

**How to Do Things with Literature: Theory / Method / Practice
ENG7/8000 // Literary Research // Fall 2026**

Professor:
Donal Harris

Class Information:
TBA

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Course Content: This course offers a selective introduction to recent initiatives in the professional study of literature. Our goal is to acclimate new MA and PhD students to the expectations of graduate-level research and writing, with an eye toward the types of professional practices that will mostly likely be expected of an individual with a PhD in English.

We have three related course objectives: 1) a primer on trends in contemporary criticism and literary theory 2) a practicum on developing and then executing graduate-level scholarship 3) an overview of what types of research recent English PhDs have produced, and how they use their degrees.

To accomplish the first objective, each week we will examine key essays from the last half-century of literary and cultural criticism, putting them in intellectual and historical context, analyzing them as rhetorical constructions, and assessing their implications for contemporary literary and scholarly practice. To accomplish the second, our in-class discussions and course assignments will emphasize how to replicate the various skills in original research, stylish writing, and convincing argumentation that these articles exemplify. For the third, we'll welcome several guests to share their research and where it led them.

Readings inevitably reflect the interests of the instructor, but they will range across several major phases and schools of thought, and will be paired with relatively brief, canonical primary texts that repeatedly show up on MA and PhD exams.

Required Texts:

1. T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*. Ed. Michael North (New York: Norton, 2000) ISBN 978-0-393-97499-7
2. Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw*. Ed Deborah Esch and Jonathan Warren (New York: Norton, 1999) ISBN 978-0-393-95904-8
3. Percival Everett, *James: A Novel* (New York: Doubleday, 2024) ISBN: 978-0385550369

Recommended Texts:

1. Jonathan Culler, *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford UP, 1997) ISBN: 978-0199691340
2. Eric Hayot, *The Elements of Academic Style* (New York: Columbia, 2014) ISBN: 9780231168014
3. Katina Rogers, *Putting the Humanities PhD to Work: Thriving in and Beyond the Classroom* (Durham: Duke UP, 2020)
4. Wendy Belcher, [*Writing Advice for Academics*](#)