



English (ENGL) 211

Reading Novels and Short Stories (Revision 8)

Status: Replaced with new revision, see the [course listing](#) for the current revision ❌

Delivery mode: [Individualized study online](#). Delivered via Brightspace.

Credits: 3

Areas of study: Arts or Humanities

Prerequisites: None. Students without prior writing instruction are strongly urged to take **ENGL 255**. Note that English language fluency is required for taking English 211.

Precluded:

ENGL 211 cannot be taken for credit if credit has already been obtained for ENGL 210.

Challenge:

ENGL 211 has a challenge for credit option.

Faculty:

[Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences](#) 

Overview

English 211: Reading Novels and Short Stories is a three-credit junior-level course in which you will use the methods of literary studies to analyze a variety of works of fiction.

The texts that you will study in this course include short stories, novels, and one graphic novel, ranging from the nineteenth to the twenty-first centuries, from writers of diverse backgrounds and nationalities. Through examining these works and the accompanying commentaries in the Study Guide, you will encounter major literary concepts, terms, and analytical strategies, with a particular focus on examining texts carefully in order to compose written critical analyses of their meaning.

By the end of the course, you will have considered how electricity can serve as a metaphor for foolish hope, traced the symbolic meanings of a granola bar wrapper, and been lied to by an old lady. In helping you develop a richer understanding of how fiction works, this course will serve as a foundation for further studies in literature and for your everyday encounters with literary and cultural texts of all kinds.

Outline

Unit 1: Short Stories

Through an examination of selected short stories, Unit 1 provides an introduction to close reading, analytical writing, and selected key concepts in literary studies as they relate to the assigned texts.

Unit 2: *Borders*

This unit examines the graphic novel *Borders*, written by Thomas King and illustrated by Natasha Donovan.

Unit 3: *Brother*

This unit examines David Chariandy's novel *Brother*.

Unit 4: *Drive Your Plow over the Bones of the Dead*

This unit examines Olga Tokarczuk's novel *Drive Your Plow over the Bones of the Dead*.

Unit 5: *Temporary*

This unit examines Hilary Leichter's novel *Temporary*.

Learning outcomes

When students have completed English 211: Reading Novels and Short Stories, they should be able to

- apply the skills of close reading in relation to the assigned texts

- analyze the ways in which relevant literary elements such as metaphor, irony, point of view, form, imagery, setting, and others operate within specific texts
- demonstrate a clear understanding of the ways in which particular themes and ideas are represented through both the form and the content of the assigned texts
- create thoughtful, insightful, well-written, and well-supported critical analyses of literature in essay form


Note: Fluency in the English language is required for taking English 211. If you are unsure of your literacy skills please use our [English Language Assessment tool](#) to assess your readiness for this course. Athabasca University also offers courses in English language and writing skills: [ENGL 140: Grammar](#), [ENGL 145: Reading and Writing for Academic Purposes](#), [ENGL 155: Developing Writing Skills](#), [ENGL 177: English for Academic Purposes](#), [ENGL 189: English for Business](#).

Evaluation

To **receive credit** for English 211, students must submit all three assignments, including the brief self-reflection that is part of each of them, obtain a minimum grade of 50% on the exam, and obtain a final course grade of at least **D (50%)**. The weighting of the course assignments is as follows:

Assignment	Weighting	Due
Essay 1: Passage Analysis	10%	After Unit 1

Assignment	Weighting	Due
Essay 2: Analysis of <i>Borders</i> and/or <i>Brother</i>	25%	After Unit 3
Essay 3: Analysis of <i>Drive Your Plow over the Bones of the Dead</i> or <i>Temporary</i>	25%	After Unit 5
Final Exam	40%	After Unit 5
Total	100%	

The **final examination** for this course must be requested in advance and written under the supervision of an AU-approved exam invigilator. Invigilators include either ProctorU or an approved in-person invigilation centre that can accommodate online exams. Students are responsible for payment of any invigilation fees. Information on exam request deadlines, invigilators, and other exam-related questions, can be found at the [Exams and grades](#)  section of the Calendar.

Materials

Physical course materials

The following course materials are included in a course package that will be shipped to your home prior to your course's start date:

Chariandy, David. *Brother*. McClelland & Stewart, 2017.

Gardner, Janet E., and Joanne Diaz. *Reading and Writing about Literature: A Portable Guide*. 6th ed., Bedford/St. Martin's, 2025.

King, Thomas. *Borders*. Illustrated by Natasha Donovan, HarperCollins, 2021.

Leichter, Hilary. *Temporary*. Coffee House Press, 2020.

Tokarczuk, Olga. *Drive Your Plow over the Bones of the Dead*. 2009. Translated by Antonia Lloyd-Jones, Riverhead Books, 2019.

Other materials

All other course materials, including a Study Guide, additional selected readings, and detailed course information, will be provided online.

Challenge for credit

Overview

The challenge for credit process allows you to demonstrate that you have acquired a command of the general subject matter, knowledge, intellectual and/or other skills that would normally be found in a university-level course.

Full information about **challenge for credit** [↗](#) can be found in the Undergraduate Calendar.

Evaluation

To **receive credit** [↗](#) for the ENGL 211 challenge registration, you must achieve a grade of at least 50 per cent on the examination and a grade of at least **D (50 percent)** [📄](#) overall.

Note that the challenge option requires more writing in total than the standard registration, and it expects students to demonstrate mastery of the course concepts, but it does not include access to the Study Guide lessons, the full list of readings, or any teaching support.

Activity	Weight
Critical Essay	50%
Exam	50%
Total	100%

[📄](#) **Challenge for credit course registration form**

Important links

- › [Academic advising](#) [↗](#)
- › [Program planning](#) [↗](#)
- › [Request assistance](#) [↗](#)

> [Support services at AU](#) 

Athabasca University reserves the right to amend course outlines occasionally and without notice. Courses offered by other delivery modes may vary from their individualized study counterparts.

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View [previous revision](#) 
