

AP/EN 4332 3.0A (F)
Edgar Allan Poe
Fall 2019

Time: Tuesday 2:30 – 5:20

Place: Calumet College 318

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Edgar Allan Poe is one of the most important figures in the history of American literature and a far more versatile writer than most people know. He contributed to a variety of literary forms and genres. He invented detective fiction forty years before the first Sherlock Holmes story appeared. He fostered the developing genre of science fiction with several tales and his one novel, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*. A handful of his tales are considered masterpieces of terror fiction, perfect specimens not only of the short story form but also of a new kind of writing: psychological Gothic. Additionally, Poe wrote comedies (though not very funny ones). In his own time, he was known primarily for his often-scathing literary reviews; in them he was striving toward coherent critical theories about the short story and lyric poetry. He finally brought the theories together in a handful of essays that demand attention. The best of his own short stories and poems *illustrate* his (rather magisterial and exclusive) beliefs about how (and why) one goes about composing a short tale of Gothic terror, or a short lyric poem. Poetry, Poe said, was his greatest passion; for him it was, in fact, rather like a religion.

In this course we examine a healthy selection of Poe's many forms, genres, and sub-genres. In the context of his theories regarding the short story, we study several of his best-known tales of terror. We discover, for one thing, that despite his claims to hatred of allegory, many of his tales are in fact allegorical. We read his detective stories to observe how he established almost all of the key conventions of the genre. We also dip into his "comedic" tales. With one eye on his theories of lyric poetry, we study several of his poems, including those for which he is most famous, including "Annabel Lee," "The Bells," and, of course, "The Raven."

We take a variety of critical approaches to the texts: history-of-ideas; psychoanalytic; feminist; generic; New Critical (stylistics, rhetoric, linguistics). Since Poe contributed so significantly to psychological terror, we examine theories of mind coeval with Poe (phrenology, physiognomy, "moral insanity," "intellectual insanity," "religious insanity") but also some of those current in our own time (as taken from the latest edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*). As well, we draw upon stylistics, examining not only what Poe wrote but also how he wrote: we touch on linguistics but mostly fall back on what was the very first stylistics—classical rhetoric—to demonstrate that Poe was a *master* of language, a linguistic genius. We must not forget, furthermore, that Poe's narrators are rhetoricians, even orators, trying to convince us of their (often warped) perspectives; so we see how they employ some of the classical figures of speech, figures of thought, and Aristotelian appeals in order to get us to see their points of view.

* indicates primary course kit materials; most others are in the official course edition (Kennedy)

September 10: **Introduction and administrative duties**

READ (secondary): "Introduction to Poe Course"*; "Chronology"*; "Selected Literary History of the United States: 1794-1865"*; "Other Writers on Poe"*; "Poe and His Contemporary American Authors"*; "Poe's Prose Fiction by Genres"*

Note: read the selections in precisely the order in which they appear in each week's schedule. For all primary works, consult "Questions for Directed Reading" (PDF available on the LIVE syllabus).

Sept. 17: **Parody and the Sensation Tales**

READ (secondary): "The Features of Gothic Literature"*; "Introduction to 'How to Write a *Blackwood* Article'"*; "Mr. Blackwood and the 'Tone Metaphysical'"*;

READ (primary): "How to Write a *Blackwood* Article"*; "A Predicament"*;

READ (secondary): "Introduction to 'The Pit and the Pendulum'"*;

READ (primary): "The Buried Alive"*; "The Pit and the Pendulum"

Sept. 24: **Poe on the Short Story, and Allegory; the *Vanitas* Trilogy**

READ (secondary): "Poe's Literary Theory and the Short Story" (essay in the MLA format)*; "Definitions and Pictorial Aids for 'The Masque of the Red Death'"*;

CONSULT: "Prospero's Clock-Suite and Colour Symbolism"*;

READ (primary): *Chromatography* (excerpts); *Symbolic Colours* (excerpts)*;

CONSULT: "Another Version of Prospero's Clock-Architecture"*;

READ (secondary): "*Vanitas* Paintings and Poe's *Vanitas* Trilogy";

CONSULT: "Illustration for Poe's Plague Tales"*;

READ (primary): "The Masque of the Red Death";

READ (primary): "King Pest the First. A Tale Containing an Allegory"

<https://www.eapoe.org/works/harrison/jah02t13.htm>

October 1: **Poe's Theories on Lyric Poetry I**

READ (secondary): "Poe and the Poetic Principle"*; "Poe's Poetry"*;

READ (primary): "The Poetic Principle"; "Israfel," "To Helen," "The Bells," "Fairy-Land," "Annabel Lee," "To One in Paradise" (pp. 93-94 in Kennedy, in the tale "The Assigination")

Oct. 1: C.R.A. (Critical Reading Assignment on "The Raven") to be done in class
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Poe's Theories on Lyric Poetry II

READ (secondary): "Introduction to 'The Raven'"*;

READ (primary): "The Raven"; "The Philosophy of Composition"

Oct. 8: **The "Transcendental" Tales**

READ (secondary): "Transcendentalism"*; "Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman: Transcendental Utterances"*; "Excerpts Relevant to Poe's Tales of

Palingenesis"*; "Transcendental Realm of Supernal Beauty"*; "Introduction to 'Berenice'"*; "Excerpts Relevant to 'Berenice'"*; "Introduction to 'Morella'"*;

READ (primary): “Berenice”; “Morella”;
READ (secondary): “Feminist Readings of Poe Tales”*

Oct. 12 – 18 Fall Reading Week: No classes—whoo hoo! ☺

- Oct. 22: **The “Transcendental” Tales, continued**
READ (secondary): “Poe’s Tales and Silly Vampire Theories; or, Poe Scholarship at its Worst”*; “Classic American Literary Patterns Involving Men and Women”*; “Poe, Phrenology, and Physiognomy”*; “Poe’s Review of *Phrenology*”*; “Phrenological Diagram or Map”*; “Plates from Lavater’s *Essays on Physiognomy*”*; “Introduction to ‘Ligeia’”*; “Analogies and the Transcendentalists’ Theory of Correspondences”*;
CONSULT: “Phrenology Advertisement”*;
READ (primary): “Ligeia”
- Oct. 29: **Taphephobia and Weird Siblings; or, “I’m not quite dead yet”**
READ (secondary): “Introduction to ‘The Premature Burial’”*; “More on ‘The Premature Burial’”*; “‘The Premature Burial’: Psychological Profile of the Narrator”*;
CONSULT: “Coffin-bell”*;
READ (primary): “The Premature Burial”;
READ (secondary): “Introduction to ‘The Fall of the House of Usher’”*; “Poe on Human Nature and the Tripartite Mind”*; “The Cult of Sensibility: The Ability to *Feel*”*; “Sensibility, Phrenology, and ‘The Fall of the House of Usher’”*; “Exegetical Schema for ‘The Fall of the House of Usher’”*; “Allegorical Readings of ‘The Fall of the House of Usher’”*; “‘Usher’: An Exegetical Smorgasbord”*; “Some Naturalistic Explanations for ‘The Fall of the House of Usher’”*; “‘Usher’ and the Phrenologists: Theory and Text”*; “The Phrenological Allegory in ‘Usher’: Summary”*; “Phrenological Architecture, from L. N. Fowler”*; “American Phrenological Journal—Cover”*;
READ (primary): “The Fall of the House of Usher”
- Nov. 5: **Schizophrenia and Frantic Forensic Oratory**
READ (secondary): “Instances of *Ecphonesis* in ‘The Tell-Tale Heart’”*; “Classical Rhetoric and Oratory: A Brief Summary”*; “The Rhetorical Structure of ‘The Tell-Tale Heart’”*; “‘The Tell-Tale Heart’ in the Context of Transcendental Epistemology”*;
READ (primary): “The Tell-Tale Heart”
- Nov. 12: **Temperance Literature and More Homicidal Rhetoricians**
READ (secondary): “‘Religious Insanity,’ Alcoholism, and ‘The Black Cat’”*; “The Inner-Directed Rhetoric of ‘The Black Cat’”*; “‘The Imp of the Perverse’ and the High Place Phenomenon”*;
READ (primary): “The Imp of the Perverse”; “The Black Cat”
- Nov. 19: **Criminals and Crime-Solvers**
READ (secondary): “Introduction to ‘The Cask of Amontillado’”*; “‘The Wheel of Fortune’ and ‘The Cask of Amontillado’”*;
READ (primary): “The Cask of Amontillado”

READ (secondary): “Poe’s Contributions to Detective Fiction: Conventions”*;
 “Form in Poe’s—and Classic—Detective Fiction”*;
 READ (primary): “Thou Art the Man”*
 READ (secondary): “Psychopathology in ‘Thou Art the Man’”*; “Description of
 the Psychopathic Personality, 1845”*

Nov. 26: **Poe Invents a New Literary Genre: Detective Fiction!**
 READ (secondary): “The Dupin Tales: His Methods and Philosophy of
 Detection”*; “The Bipartite Dupin”*; “The Dupin Tales, the Tripartite Theory of
 Mind, and Psychological Identification”*; “Phrenology and Race”*; “The
 Allegory in ‘Rue Morgue’”*;
 READ (primary): “The Murders in the Rue Morgue”; “The Purloined Letter”

Nov. 26th: final date to submit **JSTOR** research assignment

December 3: exam review

December 3rd: **essay due**
 Final exam during the official exam period from Dec. 5th – 20th

Dec. 3: Fall classes end; Dec. 4th: last day to submit fall-term work

Course requirements

essay:	35%
exam:	35%
participation:	15%
JSTOR Research assignment:	5%
C.R.A. (critical-reading assignment):	10%

Students are expected to submit *all* assignments to be eligible to pass this course. Submission of all assignments does not *guarantee* a pass, however.

Policies

A late essay will be penalized 5% automatically and an additional 2% for every day that passes after the due date (except in the case of personal problems proved with what I consider acceptable documentation).

A missed final test must be supported with documentation (e.g., a doctor’s note) that I consider acceptable. Normally, a make-up test will be provided to be written at a time and date agreed upon by me and the student(s) involved.

If you are having some kind of personal crisis that may cause you to miss more than one class in a row, or if you think you might miss the essay due date or test, notify me *beforehand*. In other words, if something’s going on in your life that you feel may seriously affect your academic performance, *contact me* before you run that risk. Don’t wait until *after*. That sort of poor timing does little to elicit my sympathy and gives the impression that you’re merely making excuses for your poor academic performance.

A Friendly Note Regarding Academic Expectations

Studies have shown that students and instructors often differ on the issue of grade expectations; that, in turn, can lead to conflicts over marks assigned. In a U.S. study, some students were quoted as saying they deserve a “B” simply for attending class or merely for doing the course readings! That unhealthy attitude can only lead to grief, so let’s clear up a few misconceptions right at the outset of this course.

There isn’t always a direct correlation between work ethic and grades. Just because you put a lot of effort into studying for a test or writing an essay doesn’t mean you’ll automatically receive a high grade. Certainly, an impressive work ethic is something successful students typically have but **quantity of effort must be combined with quality of production** for grades of which you can be proud. You can spend weeks sweating over an essay but if the thesis is flawed or absent, and/or the writing is atrocious, and/or the organization is poor, you will likely be disappointed with the grade regardless of the “blood, sweat, and tears” that went into the paper. You can spend days preparing for a test or exam but if you were working from poor class notes and/or have weak retention skills and/or shabby writing skills, then, again, you’ll probably be unhappy with the grade you get. Always remember that **you’re not only being evaluated on the basis of effort but also—and more importantly—on the basis of *the critical skills you’ve picked up and applied.***

So, again, keep in mind that you shouldn’t confuse level of effort with quality of work. Students who make that mistake are often the same ones who blame their instructors as being incompetent instead of taking a good hard look at themselves. As one academic put it, “Attributing the outcome of a failure to someone else is a common problem.” If you cultivate the proper attitude towards the issue of academic expectations, you can save yourself, and your instructors, a lot of grief. Have realistic and healthy expectations.

Reading List

Kennedy is the official course edition but any edition will do:

Kennedy, J. Gerald, ed. *The Portable Edgar Allan Poe*. New York: Penguin, 2006.

Zimmerman, Brett. *AS/EN 4332 Edgar Allan Poe* – primary course kit

Zimmerman, Brett. *AS/EN 4332 Edgar Allan Poe* – critical skills course kit

Recommended purchases

Every serious English major should own

Joseph Gibaldi, *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, latest edition

and the latest editions of one or more of the following:

M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*

- not a comprehensive literary catalogue but includes excellent short essays on various critical approaches to literature

Chris Baldick, *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Literary Terms*

- inexpensive because abbreviated; better than nothing

Edwin J. Barton and Glenda A. Hudson, *A Contemporary Guide to Literary Terms*

- expensive, far from comprehensive, but quite useful anyway

Jean Chevalier and Alain Gheerbrant, *The Penguin Dictionary of Symbols*

J. A. Cuddon, *Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*

- expensive but comprehensive

Northrop Frye, Sheridan Baker, George Perkins, *The Harper Handbook to Literature*

Martin Gray, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms*

William Harmon and C. Hugh Holman, *A Handbook to Literature*

- my personal favourite; expensive but comprehensive

X. J. Kennedy, Dana Gioia, Mark Bauerlein, *Handbook of Literary Terms: Literature, Language, Theory*

- short but useful

Rules, Guidelines, and Friendly Advice to Students

Courteous In-Class Behaviour

1. ***Please do not carry on private conversations when the instructor is teaching*** or when other students are legitimately contributing to class discussion. Show them the same respect and courtesy that you'd want. I simply will not tolerate this sort of boorish behaviour; it's unworthy of university students.
2. ***Live cell phones are NOT permitted in the lecture or tutorial.*** Please remember to turn off your cell phone before entering class. Some instructors will ask students whose phones have gone off to leave for the duration of that class; others will simply chastise them at length—a rather humiliating experience.
3. ***If you bring a laptop to class, you will be expected to use it for class-related purposes;*** mostly, that means for word-processing. Using it for non-class-related purposes, such as surfing the internet or playing games, is a sign of extreme disrespect not only toward your instructor but also toward your fellow students, especially those beside and behind you who may be distracted by an illegitimate use of the device. Some instructors have even asked students guilty of the laptop's misuse to leave the class for the duration of the lesson—another humiliating experience.
4. ***Do not start packing up when you sense the lesson is drawing to a close if the instructor is still speaking.*** That practice is noisy, distracting, and disrespectful. The instructor will *tell you* when the lesson is finished, or we'll decide together.

Academic Integrity

5. ***Plagiarism is a serious offense!*** You may not present other people's words or ideas—whether word-for-word, in paraphrase, or in summary—as if they are your own. Cite all sources in both written work and oral presentations. Failure to do so will lead to severe penalties; please read your material on academic honesty.

Important Dates and Procedures

You are responsible for knowing sessional dates, including drop dates. If you wish to drop the course, you must do so by the drop date through the registrar's office; in other words, your exit must be done *officially*. You can't simply stop coming to class. If your name is still on the list by the end of the course, and you've done none or very little of the work, you'll receive an F. To get the F dropped from your transcript, you'll have to go through a petition process, and the members of the petitions committee typically do not sympathize with students who failed to familiarize themselves with the university's rules and regulations regarding drop dates and other important matters.

Senate Policy on Academic Honesty

The Policy on Academic Honesty is an affirmation and clarification for members of the University of the general obligation to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty. As a clear sense of academic honesty and responsibility is fundamental to good scholarship, the policy recognizes the general responsibility of all faculty members to foster acceptable standards of academic conduct and of the student to be mindful of and abide by such standards.

Academic honesty requires that persons do not falsely claim credit for the ideas, writing or other intellectual property of others, either by presenting such works as their own or through impersonation. Similarly, academic honesty requires that persons do not cheat (attempt to gain an improper advantage in an academic evaluation), nor attempt or actually alter, suppress, falsify or fabricate any research data or results, official academic record, application or document.

Suspected breaches of academic honesty will be investigated and charges shall be laid if reasonable and probable grounds exist. A student who is charged with a breach of academic honesty shall be presumed innocent until, based upon clear and compelling evidence, a committee determines the student has violated the academic honesty standards of the university. A finding of academic misconduct will lead to the range of penalties described in the guidelines which accompany this policy. In some cases the University regulations on non-academic discipline may apply. A lack of familiarity with the Senate Policy and Guidelines on Academic Honesty on the part of a student does not constitute a defence against their application. Some academic offences constitute offences under the Criminal Code of Canada; a student charged under University regulations may also be subject to criminal charges. Charges may also be laid against York University students for matters which arise at other educational institutions.

2. Senate Guidelines on Academic Honesty

2.1 Summary of Offences Against the Standards of Academic Honesty

The following summary of offences is not exhaustive, nor are the definitions provided for each offence confined to the examples cited.

2.1.1 Cheating is the attempt to gain an improper advantage in an academic evaluation.

Forms of cheating include:

- Obtaining a copy of an examination before it is officially available or learning an examination question before it is officially available;
- Copying another person's answer to an examination question;
- Consulting an unauthorized source during an examination;
- Obtaining assistance by means of documentary, electronic or other aids which are not approved by the instructor;
- Changing a score or a record of an examination result;
- Submitting the work one has done for one class or project to a second class, or as a second project, without the prior informed consent of the relevant instructors;
- Submitting work prepared in collaboration with another or other member(s) of a class, when collaborative work on a project has not been authorized by the instructor;
- Submitting work prepared in whole or in part by another person and representing that work as one's own;
- Offering for sale essays or other assignments, in whole or in part, with the expectation that these works will be submitted by a student for appraisal;
- Preparing work in whole or in part, with the expectation that this work will be submitted by a student for appraisal.

- 2.1.2 Impersonation is to have someone impersonate one's self in class, in a test, examination or interview, or in connection with any other type of assignment or placement associated with a course or academic program. Both the impersonator and the individual impersonated may be charged.
- 2.1.3 Plagiarism is the misappropriation of the work of another by representing another person's ideas, writing or other intellectual property as one's own. This includes the presentation of all or part of another person's work as something one has written, paraphrasing another's writing without proper acknowledgement, or representing another's artistic or technical work or creation as one's own. Any use of the work of others, whether published, unpublished or posted electronically, attributed or anonymous, must include proper acknowledgement.

All students are expected to familiarize themselves with the following information, available on the Senate Committee on Curriculum & Academic Standards webpage:

http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/senate_cte_main_pages/ccas.htm

- York's Academic Honesty Policy and Procedures/Academic Integrity Website
- Ethics Review Process for research involving human participants
- Course requirement accommodation for students with disabilities, including physical, medical, systemic, learning and psychiatric disabilities
- Student Conduct Standards
- Religious Observance Accommodation