

## GOALS FOR ENGLISH MAJORS OHIO WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

- A. Affirm the conviction that literature enriches human experience, as evidenced by:**
1. The habit of reading for pleasure and knowledge
  2. An awareness of and appreciation for how literature (fiction, drama, poetry, nonfiction, hybrid genres) can contribute to the development of a person's moral imagination
  3. An awareness that literature contributes to a person's ability to understand both the world and the self in new ways
- B. Cultivate curiosity about the relationship of language and literature to cultural, scholarly, and historical contexts, along with strategies to begin to satisfy that curiosity, including:**
1. The ability to ask significant questions on subjects such as literary, philosophical, social, political, religious, moral, multicultural, and theological contexts
  2. The ability to use diverse resources (in print and on line as well as personal) to seek evidence and ideas that might help answer those questions referred to in B.1 ("information literacy"<sup>1</sup>)
  3. The awareness of criticism as a cooperative effort among readers, which would include:
    - a. The ability to do close textual analysis
    - b. A basic critical vocabulary and familiarity with major critical theories
    - c. The awareness of one's own critical assumptions, as well as those of others
- C. Develop reading skills, including:**
1. Close reading skills: the ability to recognize and analyze:
    - a. Conventions of all sorts, as well as the effects of observing and violating them
    - b. Structure
    - c. Genre (especially distinguishing features of narrative, drama, poetry, essay)
    - d. Linguistic features
    - e. Rhetorical features (based on categories of author, subject, purpose, audience)
  2. A working definition of "literariness"<sup>2</sup>:
    - a. Familiarity with ways of distinguishing instrumental from aesthetic discourse
    - b. Sensitivity to the polysemous nature of literary language ("polysemous" is "having or characterized by many meanings"<sup>3</sup>; literary language tends to have multiple meanings and thrive on ambiguities)
    - c. Ability to formulate value judgments about literature
  3. Sensitivity to language as a medium
    - a. Denotation, connotation, and association
    - b. Prosody ("the study of versification, particularly as it encompasses meter, rhyme, rhythm, and stanzaic form, and—to a lesser degree—sound patterns"<sup>4</sup>)
    - c. Figurative language, subdivided into tropes (like metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, simile, irony) and figures of speech (like antithesis, apostrophe, hyperbole, personification)

---

<sup>1</sup> See the web site of The National Forum on Information Literacy (<http://www.infolit.org/>).

<sup>2</sup> See The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, for an extended definition.

<sup>3</sup> American Heritage Dictionary.

<sup>4</sup> The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition.

- d. Linguistic change and variation
- e. Various styles (high, middle, low, mixed)

**D. Develop writing skills, including:**

1. Extensive acquaintance with the writing process (pre-writing, drafting, revision, editing, proofreading, and manuscript preparation)
2. Sensitivity to the rhetorical situation (author, subject, purpose, audience)
3. The ability to:
  - a. Write in grammatically correct and syntactically sophisticated prose
  - b. Produce a classic thesis-driven essay
  - c. Construct an argument appropriate to the purpose
  - d. Support an argument with relevant and sufficient evidence
  - e. Use the library and online databases effectively
  - f. Adapt style to purpose and audience
  - g. Use or adapt the conventions of a variety of traditional genres

**E. Cultivate knowledge of authors, texts, and language by reading a selection of literature in the English curriculum that introduces:**

1. Historical perspectives (including the traditional canon as well as extensions of it)
2. Non-English texts that have profoundly shaped literature in English (such as the Bible and Aristotle)
3. Literature in English as an historical and global phenomenon.
4. Canon formation as affected by issues of race, class, and gender (What counts as “literature” and why?)
5. Intertextuality (connections among different texts, both explicit and implicit)