Welcome to Week 1

➢ Please watch the online video (38 seconds).

What Will We Learn?

Welcome to the course! We are going to start out this week by introducing ourselves and telling you the story of how this DavidsonX class came to be, and why we think interdisciplinary collaboration is important. You may have noticed that this class doesn't really look like many other edX courses; it is neither exclusively a science nor a literature class. We will talk about why that is so when we tell you our course origination story.

In the first two weeks, we will have some initial discussions of representations of HIV/AIDS while also learning some important basic analytical skills. There are some key ways of reading and thinking with which we would like you to become familiar. They will provide an important basis for the kinds of critical analysis we will ask you to do in weeks 3 through 7.

1. We will learn basic moves of literary interpretation.
2. We will learn how to read a scientific paper.
3. We will learn what these kinds of writing have in common. This is important because it will be one of the first places we invite you to think about linking the arts & sciences.
4. We will be introduced to what we call “cultural artifact”—examples of how HIV/AIDS is represented through art and objects

The Origin Story

➢ Please watch the online video (3 minutes, 39 seconds).

Why are a professor of Biology and a professor of English co-teaching a course? Ann and Dave discuss their respective backgrounds and how this course came into existence.
Ann’s specialty is in Disability Studies. This means that she studies the representation of disability and illness in literature and in art. In 2009 she co-curated an exhibition featuring an artist named Nancy Fried who makes terracotta sculptures of torsos that are modeled after her own post-mastectomy body after she survived breast cancer. Meanwhile, Dave was teaching a course in Genetics with a unit that focused heavily on breast cancer. He and his students studied instances of BRCA1 mutations present in hereditary breast cancer.

To provide another perspective on how to study breast cancer, Dave brought his students to Ann’s exhibit. This visit inspired interdisciplinary conversation between the sciences and the arts. With the success of this interaction, Ann and Dave decided to expand upon this experience and create a class that could further encourage this kind of conversation. Ann and Dave are now teaching their “Representations of HIV/AIDS” class for the third time this year.

1.1 How Do You Read a Play or Literary Work?

What Will We Learn?

In this section, you will learn about four basic concepts that will help you analyze texts: symbol, style, structure, and the "so what?". Ann will talk to you about these, model them for you, and then you will try them yourself through answering a series of questions that will test your understanding.

➢ Please watch the online video (6 minutes, 26 seconds).

Reading a Play or Literary Work

How do we engage with a literary work? Literary criticism examines two kinds of sources: primary sources and secondary sources. In this section we will learn four different ways to approach these types of text.

To practice, read the short story by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, “The Yellow Wallpaper”. This is a story about a woman who is compelled to take a "rest cure", a treatment that is offered for her postpartum depression. She is isolated on the top floor of a house and not to do any work. And over the course of the story she slowly goes mad.
We can analyze the text by looking at these four elements of literary criticism:

1) Symbol
   - Words that have meaning beyond themselves
   - Repeated images with heightened meaning
   - Nursery implies she is infantilized
   - Windows with bars implies imprisonment
   - Yellow wallpaper “with its lame, uncertain curves” implies patterns that are oppressive to the woman

2) Style
   - How the narration is carried out
   - Woman speaks in confiding tone to reader implying that she has no one else to talk to

3) Structure
   - Framework and organization of a piece of literature
   - Almost every line starts a new paragraph, as if the story keeps interrupting itself, implying a sense of anxiety and nervousness

4) So What?
   - What does the story add up to?
   - What do our findings in symbol, style, and structure tell us about the overarching meaning of the piece?
   - Different literary critics find different answers to the “so what?”

Please complete the reading and the online quiz.
Please watch the online video (8 minutes, 35 seconds).

Review of Quiz 1.2

Looking at Susan Glaspell’s, “A Jury of Her Peers”, we can now practice what we’ve learned from the previous section about literary criticism. Here are some of Ann’s observations about the text:

1) Symbol
   - Names: the women are only identified by their married names, suggesting a patriarchal world
• The quilt has many individual pieces that are not properly joined together just like Minnie is an individual without much community or support

2) Style
• Narration places emphasis on the small things that bother the women (which might have bothered Minnie) that do not seem to bother the men

3) Structure
• Written like a detective story with an unlikely set of detectives
• Hunting for clues engages the reader

4) So What?
• Women’s way of knowing and being in the world matter
• Culmination of interpretation on the play on words “knot it”
• Minnie’s husband was strangled: she knotted the rope
• “Knot it” and “Not it”: the women decide to pass the verdict of not guilty onto Minnie
• What happens when one is rendered voiceless in a society

1.2 How Do You Read a Scientific Paper?

What Will We Learn?

In this section, you will learn about how to read and identify key elements of a scientific paper: introduction, materials and methods, results, and discussion. Dave will talk to you about these, model identifying them for you, and then you will have the chance to practice identifying them yourself through answering a series of questions that will test your understanding.

➢ Please watch the online video (6 minutes, 15 seconds).

Reading a Scientific Paper

How do we analyze a piece of scientific literature? This kind of criticism also engages with multiple types of texts: primary literature, secondary literature, and tertiary literature. But to properly navigate any type of scientific literature, it is important to first understand the basic structure.
1) Introduction
   • The general problem
   • The general approach to solving the problem
   • A summary of this specific approach to solving the problem

2) Materials and Methods
   • Detailed step-by-step account of experiment
   • Important for validity and reproducible results

3) Results
   • Account of the data the researchers have generated

4) Conclusion
   • What the results are and why they’re important

➢ Please complete the reading and the online quiz.
➢ Please watch the online video (4 minutes, 28 seconds).

Review of Quiz 1.3
Looking at Karen Bernd and Madeleine Chalfant’s article, we can now practice what we’ve learned from the previous section about reading scientific literature. Here are some of Dave’s observations about the text:

1) Introduction
   • The general problem: lungs encounter stressors
   • Gap in our knowledge: effect of ozone and estrogen on pulmonary health
   • Proposed method of addressing this problem: cell culture allowing for characterization of combined effects of exposure

2) Materials and Methods
   • Detailed step-by-step account of experiment
   • Important for validity and reproducible results

3) Results
   • Account of the data the researchers have generated
   • Visual presentation of data gathered through research via graphs and figures
   • Way of addressing recent gap in knowledge
4) Conclusion

- What the results are and why they’re important
- The results provide greater insight into cellular mechanisms involving sex differences in lung disease and effects of ozone exposure
- However, this fills only part of our gap in knowledge, underscoring the need for further research

➤ Please watch the online video (2 minutes, 46 seconds).

Commonalities in Literary Works and Scientific Papers

What do these two types of literary criticism have in common? Ann talks a lot about symbols in her literary critique. She then notes how graphs and charts can be read as symbols in scientific literature since they can convey more than just pure data, just like certain words in creative literature can convey more than just their actual meaning. Charts and graphs can function as elements of storytelling; they provide information that helps scientists convey the overall importance of the key problem.

Ann and Dave also discuss the commonality of structure and how it is necessary in both forms of literature in order for them to reach a final goal. Both types intend to engage the reader in a narration about a problem and then encourage the reader to react in a specific way to this problem.

The use of language is another pertinent feature in both forms of literature. Language is not neutral. Word choice is historically situated and always influenced by its particular context. These are important points to keep in mind when reading any type of literature.

1.3 Cultural Artifact #1: “Silence=Death”

What Will We Learn?

One central idea of this course is the importance of linking the arts and sciences. Another central idea is that all kinds of things tell stories that we can interpret from those different points of view. Objects tell us important stories about the history of the pandemic.

In this section, you will learn what we call "cultural artifacts" are, and you will watch a discussion between Dave, Ann, and their students meant to
model for you how to interpret cultural artifacts. You will then begin your own analysis of representations of HIV/AIDS by participating in a graded discussion about one of these artifacts and offering an interpretation of your own.

- Please watch the online video (1 minute, 36 seconds).

**Why Cultural Artifacts are Important**

Cultural artifacts can be anything from representations in television shows, film clips, blogs, podcasts, or songs to physical objects. They depict a historical event through popular or material culture. Just like language is a reflection of a historical time and context, so are cultural artifacts. They help us gain a better understanding of that particular time or event and hopefully generate meaningful conversation.

- Please examine Cultural Artifact and contribute to the online Word Cloud.

- Please watch the online video (13 minutes, 39 seconds).

**Cultural Artifact: “Silence=Death”**

Dave and Ann invite two Davidson College students, Betsy and Caitlin, to partake in a discussion about this week’s cultural artifact. The cultural artifact is a poster from 1987 created by a group of AIDS activists called the Silence Equals Death Project. It is a black image with a pink triangle in the center. And in large text below it says, “Silence equals death”. And then at the very bottom in small print it reads, “Why is Reagan silent about AIDS? What is really going on at the Center for Disease Control, the Federal Drug Administration, and the Vatican? Gays and lesbians are not expendable. Use your power. Vote. Boycott. Defend yourselves. Turn anger, fear, grief into action.”

- Please contribute to the online Discussion Board.

- Please complete the Self Assessment.

Please complete the end of the week survey.