

ENGL 464 – Faulkner & Wideman Seminar  
Spring 2019, Hendrix College

Dr. Alex Vernon  
office hours: MTWThF 11-12:00 & by appt.  
[vernon@hendrix.edu](mailto:vernon@hendrix.edu)

10 Fausett Hall, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor  
office: x1258  
[alex-vernon.squarespace.com/courses](http://alex-vernon.squarespace.com/courses)

William Faulkner:

I discovered that my own little postage stamp of native soil was worth writing about and that I would never live long enough to exhaust it, and that by sublimating the actual into the apocryphal I would have complete liberty to use whatever talent I might have to its absolute top. (*Lion in the Garden*)

The past is never dead. It's not even past. (*Requiem for a Nun*)

John Edgar Wideman:

The notion of being grounded is a very important notion in all traditional cultures. I'm using the word grounded metaphorically: the forefathers entered this land and it was dangerous and nobody ever lived here before. But they spoke to the spirits of this land and those spirits gave them information and knowledge that they needed to start a village. The village could grow and would be sustained because the people kept alive that knowledge of the original contract, a knowledge of the rootedness. Everything flows from that ancestral bargain. And I believe that in order for my art, anybody's art, to flourish it has to be rooted, it has to be grounded, in that sense. So, yes, particularity, yes, the very unique and real ground that you fought for and bled in and created as a people. In my case that is Homewood. (1985 interview with Kay Bonetti)

Past lives live in us, through us. Each of us harbors the spirits of people who walked the earth before we did, and those spirits depend on us for continuing existence, just as we depend on their presence to live our lives to the fullest. (epigraph to *Sent for You Yesterday*)

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1	Tues, 15 Jan	Course Introduction
2	Thurs, 17 Jan	Faulkner, <i>Sanctuary</i> chpts 1-14 (to p105)
3	Tues, 22 Jan	Faulkner, <i>Sanctuary</i> chpts 13-22 (to p206)
4	Thurs, 24 Jan	Faulkner, <i>Sanctuary</i> chpts 23-31 (to p317)
5	Tues, 29 Jan	student-led article discussion
6	Thurs, 31 Jan	Faulkner, <i>Light in August</i> chpts 1-5 (to p118)
7	Tues, 5 Feb	Faulkner, <i>Light in August</i> chpts 6-11 (to p255)
8	Thurs, 7 Feb	Faulkner, <i>Light in August</i> chpts 12-16 (to p391)
9	Tues, 12 Feb	Faulkner, <i>Light in August</i> chpts 17-21 (to p507)
10	Thurs, 14 Feb	av out/medical
11	Tues, 19 Feb	student-led article discussion
12	Thurs, 21 Feb	Faulkner, <i>Absalom, Absalom!</i> chpts 1-3 (to p69)
13	Tues, 26 Feb	Faulkner, <i>Absalom, Absalom!</i> chpts 4-6 (to p175)
14	Thurs, 28 Feb	Faulkner, <i>Absalom, Absalom!</i> chpts 7-9 (to p303)
15	Tues, 5 Mar	student-led article discussion
16	Thurs, 7 Mar	Wideman, <i>Damballah</i> , through “Hazel” ( to p79)
17	Tues, 11 Mar	AV away – no class
18	Thurs, 13 Mar	Wideman, <i>Damballah</i> , through “Across the Wide Missouri” (to p141)
18 – 22 Mar		SPRING BREAK
19	Tues, 26 Mar	Wideman, <i>Damballah</i> , through “The Beginning of Homewood” (to p205)
20	Thurs, 28 Mar	Wideman, <i>Hiding Place</i> , Part I (to p88)
21	Tues, 2 Apr	Wideman, <i>Hiding Place</i> Part II (to p158)
22	Thurs, 4 Apr	Wideman, <i>Sent for You Yesterday</i> , through “The Return of Albert Wilkes” (to p86)
23	Tues, 9 Apr	Wideman, <i>Sent for You Yesterday</i> , “The Courting of Lucy Tate” (to p155)
24	Thurs, 11 Apr	Wideman, <i>Sent for You Yesterday</i> , “Brother” (to p208)
25	Tues, 16 Apr	writing day
26	Thurs, 18 Apr	writing day
27	Tues, 23 Apr	draft workshop
28	Thurs, 25 Apr	draft workshop
	Tues, 29 Apr	reading day
	Thurs, 2 May 2:00 – 3:00	➤ essay due ➤ course- and self-evaluation/reflection

## **Course Description**

The purposes of this course are to: (1) perform a close study of three William Faulkner Yoknapatawpha novels and John Edgar Wideman's Homewood trilogy; (2) foster your ability to work with literary criticism; (3) produce a significant essay on some aspect of either or both Faulkner and Wideman; (4) prepare you for the English major senior thesis; and (5) create an atmosphere that approximates a graduate school seminar.

This course is student-centered; I expect each of you to participate actively in class discussions. On a typical class discussion day, you will supply many of the prompts for collaborative consideration. You will also work in a team of 2 students choosing and leading discussion on two critical articles. In the final weeks, you will be responsible for providing feedback on peer drafts.

This course demands a lot. Read and work ahead when you can.

## **Texts**

- ✂ Faulkner, *Sanctuary* (1931)
- ✂ Faulkner, *Light in August* (1932)
- ✂ Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936)
- ✂ Wideman, *Damballah* (1981)
- ✂ Wideman, *Hiding Place* (1981)
- ✂ Wideman, *Sent for You Yesterday* (1983)
- ✂ secondary works of your choosing

As a Literary Studies learning domain course, ENGL 464 has the following learning goals:

- 1) To engage in the practice of written and oral expression.
- 2) To read a text critically to determine what meanings it holds, how and why those meanings are produced, and the effects of these choices.
- 3) To examine how literary works provide insight into the human experience.

As a Writing Level 2 course, ENGL 464 provides a writing intensive experience culminating in a long essay that will also develop your skills in long-form criticism as you prepare for your senior thesis. The four learning goals for W2 courses cover (1) Organization and Coherence; (2) Thesis; (3) Grammatical Correctness; and (4) Diction and Sentence Structure—as appropriate for written discourse in literary studies. A fuller description of the [W2 Learning Goals](#) is in the Hendrix Catalogue.

## **Requirements/Assessment**

- ✎ *Class Participation* (20%): The class participation grade includes **active** participation in class activities, assessed subjectively. This includes the Discussion Prompts; for each day, bring:
  - (1) two typed discussion questions/prompts. As the course progresses, I will expect questions about the text in hand and questions that seek connections, or challenge connections, to a text or texts we have previously studied. The questions should be specific and provocative, the kind that can sustain inquiry.
  - (2) an identified passage in which you find rich potential for close scrutiny. Type the passage on your page.In both cases, be prepared to follow-up on the question and passage such that, for 5-10 minutes, you are steering class discussion.
- ✎ *Article Discussion* (10%). Your group will be responsible for leading class discussion one day. The discussion should involve two critical articles you assign to the class the prior class meeting (though you can certainly discuss beyond those articles). We will sign up for your article summary on the second or third class meeting.
- ✎ *Essay draft* (10%): A full draft of your final essay is due prior to the workshop day, distributed electronically to the instructor (who will distribute to the class). Graded on completion and effort.
- ✎ *Draft feedback* (10%): You will be assigned two of your peers' drafts on which to provide about two-three pages of feedback on draft workshop day.
- ✎ *Critical Essay* (15%): Your essay will fall between sixteen and eighteen pages. This is your baby. Pursue the line of inquiry that most fascinates you; otherwise you can't hope to fascinate your reader. You will need to demonstrate awareness and consideration of other scholarship on your topic; to engage critical sources beyond simple supporting quotations; to provide some extra-textual context for your discussion; and to attend closely to the text(s). A full assignment description will be provided.

In terms of essay grading criteria/expectations, use the following general guidelines: An **A** essay provides insights beyond class discussion; it must be clearly and gracefully written and organized. A **B** essay might be well written and organized but not push the ideas much past class discussion, or it has some problems of logic/evidence in that effort; or it is successful in its ideas, but the execution—the writing—has some shortcomings. A **C** essay does not go beyond class discussion, depends on plot summary, or otherwise has logic/evidence problems preventing its argument from being particularly convincing or compelling. If most readers don't need you to explain what you are explaining, your paper is probably a "C" in content. A "C" paper might also have somewhat compelling and even convincing ideas, but it exhibits serious problems in written expression. A **D** essay has serious shortcomings in both content and expression.

## **Other Policies**

- ✎ The syllabus is subject to revision as the course progresses.
- ✎ *Email:* Email will be used to contact the entire class for communicating changes to the syllabus and other matters. Check your Hendrix account daily.
- ✎ Drinks are permitted in class, but no food. No hats except for religious or medical reasons.
- ✎ *Learning Disabilities:* It is the policy of Hendrix College to accommodate students with disabilities, pursuant to federal and state law. Students should contact Julie Brown in the Office of Academic Success (505-2954; brownj@hendrix.edu) to begin the accommodation process. Any student seeking accommodation in relation to a recognized disability should inform the instructor as soon as possible.
- ✎ The failure to complete any course requirement may result in a failure of the course.
- ✎ *Academic Dishonesty:* Intellectual dishonesty will not be tolerated. See the academic integrity statement and policy in the student handbook. Frequently, failure to document and attribute secondary sources adequately is not a deliberate attempt to pass another's ideas and words off as one's own, but rather a misunderstanding of how to give that other person sufficient credit properly. Please consult with me on any documentation question so we can avoid problems.
- ✎ *Late essays:* If you have extenuating circumstances, you must consult me at least one week prior to the due date (except in the case of actual emergencies). Otherwise, you will lose five points for every day it is late, starting from when class begins on the due date.
- ✎ *Essay Format:* All submitted essays must follow the MLA style for format, documentation, and bibliography. Specifically:
  - ✎ MLA format: 12 point font, Times New Roman or Garamond (with serifs). 1" margins all around (watch out for 1.5" left margin default). No extra space between paragraphs (watch out for default); section breaks are fine. No cover sheet. No folders. Staple pages (not my job). Last name and page numbers in the upper right corner of each page except the first. All papers must have a productive title and a "[Works Cited](#)" section. Epigraphs beneath the title are welcome. Footnotes or endnotes are permitted.
  - ✎ Exceptions to MLA format: Single-space the name/course/date/professor information on the first page. 1.5-space block/indented quotations; indent .5 on each side. If you have room, add your entire "Works Cited" section at the bottom of your last page.
  - ✎ MLA documentation: MLA calls for [parenthetical documentation](#), not footnotes or endnotes. Consult any recent English handbook, the *MLA Handbook* in the library, or the online guide linked via the English Department's website. *Rule of thumb: Given the context of the surrounding passage and the bibliography listing, include the absolute minimum amount of information necessary within the parentheses.*