

Fall 2020

View All Pages

Published

Home

Student Evaluation of Teaching

Syllabus

Assignments

Modules

Grades

Library Resources

Files

People

Announcements

Discussions

Pages

Outcomes

Rubrics

Quizzes

Collaborations

Unicheck Course Extension

Settings

Close readings

Intro/rationale

Close reading is one of the most important skills necessary for reading independently and critically. It allows us to connect to texts on a deeper level and to integrate them with our own ideas and perspectives. You can apply this skill to literature but also to any text whatsoever, including a news article, an advertisement, a business proposal, or an email. In this class, we will practice the close reading on literary works from England after 1700. In doing so, we will improve our ability to make connections between texts and their historical and cultural contexts; identify and analyze texts' genres and forms; and compare and analyze texts in relation to each other.

Please read *closely*, and refer frequently to the handout [How to do things with words: Or, how to do a close reading](#). ↓

[Minimize File Preview](#)

The screenshot shows a document viewer interface. At the top, it says "Page 3 of 3" with navigation arrows and a "ZOOM" control. The main content is a slide titled "Bloom's Taxonomy" which features a pyramid with six levels: create, evaluate, analyze, apply, understand, and remember. Each level has associated verbs and descriptions. Below the pyramid, there is a paragraph of text starting with "At this point, you will move from *understanding* the text into the close-reading realm: textual *analysis*." The text discusses moving beyond content to form and beyond business/worldly concerns to semantic fields.

Assignment prompt

Write a short response (400-500 words) in which you describe **then** analyze something interesting going on in the text. First zoom in. Describe specific language: What are the words doing? And how are they working together to do what it is they are doing? Then zoom out. Analyze how what you have just described reflects, or generates, larger themes in the work as a whole.

This is not a formal paper (like the literary analysis at the end of the semester will be) with an introduction, body, conclusion, and thesis. However, your response does need to be edited, grammatically sound, and at least semi-professional in tone and style. Your close readings will be posted on a Discussion board in Canvas, so that we can read and learn from each other's analyses and also strengthen our learning community.

Here are some tips on how to write an effective close reading:

- You are not permitted to bring in any outside research or sources. Your close reading must focus entirely on the text itself.
- Look for patterns (repeated words or phrases, motifs, ideas, etc), things that seem strange (but important), ideas the writer seems to be emphasizing, contradictions, or especially intense or dense language. Discussions of poetic form and a writer's use of language and style are always welcome.
- There are no right or wrong "answers." You don't have to have all the answers to the questions you ask in this close reading space. You can use this space to try to help yourself better understand what it is the text is doing, and how it accomplishes what it does (whether the author intended it to or not).
- Some of the broader themes we are discussing in the literature in this class to which you can connect your close reading include: history, gender, sexuality, race, class, education, freedom, the self and its boundaries, travel, nature, and urban life. You can also feel free to relate the work you are examining to present-day issues or themes.

Here is an example of a [close-reading](#) (that I wrote). (I took this close reading, and expanded it into a literary analysis essay, which you can also do for [your literary analysis essay](#) at semester's end).

Learning outcomes

- Demonstrate knowledge of relevant historical and cultural contexts, including literary movements, major social trends, significant political events, and canonicity.
- Identify and analyze relevant genres and forms.
- Understand and practice the skill of close textual reading.
- Acquire and employ a [basic vocabulary of literary and critical terms](#) ↓
- Practice comparative analysis of two or more works.
- Write a clear, persuasive, and argumentative essay interpreting one or more works of literature, using appropriate quotation and citation.

Success criteria

- [400-500 word](#) typewritten response to the assigned text (15%)
- the submission is clearly written and well edited (15%)
- details or specific language from the works are discussed (30%); these are used to relate to broader themes or arguments (30%)
- creativity (10%)

Grading

- This assignment will be assessed using the [attached rubric](#) and is worth 30% of your final grade (5% each).
- Failure to cite any words/ideas/research will result in an automatic zero for the assignment.

◀ Previous

Next ▶