



English (ENGL) 306

The Literature of Work (Revision 4)

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: A university English literature course is recommended.

Precluded: None

Challenge: ENGL 306 has a challenge for credit option.

Faculty: [Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences](#) 

Overview

ENGL 306 is an introduction to literature about work created by people who do the actual work being depicted. This is a relatively new genre. In the past, most literature about the workplace was written by outsiders—by people who had never done the job and who therefore did not have an insider’s knowledge of what actually went on in the daily life of workers. In breaking the taboo against depicting the realities of life on the job, the literature of work gives an exciting new perspective both on the workplace and on the possibilities of literature.

Because ENGL 306 is a senior-level course, we expect students to have good reading and writing skills as well as the basic critical tools and knowledge of literary forms and techniques that are acquired in introductory-level university English courses like Athabasca University’s ENGL 201 and 202; 210/211 and 212; or 291 and 292.

Students who do not have the recommended credits in an introductory English literature course may experience difficulties with the required assignments and examination.

Outline

- Unit 1: Oral Responses to Working
- Unit 2: Women and the Labour Movement
- Unit 3: Memoir
- Unit 4: Fiction
- Unit 5: Plays
- Unit 6: Film
- Unit 7: Autobiography and Criticism

Learning outcomes

ENGL 306: The Literature of Work is designed to introduce you to the contemporary literature of work, its authors, forms, themes, and concerns. The following are the broader learning outcomes that students should achieve by the end of the course:

- read, understand, and enjoy several significant examples of the literature of work
- achieve a general overview of work literature
- develop an appreciation of the techniques of artistry in language
- develop an appreciation of each work as an individual work with its own formal integrity
- develop an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the various genres of writing (e.g., fiction, drama, film, autobiography)
- improve the critical tools and communication skills acquired in introductory (junior-level) literature course(s)

- increase their interest in and ability to read literature
- increase their knowledge and understanding of themselves and others through experience with the literature of work

Through careful study of the assigned texts and Study Guide, students will also be able to accomplish the following specific outcomes:

- identify specific literary techniques as they occur in the works
- identify works and authors by means of their form, style, content, and context
- summarize (paraphrase, outline) the plots and thematic concerns of works
- analyze works from the perspective of their literary elements, including narrative point of view, characterization, plot, theme, setting, atmosphere, imagery, style, structure, organization, etc.
- analyze interrelationships among, and the relative importance of, literary elements in a work
- evaluate the effectiveness of the techniques used in a work and analyze its strengths and weaknesses
- recognize recurring themes, literary devices, and elements in the works
- compare and contrast the works studied
- participate in informed and thoughtful discussion of the literature of work
- write literary criticism in the form of essays with correct grammar, a lucid style, and a coherent and sustained argument that uses evidence from the primary text(s)

Evaluation

To **receive credit** [↗](#) for ENGL 306, you must achieve a composite course grade of at least **D (50 percent)** [↗](#) and a grade of at least D (50 percent) on the final examination. The weighting of the course assignments is as follows:

Activity	Weight
Assignment 1: Historical Context Reviews	15%
Assignment 2a: Creative Work	10%
Assignment 2b: Critical Essay	20%
Assignment 3: Analysis of Literature of Work	30%
Final Exam	25%
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:

Fennario, David. *On the Job*. Talonbooks, 2017.

Marty, Sid. *Men for the Mountains*. McClelland & Stewart, 2008.

Sayles, John. *Union Dues*. Avalon, 2006.

Worth, Jennifer. *Call the Midwife: Shadows of the Workhouse*. HarperCollins, 2005.

Instructional Resources

North Country. Directed by Niki Caro, performances by Charlize Theron, Frances McDormand, Sissy Spacek, Woody Harrelson, and Sean Bean, Warner Bros. Pictures, 2005. (Film)

Smedley, Agnes. *Daughter of Earth*. 3rd ed., The Feminist Press at The City University of New York, 2019. (eBook)

The instructional resources also include a Course Information, a Study Guide, and other online readings.

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 ENGL 306 challenge for credit, you must pass the essay and the examination. Credit is awarded on a pass/fail basis only.

 **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.

Opened in Revision 4, August 11, 2025

Updated May 8, 2026

View **previous revision** 
