Description:
What happens to us when we read texts? In this course, we’ll explore how particular textual strategies work on the minds of readers and how, in turn, readers bring a part of themselves to bear on textual interpretation. As we delve into the psychology of reading, we will consider factors of emotion, perception, and memory in texts and in readers’ responses to them. We’ll read a series of critical approaches to reader-oriented theory, and we’ll practice those approaches by interacting with readers inside and outside of our classroom as we experience a variety of texts—fiction, graphic memoir, poetry, and film. In the process, we will form the very kind of reading community that reader-oriented critics advocate.

Required Texts:
1. Bechdel, Alison. Fun Home (Mariner) ISBN 0618871713
2. Dickens, Charles. Oliver Twist (Dover) ISBN 0486424537
5. Assorted poetry, short fiction, and critical essays, available on D2L &/or distributed in class.

Outcomes:
Students in this course will demonstrate
1. the ability to discuss literature, including engaging in an exchange of ideas and offering and supporting insights
2. the capacity to sustain controlled, critical arguments that analyze and synthesize texts
3. an understanding of the craft of writing, including concision, diction, grammar, and syntax
4. the ability to produce creative writing that shows an awareness of language, freedom from cliché, and an understanding of genre, style, and topic
5. the ability to identify and use a range of sources suitable to the scholarly conversation on a particular topic, to evaluate and integrate source material, and to document accurately
6. an understanding of the literary tradition, the historical and cultural contexts of literature, and critical methods of reading
7. the ability to give well-planned, engaging presentations.

We will pursue these outcomes through the following course assignments.
Assignments:

40%  **Research Project (serves outcomes 2, 3, 5, & 6)**
Components include:
- Project Proposal: 2-3 pp. (5%)
- Reader Response Collection & Analysis: 4-5 pp. (10%)
- Paper: 10-12 pp. critical essay (25%)

For this project, you will select a text and research reader response to it in the past (i.e., upon its publication) and present how did readers interact with this text? What do these responses say about the cultural role of reading, past and present? You'll use a combination of traditional and non-traditional sources for this assignment—e.g., scholarly articles and amazon.com reviews. To enhance your argument about the role of your text/genre in today's culture, you'll survey a group of readers, whom you'll ask to read and respond to a brief selection of the work you're analyzing.

15%  **Reading Journal (Outcome 6)**
Since this is a course in Reader Response, you will slow down your reading process by keeping a journal in which you will record your responses to course readings. These journals will be informal and will be collected only three times throughout the semester. I will, however, expect you to have them in class daily so that we can use your ideas—and your questions—as springboards for discussion. More details forthcoming.

15%  **Short Paper (Outcomes 2, 3, & 6)**
This will be a mini-version of the Research Project; in short, you'll select a text, write a response to it, and then interview two readers regarding their responses to it. The final version of the paper will synthesize your interpretations with theirs. You may, but do not have to, explore the effects of digital, e-reading in this paper. More details to come.

10%  **Creative Assignment & Peer Analysis (Outcomes 1, 3, & 4)**
This assignment will consist of two parts: 1) You will craft a brief creative piece with a particular audience in mind; and 2) you will swap creative pieces with a peer in the class, at which point you will read and write a brief response to each other's work.

10%  **Final Presentation (Outcomes 1 & 7)**
In this final assignment for the term, we will conduct a series of mock conference sessions during which you will select and deliver portions of your Research Project to your peers. We will follow each session with a brief question and answer period.

10%  **Participation (Outcome 1) includes**
- **Discussion Leader (5%)**. Together with a peer, you will be responsible for leading discussion during two class meetings. Dates are noted in the syllabus; details to come.
- **Individual Participation (5%)**. This course is a seminar in which your active participation is central to our learning. While I will do some lecturing to clarify theoretical concepts, much of our class time will be spent in small or large group discussions. As always, "active participation" means that you arrive to class on time with the assignment thoroughly completed. It also means that you remain engaged and make a concerted effort to contribute to class discussion. The basis for your individual participation grade will be your attendance percentage, which will then either be enhanced or reduced by the level and consistency of *thoughtful speaking and engaged listening*. Please note that students who are inappropriately chatty, technologically distracted, and/or sleeping (!) cannot earn full credit in this category.
PLEASE NOTE: You cannot pass the course if you do not complete each assignment. All papers should follow MLA style and format. They should be typed in 12-pt. font and double-spaced. Points will be deducted from papers not meeting these standards.

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<th>GRADING SCALE</th>
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<tr>
<td>100% - 94% = A</td>
<td>89% - 88% = B+</td>
<td>79% - 78% = C+</td>
<td>69% - 60% = D</td>
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<tr>
<td>93% - 90% = A-</td>
<td>87% - 84% = B</td>
<td>77% - 74% = C</td>
<td>59% - 0% = F</td>
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<tr>
<td>83% - 80% = B-</td>
<td>73% - 70% = C-</td>
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Policies & Expectations:

✓ **Attendance.** Come to class. Every day. Excessive absences will directly affect your grade. You may miss three classes. After these three, you may lose 1/3 of a letter grade for each additional class you miss (e.g., an A- course grade will change to a B; a B+ course grade will change to a B-). Absences will be excused only in emergency situations, with appropriate documentation. Please be aware that “self-reported sick in room” notices from the Student Health Center will not change an absence from unexcused to excused. I reserve the right to mark text-messagers and sleepers absent.

✓ **Preparedness.** Come to class prepared and ready to discuss the day’s reading assignments. All readings should be completed before the class during which they will be discussed. Similarly, all writing assignments should be submitted on time. Late papers will be penalized 10% per day late, including the first day and weekends. Computer issues do not justify late or shoddy work. Know that technology tends to fail us at the most inconvenient of times. Be prepared, backup your work, and you will have no problems.

✓ **Honesty.** The lasting reward of academic integrity is a good character and the ability to learn on your own. See the Academic Integrity Policy available online and in the Undergraduate Catalog. Note that failure to demonstrate academic integrity has serious consequences in the short term (grades) as well as for the rest of your life.

✓ **Respect.** Maintain a respectful attitude toward the course, your fellow students, and me; in turn, I will do the same for you. Know that disrespectful behavior—online or in class—can negatively affect your participation grade.

**IMPORTANT NOTES:**

- **ACCESSIBILITY STATEMENT:** Westminster College actively strives for the full inclusion of all students. Students with disabilities who require access solutions for environmental or curricular barriers should contact Faith Craig, Director of Disability Resources, located in 209 Thompson-Clark Hall. Phone: 724.946.7192; e-mail: craigfa@westminster.edu.
- **ATHLETICS & EXTRACURRICULARS:** If you are involved in College athletics or other extracurricular activities and will miss class meetings because of games or performances, please notify me in advance of any class sessions you will miss. All work is to be submitted prior to the excused absence.
- **CELL PHONES** generally should be kept out of sight and out of mind. If you are texting, facebooking, tweeting, etc., I count you absent because you’re not really here, are you? Please let me know if you are using your phone to access course materials.
- **LEARNING & WRITING SERVICES @ Mcgill LIBRARY** is located in Room 206 of the library and is staffed by upper-class undergraduate tutors who offer help with writing assignments. While tutors will not proofread your paper(s) for you, they can help you with thesis statements, organization, textual support, grammar, etc. Visit this website to learn more and schedule an appointment: http://www.westminster.edu/academics/learning-writing-services.cfm
• **PAPER DRAFTS:** I encourage you to visit me during office hours so that we can discuss your writing. You may also e-mail me specific questions about an assignment. In each case, though, please allow sufficient time for the drafting process (“sufficient time” = one week before paper is due).

**ENG 408 Schedule of Readings & Assignments**

*NOTE: Schedule is subject to change at any time.*

“D2L” means that readings are available in the Content portlet of our course site at D2L.

### Introduction: What happens when we read texts?

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<tr>
<td><strong>M 28 Aug</strong></td>
<td>Course overview &amp; Bressler recap. Why are reader-oriented theories important? I'll discuss our assignments for Wednesday and Friday. This week, we'll get to know each other as readers. I'll distribute the Reading Journal assignment.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>W 30 Aug</strong></td>
<td>D2L: Read Woolf. Please also bring to class your choice of short fiction OR poetry; be prepared to discuss. I'll distribute the Discussion Leader assignment.</td>
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<td><strong>F 1 Sep</strong></td>
<td>D2L: Read Keen; also skim the definition of “Reader” in the Living Handbook of Narratology: what section/s interest you, and why? We’ll finish discussing your fiction &amp; poetry selections.</td>
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### UNIT ONE: Emotion

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<td><strong>M 4 Sep</strong></td>
<td>D2L: Read Pound, “A Retrospect” and “A Few Don'ts,” plus Tracy K. Smith, introduction and all poems. We’ll look at Wednesday’s readings. <strong>Discussion Leader</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>W 6 Sep</strong></td>
<td>D2L: Read introduction to Wordsworth and the poems “Most Sweet it Is,” “Influence of Natural Objects,” “A Poet! He Hath Put His Heart to School,” plus one poem of your choice. <strong>Discussion Leader</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>F 8 Sep</strong></td>
<td>Begin Dickens, <em>Oliver Twist</em>, chapters I-VII (i.e., 1-7)</td>
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<td><strong>M 11 Sep</strong></td>
<td>Dickens, <em>Oliver Twist</em> chapters VIII-XIII (8-13). Film discussion and clips.</td>
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<td><strong>W 13 Sep</strong></td>
<td>Dickens, chapters XIV-XX (14-20)</td>
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<td><strong>F 15 Sep</strong></td>
<td>Dickens, chapters XXI-XXVII (21-27)</td>
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<td><strong>M 18 Sep</strong></td>
<td>Dickens, chapters XXVIII-XXXVI (28-36)</td>
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<td><strong>W 20 Sep</strong></td>
<td>Dickens, chapters XXXVII-XLI (37-41)</td>
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<td><strong>F 22 Sep</strong></td>
<td>Dickens, chapters XLII-XLVIII (42-48)</td>
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<td><strong>M 25 Sep</strong></td>
<td>Finish Dickens, chapters XLIX-LIII (49-53). We’ll discuss the Short Paper assignment. <strong>Journals due to my office (if print) or D2L by 5:00 p.m.</strong></td>
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### UNIT TWO: Perception

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| **W 27 Sep** | D2L: Read early reviews of Dickens and also Mary Catherine Harrison’s essay.  
Discussion Leader |
| **F 29 Sep** | D2L: Rosenblatt. Short Paper Workshop (see assignment for details)  
Discussion Leader |
| **M 2 Oct** | D2L: Iser; plus Keats, skim intro and read “Bright Star,” “This Living Hand,” “Ode to Psyche,” and your choice of one additional poem.  
Discussion Leader |
| **W 4 Oct** | D2L: Poe, excerpt from review of Hawthorne; “The Purloined Letter”; and “The Cask of Amontillado.” We’ll discuss Monday’s assignment and practice the research process.  
Discussion Leader |
| **F 6 Oct** | D2L: Bierce, “The Damned Thing” and “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge.”  
~Short Paper due to D2L by midnight on Sunday, Oct 8~ |
| **M 9 Oct** | Locate a piece of criticism on one text we’ve read thus far, and link it to our Discussions page on D2L. Come to class prepared to discuss your chosen essay’s central argument: how does it relate to reader-oriented approaches? I’ll distribute the creative assignment. |
| **W 11 Oct** | D2L: Fish. We’ll begin viewing Dir. M. Night Shyamalan’s *The Sixth Sense* (1999). |
| **F 13 Oct** | FILM: *The Sixth Sense*, ctd. |
| **M 16 Oct** | FILM: finish and discuss. You’ll have time to pair up with a peer and discuss ideas for the creative assignment. |

### UNIT THREE: Memory

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Discussion Leader |
| **F 20 Oct** | No formal class meeting today. Finish a draft of your creative, and swap it with a peer before leaving for break. |
| **M 23 Oct** | NO CLASS: FALL BREAK! |
| **W 25 Oct** | Bechdel, *Fun Home*, chapters 3-4. **Creative Assignment & Peer Analysis due to D2L by midnight** |
| **F 27 Oct** | Bechdel, chapters 5-6. We’ll discuss your responses to peers’ creative works, and I’ll distribute the Research Project Assignment. |
| **M 30 Oct** | Finish Bechdel. D2L: Warhol on Bechdel’s method. **Discussion Leader.** |
**CONCLUSION: Readers Responding Now**

**F 3 Nov** Begin Walker, *The Color Purple*: Preface and pp. 1-50. **Research Project Proposal & working bibliography due to D2L by 5:00 p.m.**

**M 6 Nov** Walker, pp. 51-125

**W 8 Nov** Walker, pp.126-177; plus project workshop: bring drafts and questions (see assignment for details)

**F 10 Nov** **NO CLASS:** I’ll be out of town at an Honors Conference. Use this time to read Walker and develop your project.

**M 13 Nov** Walker, pp. 178-243

**W 15 Nov** Finish Walker, pp. 244-88. On D2L, read Stein. **Discussion Leader**

**F 17 Nov** Tentative field trip &/or musical viewing: *The Color Purple*

**M 20 Nov** D2L: Criticism on *The Color Purple* musical adaptation, TBA. Finish discussing Walker; conference sign-up. **Discussion Leader**

**Reader Response Collection and Analysis due to D2L by noon on Tues. the 21st**

**22 - 24 Nov** **NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING BREAK!** Read Rankine (OR work on your project!) over break; it'll make your life easier when you come back.

**M 27 Nov** **NO CLASS:** Individual conferences in my office. We’ll discuss research projects.

**W 29 Nov** Begin Rankine, *Citizen*: Parts I-II (pp. 1-40). Youtube clips.

**F 1 Dec** Continue Rankine, Parts III-V (pp. 41-80). D2L: Holland

**Research Project Papers due to D2L by midnight on Sunday, Dec. 3**

**M 4 Dec** Rankine, Part VI (pp. 82-135). We’ll review and apply key RR theories.

**W 6 Dec** Finish Rankine, Part VII (139-61); on D2L: Criticism, TBA. **Discussion Leader. Reading Journals due to my office or D2L by 5:00 p.m.**

**F 8 Dec** LAST CLASS: Project presentation workday.

**M 11 Dec** Final Period, 9:00-10:30 a.m.: Project Presentations.