

ENGL 258 – American War Literature
Spring 2024, Hendrix College

Dr. Alex Vernon
office hours: MWF 11:00-12:00; TTh 230-330
I do not hang out on MS Teams...

10 Fausett Hall, 2nd floor
office: x1258
vernon@hendrix.edu



Unserviceable (2009), Drew Cameron

The environment of war is the environment of life, magnified.

—Tim O'Brien

**ENGL 258 – American War Literature
Spring 2024, Hendrix College**

1	Wed, 17 Jan	Snow Day: Review syllabus; get New York Times online access
2	Fri, 19 Jan	Course Introduction ➤ In class: Phil Klay, "After War, a Failure of the Imagination" ➤ Due: Background email
3	Mon, 22 Jan	➤ Farago, The Myth of North America, in One Painting (Teams) ➤ Assign: Writing Exercise
4	Wed, 24 Jan	➤ Writing Exercise Due ➤ In class: Civil War stories and poems
5	Fri, 26 Jan	Crane, <i>A Red Badge of Courage</i> , chapters I-XI (3-72) A & B
6	Mon, 29 Jan	<i>A Red Badge of Courage</i> , chapters XII-XXIV (73-142) C & D
7	Wed, 31 Jan	Hemingway, <i>A Farewell to Arms</i> , Book I (3-78) C
8	Fri, 2 Feb	<i>A Farewell to Arms</i> , Book II (81-159) D
9	Mon, 5 Feb	<i>A Farewell to Arms</i> , Book III (163-233) A
10	Wed, 7 Feb	<i>A Farewell to Arms</i> , Book IV-Book V (237-332) B
11	Fri, 9 Feb	No class: writing day
12	Mon, 12 Feb	Essay #1 draft due on Teams; hard copy to class for workshop
13	Wed, 15 Feb	No class: individual conferences
14	Fri, 16 Feb	No class: individual conferences
	Mon, 19 Feb	➤ campus-wide no class ➤ Due: Essay #1 on Teams by 4:00
15	Wed, 21 Feb	Vonnegut, <i>Slaughterhouse-Five</i> , chpts 1-3 (1-71) D
16	Fri, 23 Feb	<i>Slaughterhouse-Five</i> , chpts 4-6 (72-153) A & B
17	Mon, 26 Feb	<i>Slaughterhouse-Five</i> , chpts 7-10 (154-215) C
18	Wed, 28 Feb	➤ In class: <i>Good Will to Men</i> (1955) ➤ In class: <i>Tales of Suspense</i> #39 (March 1963)
19	Fri, 1 Mar	Van DeVanter, <i>Home Before Morning</i> , chpts 1-5 (11-74) A
20	Mon, 4 Mar	<i>Home Before Morning</i> , chpts 6-12 (75-165) B
21	Wed, 6 Mar	<i>Home Before Morning</i> , chpts 13-18 (166-242) C
22	Fri, 8 Mar	<i>Home Before Morning</i> , chpts 19-Afterword (243-324) D

**ENGL 258 – American War Literature
Spring 2024, Hendrix College**

23	Mon, 11 Mar	No class: writing day
24	Wed, 13 Mar	Essay #2 draft due on Teams; hard copy to class for workshop
25	Fri, 15 Mar	No class: writing day (av away)
18 – 22 Mar Spring Break		
26	Mon, 25 Mar	No class: individual conferences
27	Wed, 27 Mar	No class: individual conferences
28	Fri, 29 Mar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Essay #2 due ➤ Bring Komunyakaa, <i>Dien Cai Dau</i> ➤ In class: "You and I Are Disappearing," "Reflections of Battle"
29	Mon, 1 Apr	Komunyakaa, <i>Dien Cai Dau</i> pages 3-12: "Camouflaging the Chimera" thru "The Dead at Quang Tri" B
30	Wed, 3 Apr	<i>Dien Cai Dau</i> pages 13-28: "Hanoi Hannah" thru "Seeing in the Dark" C
31	Fri, 5 Apr	<i>Dien Cai Dau</i> pages 29-44: "Tu Do Street" thru "Thanks" D
Mon, 8 Apr TOTAL ECLIPSE No CLASS		
32	Wed, 10 Apr	<i>Dien Cai Dau</i> pages 45-63: "To Have Danced with Death" thru "Facing It" A
33	Fri, 12 Apr	Hamid, <i>The Reluctant Fundamentalist</i> , chpts 1-6 (1-92) A & B
34	Mon, 15 Apr	<i>The Reluctant Fundamentalist</i> , chpts 7-12 (93-184) C & D
35	Wed, 17 Apr	Fountain, <i>Billy Lynn</i> , 1-73 (thru "By Virtue of") C
36	Fri, 19 Apr	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Billy Lynn</i>, 74-156 ("Bully" thru "Dry-Humping") D ➤ Assign: Essay #3
37	Mon, 22 Apr	<i>Billy Lynn</i> , 157-225 ("Jamie Lee" thru "Billy and Mango") A
38	Wed, 24 Apr	<i>Billy Lynn</i> , 226 to end ("Raped" to end) B
39	Fri, 26 Apr	No class: writing/conference day
	Mon, 29 Apr	Reading Day
	Tue, 7 May	Due: Essay #3 on Teams at 11:30

Group A: TBD

Group B: TBD

Group C: TBD

Group D: TBD

**ENGL 258 – American War Literature
Spring 2024, Hendrix College**

Course Description

The purposes of this course are: (1) to engage America's complicated relationship with its military history through narrative expressions of that relationship; (2) to introduce you to the interpretation of literature at the college level; and (3) to practice and improve your abilities to write an academic essay.

ENGL 258 is a [Literary Studies learning domain](#) course. Much of our discussion will be about what literature is about—namely, the human condition, across the full spectrum of its beauty and ugliness: violence, gender & sexuality, race, politics, class, religion, etc. religious belief and disbelief, etc. Treat these subjects with due sensitivity and each other with due respect. I am committed to being mindful that we come together in our studies with different backgrounds, different experiences of the world, different sensibilities and sensitivities. If anything occurs that strikes you as inconsiderate, please do not hesitate to bring it to my attention.

In order to gain as much from this course as possible, you must actively engage the content. While some short lectures by the professor may occur, student interaction—with the stories, with classmates, with the instructor, with your own imaginations and critical eye—will constitute the primary course activity. As this course fulfills the college's [W1 writing requirement](#) and as I am committed to your success, we spend time working on your writing in and out of class, and I am available for additional individual coaching (don't forget about the Writing Center and other resources).

Course Requirements (103 points; grade based on 100-point scale)

- ✘ Class Engagement (10 pts): Based upon attendance and demonstration of preparedness and engagement.
- ✘ Close Reading Prompt (7-13 pts): Once per book (on assigned day), identify a short passage in that day's reading that genuinely makes you curious and/or fascinates you. The point of curiosity or fascination should not be a "what happened" or "what happens" plot point, or not only a plot point. Why is this moment strange? Might understanding it help us understand the whole text? Submit a one-page prompt that (1) retypes the moment of intrigue; and (2) expresses your curiosity/fascination about it. Don't interpret, but in 2-4 sentences indicate as specifically as possible what about this language grabs your attention. Submit it in the novel's Teams folder **an hour before class** the day we discuss that reading. We draw on these for class discussion. You must do one per book, so seven minimum, at one point per. You can also do one additional one per novel, on a different day, for up to three novels, for 2 points each.

**ENGL 258 – American War Literature
Spring 2024, Hendrix College**

- ✗ Writing Exercises (8 pts total): Low-stakes assignments, graded on completion good-faith effort. The first focuses on your relevant background (3 pts), the second on essay structure (5 pts).
- ✗ Essay Drafts (3 pts each): A **full** draft for each of the first two essays.
- ✗ Three Persuasive Essays (15/20/25 pts): You can think of these as analytical or argumentative, but persuasive perhaps describes acts of literary interpretation. Detailed prompts for each are introduced in class. You are not required to do any research, though you are welcome to bring knowledge from other sources or courses to bear. We do in this course what professional writers do—draft, receive feedback, rework, revise. Essays are 6-7 double-spaced pages. Your best essay will be graded on the 25-point scale, your second best on the 20-point scale, your third best on the 15-point scale. Incomplete drafts affect the final essay grade. You must receive a “C” grade on one essay to receive a “C” or higher in the course and receive W1.
- ✗ Style Revision (2 pts/each): For your first two essays, I will indicate something in the prose for you to improve. Revise and resubmit prior to the next essay’s due date.
- ✗ Course Evaluation (2 pts): This optional task is an important reflection opportunity.

SAMPLE GRADES	no extras max pts (100%)	all extras max pts	all extras 75% essay avg	all extras 85% essay avg
Class Engagement	10	10	8	9
Close Reading Prompts	7	13	13	13
Writing Exercises	8	8	8	8
Drafts	6	6	6	6
Essays	60	60	45	51
Revisions		4	4	4
Course Eval		2	2	2
Final	88	103	86	93

**ENGL 258 – American War Literature
Spring 2024, Hendrix College**

Other Policies

- ✎ All members of this community are expected to contribute to a respectful and welcoming environment. If you believe you have been the subject of discrimination, contact the Dean of Students Office (Mike Leblanc, leblanc@hendrix.edu 501-450-1222 or the Title IX Coordinator (Dr. Jennifer Fulbright, SLTC #150, Fulbright@hendrix.edu, 501-505-2901). If you have ideas for improving the classroom experience, talk with me. See the [Hendrix non-discrimination policies](#).
- ✎ **Electronic devices:** E-readers for course material are permitted, except for cell phones. A few cautions: (1) Do not use e-readers for convenience at the expense of active reading. You are still expected to take notes, highlight passages, add comments, etc. (2) Laptops/tablets can be used in class as e-readers. Do not abuse this privilege. Keep in mind: You owe yourselves time away from a screen, and nothing is better for active reading than underlining and annotating paper copies, and taking notes by hand.
- ✎ The **syllabus** is subject to revision as the course progresses. **Always use the current Teams one.**
- ✎ **Disabilities:** Hendrix College accommodates 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.
- ✎ **Your Well-Being:** Many students face mental and/or physical health challenges. If your health status will impact attendance or assignments, please communicate with me as soon as possible. If you would like to implement academic accommodations, contact Julie Brown in the office of Academic Success (brownj@hendrix.edu). To maintain optimal health, utilize campus resources like Hendrix Medical Clinic or Counseling Services (501.450.1448). Your health and wellbeing are important. **Eat well, get sleep, and exercise!**
- ✎ **Email:** Email will be used to contact the entire class for communicating changes to the syllabus and other matters. Check your Hendrix account daily.
- ✎ **Academic Integrity:** High standards of honesty and fairness in academic pursuits are central to intellectual inquiry, character development, and community integrity. Familiarize yourself with the [statement of Academic Integrity](#). Frequently, errors in documentation and attribution are not deliberate attempts to pass off another's ideas and words as one's own, but rather misunderstandings of how to give that other person sufficient credit. Consult with me on potential confusion so we can avoid problems.
- ✎ **Late essays:** For Response Papers, you lose ½ point for every day one is late. For the Writing Exercise and essay drafts, it is a full point. Essays #1 and #2 lose three points per day (on 100-pt scale). The Final Essay cannot be late. 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, of course).

**ENGL 258 – American War Literature
Spring 2024, Hendrix College**

AI-Assisted Writing

On the one hand, I discourage its use. I don't believe it can produce the kind of original work I'm asking you to achieve; I don't believe it can think the way your unique mind thinks or capture your voice. Our goal is to foster your creative critical abilities and your craft talents. We are creating knowledge based on personal encounters with texts; we are not repackaging information. On the other hand, AI is upon us, and it might prove a useful learning tool. I'm eager to talk with you about its value.

If you choose to use AI, you must adhere to academic standards for attribution, validation, and transparency. This means that you must (1) fully document all material that you did not generate [using MLA guidelines](#); (2) check information generated by AI and take full responsibility for its accuracy; (3) identify where and how you used any AI tools; and (4) **reflect in writing** on (a) how it contributed to your work, and (b) how it has made you more attentive writer. You will thus need to append a page or two of additional work. The key word here is "reflect."

Assessment of your work might include how you improve on and surpass the initial contributions of the AI.

We've been living with lower-level AI-assisted writing for many years now in the form of grammar checkers and style support. These tools are not perfect, but they are very good and getting better. This course requires AI-assisted writing in one concrete way:

Anything submitted with word processor under-squiggles for actual errors will not be accepted until you revise those squiggles away. That's just careless. Not including style choices.

Attending to the software's suggestions ideally makes us more aware of our writing and of the rules, and so should make us better writers in the long run.