

Tel Aviv University  
Department of English and American Studies

Writing Proseminar Spring 2020

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“It is the mind that makes the body rich.” *The Taming of the Shrew*, IV. iii.  
“there is nothing/ Either good or bad, but thinking makes it so.” *Hamlet* II.ii.

The Writing Proseminar is a course in academic writing in the field of literature. Students will read a literary work assigned in class and produce a 10-page research paper engaging that literary work and exploring themes or issues evoked by it.

**Goals:** This course is designed to teach and rehearse specific skills, such as close reading and analysis of a literary text; defining purposes and terms; identifying and formulating problematic issues; positioning yourself in an existing interpretive framework and finding your own perspective; addressing and negotiating critical views, developing a coherent critical thesis of your own, summarizing, abstracting and integrating arguments; compiling a bibliography, evaluating evidence; revising purposes, assumptions, organization, language; etc. The paper you produce in this course will be your contribution to the ongoing scholarly conversation about the literary work. It is due at the end of the semester, but the first draft is submitted early on (see our course schedule) and then revised and expanded through discussions with the instructor and input from other students.

**Primary text:** William Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice* (1598). The best scholarly editions are Arden and New Cambridge. Penguin, Folger’s, Signet and some others are also acceptable, and you can get them anywhere, including the online store The Book Depository, which mails books fast and efficiently at no postage charge! In class, we are going to be using the New Cambridge edition in a digital version (on Moodle), but you will need to purchase a hard copy to work with at home and carry around.

**Because this is an intensive writing course, please take into account that you will need to set aside between 6 and 8 hours per week for your reading, writing and library research in addition to the 4 hours of class time. Moreover, it is essential to attend from the first meeting, even if you are not registered yet or are not sure whether you need to take this course, because missing the introduction to our guidelines would cause you to lag behind and would make catching up next to impossible. Please do not expect me to explain assignments by e-mail, and keep in mind that late or inadequate assignments hamper your progress in the course.**

**Requirements:**

- A **research paper** about 10 pages long that fulfils all scholarly requirements, engages at least 4 critical views, provides proper bibliographical documentation and is presented in correct MLA format. The final essay will be graded 50%.
- A **midterm paper**, graded 20%.
- **Three summaries** of substantial critical articles (published sources of no less than 5 pages long). One of those will be the summary of a background source, ungraded; to be explained in class. Two summaries of critical sources will be graded, 5% each.
- Two 5-10 minute **oral reports/** PowerPoint presentations: one on an aspect of Early Modern cultural context and one on a critical article. 3% for each presentation.
- Submit 3 sets of **comments** on a fellow student's paper, up to 4 %.
- At the end of the semester, submit a **portfolio of your work**.

**A grading breakdown:**

1) Midterm essay	20%	18.5
2) Final essay	50%	29.6
3) 2 Summaries, 5% each	10% total	26.4 and 21.5
4) MLA bibliography	10%	26.4 and 1.6
5) 2 oral presentations + slides	6% total	
6) Reader exchange, 2 sets of comments	4% total	

In addition, integral and, therefore, obligatory components of this course are:

- Prepare reading/writing assignments twice a week. There are numerous ungraded assignments that are mandatory and on whose timely fulfillment your progress and your grade depend.
- Class attendance: success in this class depends on regular, punctual attendance. More than three absences are ground for dismissal from the course. Coming in late or leaving early counts as half an absence. Students are responsible for making up all missed work and information, including in the case of illness with a doctor's note or Miluim. If urgent circumstances require your absence, you must speak or write to me **in advance**.
- participation in class discussion, including oral presentations and reports,
- collaborative work which includes exchanging drafts with fellow students and making responsible critical comments on their work in progress,
- participation in conferences with instructor and one or more fellow students when such conferences are scheduled, after the submission of your midterm draft.

We have a Moodle site, and **your responsibility is to check the site** every day for assignments, updates and material to download. Announcements will be posted on Moodle as well as forwarded to your TAU mail accounts.

### Academic Integrity and Plagiarism:

The key academic responsibility, and the underlying assumption of research, is making a careful distinction between your own thinking and writing and that of others. Plagiarism is the act of passing off another person's writing or ideas as your own. Violations of academic integrity are reported to the Department of English and American Studies and result in a failing grade: a first-time offence results in a failing grade for the assignment; a second-time offence results in failing the course and suspension of further studies.

I know that most cases of plagiarism derive from not knowing how to cite sources properly. To make sure that you know how to avoid plagiarism and how to make the most of your secondary sources, we are going to go over The Harvard Guide for Using Sources: <http://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do>. This will be your reference site for citing, and your continued attendance is a sign of commitment to citing sources properly.

**Classroom Etiquette:** please respect your classmates and conduct yourself in the classroom as you would in a professional setting. Engaging in any activity not related directly to class matters on your smartphone or laptop, such as texting or receiving phone calls, is not allowed. Any of these activities will be considered extremely disrespectful to the class and, if pursued, would affect your grade.

**E-mail etiquette:** we shall address each other as "Dear First Name." Addressing your teacher by "hi," "hey," or "hello" is not appropriate. All your e-mail messages must have a subject line, such as "Proseminar 12-2," or "Question about the summary of Bloom's article." Proofread your messages for grammatical errors.

### A brief tentative schedule (to be updated and detailed within the first two weeks of the course)

date	In-class agenda	Work due for class
1. Mon Mar 9	Introduction: expectations, guidelines, requirements. Text, context, close reading.	
2. Thu Mar 12	Class discussion based on your journal entries and notecards.  Argument; Essay structure; paragraphs; topics	Read Act I of <i>The Merchant</i> . List questions/ notes for each scene. Upload your lists on Moodle (your group site).
3. Mon Mar 16	Agenda: Class discussion of text issues, based on your homework as above. Working with the OED. <b>Assigning topics for background</b>	Read Acts II and III. 1) Hand in 10 more questions, at least one for each scene, marking the scene and line numbers. 2) OED search of 10 words;

	<b>report.</b> This or next class: The Harvard Guide to Using Sources. Going over selected aspects.	also hand in.
4. Thu Mar 19	Agenda: Class discussion of text issues, as above. Discussion of selected Moodle resources on Writing and Argument	For this class: Read Act IV. 1) List questions and observations to bring up in class discussion; submit. 2) List relevant OED denotations of at least 10 interesting words. 3) Work on your background reports. 4) For next class: having read the whole play, <b>upload by Sunday Mar 22 9pm.</b> a list of 2-3 topics/issues you might like to explore; for each topic, list at least 5 questions you can ask about it.
5. Mon Mar 23	Agenda: discussion of the complete play. Discussion of research topics. Academic honesty; Harvard Guide on using sources Summary guidelines	<b>Finish reading the play;</b> 1) A list of OED words. <b>Hand in</b> at end of class. 2) By the <b>end of the day, send me</b> a brief PowerPoint presentation of your background material. (Mar 23!)
6. Thu Mar 26	Agenda: Constructing research problems; first round of background reports.  Summary guidelines	For this class: Read Richard Young on constructing problems. Construct a problem that your paper may explore. Write a paragraph formulating the problem acc. to Richard Young's heuristic; <b>upload by Wed Mar 25 10 pm.</b> Prepare for next class by reading Cooper's article.
7. Mon Mar 30	Discussing your problem formulations. Outlines. Secondary sources. Harvard Guide. Background reports, cont'd.	For this class: read Cooper's "Shylock's Humanity."
8. Thu April 2	1) Discussion: John Cooper, "Shylock's Humanity." 2) Remaining reports. 3) Discussion of your first draft requirements and plans for after the vacation.	<b>By April 2, 8am or by the end of the day, upload</b> a 3-page draft of an essay (Pre-draft). It should focus on a problematic issue, contextualize it, formulate a thesis and start developing an argument towards proving it. <b>Do not use any secondary sources yet.</b> Follow the draft with an outline. Not graded, but will serve as a diagnostic paper.
	Passover break.	1) Please read the two articles (see below); 2) do the MLA search and select a source for your second

		presentation. <b>Upload</b> a copy of your bibliography, with your choices marked, anytime by <b>8pm on Sun April 19</b> .
9. Mon Apr 20	Going over your papers – workshop in class. Assigning choices for presentations. Possibly: introductions.	Due: Summary of your background article (write-up of your oral report) ( <b>summary #1, 250 - 500 words, upload on Moodle by April 19 8pm.</b> )
10. Thu Apr 23	Shakespearean comedy, introduction to sources.	Carry out an MLA search of the library's databases (EBSCO); print out a list of 15 items – and mark your 3 choices of an article to report on later (no need to read the article yet! Use the title for guidance). <b>*upload</b> a copy of your bibliography, with your choices marked, anytime by <b>8pm on Sun April 19</b> .
11. Mon Apr 27	Discussion of a critical article	Read essays by Bloom and Girard. <b>Summary #2 due, of either of these, no more than 300 words, upload on Moodle by Sun Apr 26 8pm</b>
12. Thu Apr 30	Discussion of the critical articles	Work on your critical article presentation
13. Mon May 4	Introductions, part 2, with illustrations.	Send me Slide presentations by e-mail <b>by Tue May 5</b>
14. Thu May 7	Theory of Shakespearean Comedy, a brief overview and introduction to sources. Some critical article reports.	
15. Mon May 11	Oral reports on critical articles. Going over MLA bibliography rules	The written summary of the article on which you reported (summary #3, up to 300 words, graded) will be <b>due</b> by May 21.
16. Thu May 16	Oral reports, cont'd.	Working on your midterm drafts
17. Mon May 18	Draft exchange. Instructions will be given.	<b>Due: the Midterm draft – the first 5 pages of your essay.</b> This draft counts for 20% of your grade.
18. Thu May 21	Bibliography or other issues. Perhaps: Excerpts from Jonathan Miller's National Theatre Company production of MV (1970, with Sir Lawrence Olivier)	<b>Due:</b> a summary of the article on which you reported orally ( <b>Summary #3, 300 words</b> ).
19. Mon	1) Conferences in Webb 502.	

May 25 Eid- el_Fiter	schedule will be posted on the site. (revised draft to be submitted within a week)	
Thu May 28	Shavuot – no classes	
20. Mon June 1	Conferences in Webb 502, continued. Revised draft to be submitted within a week.	Revised <b>bibliography due</b> .
May 4	Yom Hastudent. Group 10-12 may have conferences. TBA	<b>Revised draft (#3) due</b> from those who had their conference on meeting 19.
21. Mon Jun 8	Conferences.	
22. Thu Jun 11	Conferences in Webb.	Revised draft (#3) <b>due</b> from those who had their conference on meeting 20.
23. Mon Jun 15	Conferences	Revised draft #3 <b>due</b> from the last remaining students.
24. Thu Jun 18	Conferences.	<b>Content-function outlines</b> (place in portfolio)
25 Mon Jun 22	Conferences or workshop, TBA. <b>Abstracts due</b> . Last-minute questions; critical interchange of comments and suggestions.	
26 Thu Jun 26	A mini-symposium: each of you reading out an abstract of your work; Last-minute fine-tuning, draft exchanges and conferences	
Mon June 29		Portfolios due; Final essays due by uploading on Moodle by 12 pm.