Lit. Course." *Shanlax International Journal of English*, vol. 10, no. 3, 2022, pp. 19–22.

DOI:
<https://doi.org/10.34293/english.v10i3.4759>



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Abstract

While teaching, a clear course plan will enable a teacher to present the assigned course in a smooth and effective way. It's not enough to know the text you're going to teach. As an experienced teacher, I introduce this introductory suggested course plan as a model that might be adopted and modified according to the surrounding circumstances a teacher may find her/himself in. Many factors can interfere and cause changes, such as the time limit, the number of students, their level, and so on. As a result, rather than leaving everything to chance, I present this course plan, hoping that colleagues and readers will think about it and consider utilizing it.

Keywords: Course, Teacher, Literature, Introductory, Plan.

Introduction

This course plan is intended for EN 000: Introductory Literature Course for non-native students. First of all, such a plan should include a detailed description of texts to be used in a class. This plan should include a variety of texts to choose from depending on objectives, activities, and the way of assessment (evaluation) intended at the end of the course. This plan is intended to help the teacher to be organized and prepared for teaching the course in question in an effective and ideal manner. However, this plan may be adjusted in order to meet students' needs enrolled in such a class and to accommodate class progress.

Course Description

This course will be a comprehensive look at different genres that highlight different thematic issues. Works will be assigned in categories; each category will expose students to different themes, subjects and literary terms. Students are to read the assigned works, give reports, discuss issues in class, and ask questions related to the assigned materials. All this will expand their critical thinking and way of looking at literature in the general sense.

Course Objectives: In this Course, Students will

1. Read different genres: fiction (short stories), poetry and drama,
2. Develop their critical way of thinking about literature,
3. Expand their awareness of the genres and distinguish the various types of literary works,
4. Note different literary styles and learn new terms,
5. Understand social, political, and cultural issues relevant to the assigned works,
6. React to what they read, and respond meaningfully to different types of works,
7. Discuss literary issues in class, journal entries, group meetings, and exams.

Course Materials

- Roberts, E. V. & H. E. Jacobs (eds). (1998). *Literature Compact Edition: An Introduction to Reading and Writing*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- Assorted handouts - - provided by the instructor whenever needed.

Course Assignments and Requirements

- Specific assigned texts are to be read by students for each class.
- Groups' reports and assignments are to be submitted on time. At the end of each class, students are to be divided into groups, and submit group reports about what has been taught in the class.
- Audio tape groups' discussion is to be on time as scheduled in the syllabus. Students are to be divided into groups. Each group will choose a work not listed in the syllabus and discuss it outside the class. What they have to do is to record that discussion and bring to the class. Each recording discussion should be for at least thirty minutes.
- Discussion in class is expected from each student.
Note: Each home assignment will be due at the beginning of class and, except by prior arrangement, will not be accepted after that. Each student and/or group will have the option of either missing one homework or dropping the lowest grade.

Suggested Course Grading

Final grade will be based on performance on the following suggested items; grades may vary depending on the teacher's perspective and/or the policy of the institution:

- Attendance and participation - %15
 - Reports, assignments and journal - %20
 - Audio cassette tapes: three (fiction, poetry & drama) - %15
 - Exam # 1 (short fiction) - %15
 - Exam # 2 (poetry) - %15
 - Exam # 3 (drama) - %20
- *Extra credit: Critique of an author or a work (min 5ps) (10pts).

Course Attendance

Class attendance is required since coming to class is the only way students can successfully complete the course. Again this part depends on the policy required from students. Excused absences will be permitted in certain circumstances such as medical problems or family crisis. Having more than two inexcusable absences will affect attendance grade.

Course Deadlines

Assignments will be scheduled in class, and are to be turned in on time. To be fair, all students are to meet announced deadlines as scheduled in the syllabus. At the end of each genre, there could be a tape discussion and an exam. Extra credit critique might be applied to give students a chance to compensate what is missed.

Tentative Weekly Schedule

1. Week I: Distributing syllabus; Introduction; asking students about their expectations; and presenting some general terms such as literature, genre, fiction, etc. —terms that will be helpful during the course.
 2. Week II: Fiction: An overview: short story, plot, character, structure & theme. It will be more focused and students are to give examples for stories they studied in the past. Applying the terms to their stories, every student should write no more than two pages. They will be asked to comment on what they have written in class.
 3. Weeks III, IV, V, VI & VII: One or two stories (a suggested list is below) to be chosen for study during the next five weeks:
Alice Walker's Everyday Use
Stephen Crane's The Blue Hotel
William Faulkner's Barn Burning
Willa Cather's Paul's Case
Ernest Hemingway's Soldier Home
Alice Munro's The Found Boat
- Other stories might be chosen; the above given list is a good one suggested here but it is not necessary to be the only choice. By the way, a translated story might be the focus if students belong to another culture and English is taught as a foreign language. The idea of a translated story might give an instructor a chance to connect students with something they

knew and at the same time, they will learn English. Yet, this suggestion should be accompanied by a story written by a native speaker of English because culture is part of the knowledge usually required from students.

First tape discussion (short fiction) is due.

First exam (short fiction).

- Weeks VIII, IX, X, XI: Poetry: an overview, the nature of poetry, diction, its levels and types, syntax, rhetorical figures, sound, rhythm & rhyme in poetry, the shape of the poem, etc.

A suggested list of poems may go as follows (focus might be on three or four poems):

Robert Browning's *My Last Duchess*

Emily Dickinson's *Because I Could Not Stop for Death*

Thomas Hardy's *The Man He Killed*

William Blake's *The Lamb*

e. e. cummings' *next to of course god america*

Sylvia Plath's *Metaphors*

Walt Whitman's *Reconciliation*

I. Amiri Baraka's *Ka'Ba*

Li-Young Lee's *A Final Thing*

John Keats' *Ode to a Nightingale*

Amy Lowell's *Patterns*

Second tape discussion (poetry) is due.

Second exam (Poetry).

- Weeks XII, XIII, XIV, XV & XVI: Drama: an overview, types of drama, characteristics of each type, etc. One or two short plays might be enough in this section, particularly when students' background is not good enough to explore more English texts.

The suggested plays may include:

Eugene O'Neill's *Before the Breakfast*

Susan Glaspell's *Trifles*

Langston Hughes' *Mulatto*

Anton Chekhov's *The Bear*

Beth Henley's *Am I Blue*

Third tape discussion (drama) is due.

Final exam will be in drama. If there is more time left, the teacher may revise and go back to those vague and unclear points the class has passed through and experienced.

My Experiences

I had a chance to teach a course entitled "Introduction to literature" few times. The course has been improved throughout time; focus, titles, and requirements have been changed from time to time. In this course, the contents are divided into four parts and as follows:

- =INTRODUCTION is the first part which is divided, in turn, into: definition of literature, importance of literature, definition of literary genres, and basic literary terms.
- =POETRY consists of the following: definition of poetry, features of a poem, figures of speech, sound devices, and how to analyze a poem. In addition, three poems are taught in this section: 'Daffodils' by William Wordsworth, 'Sonnet 18' by William Shakespeare, and 'Anthem for Doomed Youth' by Wilfred Owen.
- =The third part is DRAMA, where 'Trifles' by Susan Glaspell is studied. In addition, students are introduced to: definition of drama, elements of a play, feature and types of drama.
- Fiction is the fourth part which includes the following items: definition of fiction, types of fiction, types of novels, elements of fiction, and narrative techniques. In addition, 'The Lottery' by Shirley Jackson is introduced in this section.

Generally speaking, students vary regarding their look at and opinion in literature; many have a negative perspective generated in advance and there is no way to change their opinion. Such an opinion hinders the process of teaching and learning literature. Some students do not like working hard; they search for something short and few things to be memorized. They are not ready to read and understand between four and five pages a week; literature requires reading.

Course Schedule & Disclaimer

This syllabus is tentative, and all dates are subject to change according to the school, students, culture, etc. The contents of the course may be adjusted and changed as necessary by the instructor to suit the educational needs of the students enrolled in the class, and to accommodate the class progress. In addition to what is said, local ideologies and social norms should be of great importance because controversial issues may lead to negative consequences.

Conclusion

A course plan is necessary for a teacher to present the specified course in a smooth and successful manner while instructing. Many elements, such as the time limit, the number of pupils, their level, and so on, might interfere and produce changes. As a result, rather than leaving everything to chance, I've created this course plan in the hopes that colleagues and readers will consider and use it.

Depending on the objectives, activities, and method of assessment (evaluation) expected at the end of the course, the above course plan contains a number of texts to pick from. This plan is designed to assist the teacher in being more organized and prepared to teach the course in the most effective and best way possible. This strategy, however, may be modified to meet the needs of students enrolled in such a class and to accommodate class progress.

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