

ENGLISH 185: CRITICAL READING and WRITING  
DR. SARAH HIGINBOTHAM  
OXFORD COLLEGE of EMORY UNIVERSITY

## OVERVIEW

### Critical Reading and Writing as Attunement

In a sense, this entire course is about learning how to pay attention. The most important skills that universities seek to develop in their students -- the ability to assess the soundness of an argument, to accept and act on criticism, to express ideas clearly, to imagine alternatives to existing approaches, and to formulate and defend a point of view -- all begin with close listening, or “attunement.” So this semester we will foreground what it means to be attuned to texts, people, voices, and ideas and how to write and speak in a way that makes other people actually want to listen.

Our two primary literary texts center on attunement as explored by two quite different authors: the late Elizabethan dramatist William Shakespeare and the post-modern experimental novelist David Mitchell. We will also read a book about academic writing that claims that the best writing emerges from the best listeners, from being able to hear and respond to those who think differently than us.

## IMPORTANT DATES

February 15	<i>Hamlet</i> essay due
March 1	quotation project due
March 8	research proposal due
March 27	bibliography due
April 5	research essay due
April 24	substantial revision of one project (final)

SPRING 2018

1J TTh 1:40 - 3:20 Humanities Hall  
Conference Room

3J TTh 3:30 - 5:10 Humanities Hall  
Conference Room

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Office hours: TTH 9 - 10 a.m.

Office: Humanities Hall 205B

## MATERIALS

### REQUIRED

*Hamlet*, William Shakespeare  
Arden, 2006

*Black Swan Green*, David Mitchell  
Random House, 2007

*They Say, I Say*  
W.W. Norton, 2016

Articles, chapters, and poetry  
assigned on syllabus

### WEBSITES

[Canvas](#)

[Dr. Higinbotham's Website](#)

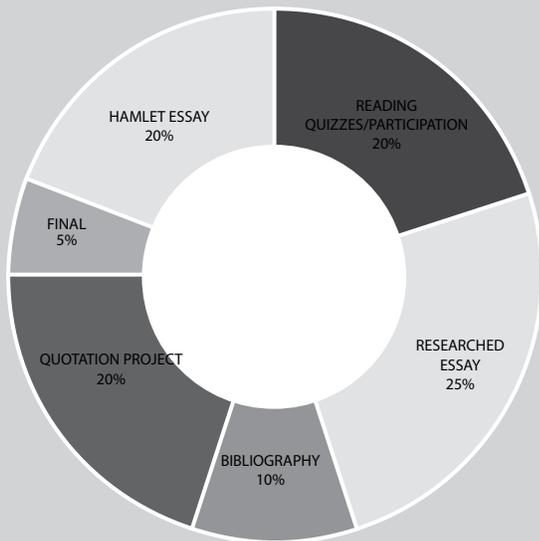
[Library Research](#)

[Voyant](#)

# EVALUATION

Every assignment will have specific and thorough guidelines that explain the project. You can access the assignment information on both Canvas and the course website. You can also discuss an assignment with me before it's due. While the assignments themselves are challenging, you should never feel lost or confused about the actual parameters of an assignment or my expectations. If you do, please ask questions in class, make an appointment to see me, or e-mail me.

## ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING



The **reading quizzes** will occur regularly at the beginning of class. The first quiz question will always be to write a quotation from the day's reading on the board, with your name beneath. Sometimes the reading quiz will be an impromptu essay on the reading. I will drop your lowest quiz grade, which includes a 0 received for a quiz given during a class absence. The grade includes your attentive and active participation in class (explained more fully below in "Classroom Policies").

In the **research essay**, you will closely engage with either *Hamlet* or *Black Swan Green*. Seek to answer a question that emerges from your reading of either the play or novel, conduct research, and write a 6-page paper.

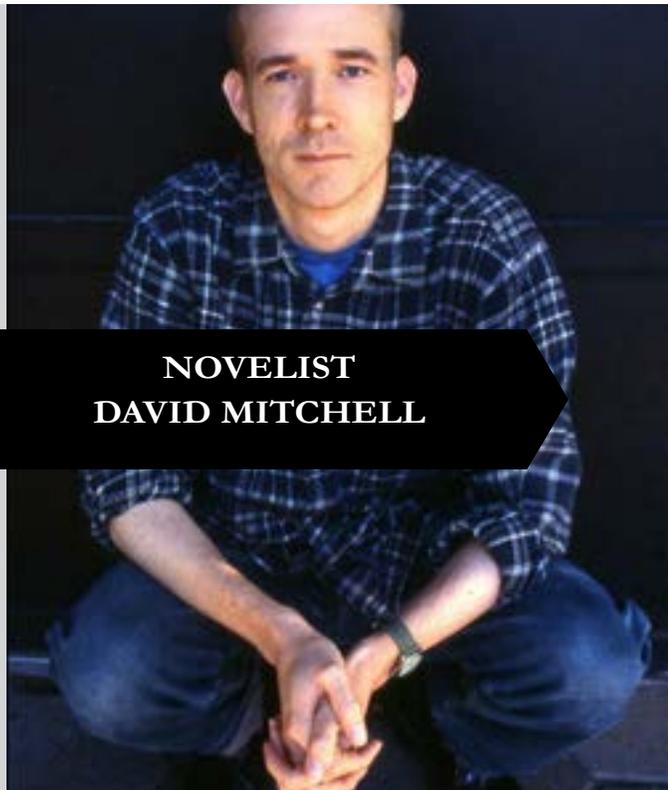
The **Hamlet essay** will explore a metaphor, theme, trope, or image in the play or novel. These papers will not use outside sources.

The **quotation project** is an interdisciplinary, "unwritten essay," the opportunity to explore a quotation from either *Hamlet* or *Black Swan Green* via other creative means: music, visual art, computer graphics, photography, video or another form of artistic expression. The project requires an original title, a quotation that you will expand upon, a creative, 2-sentence artist biography, and a 150-word artist's statement.

The **Final** project will involve choosing one project from the semester, getting structured peer review from two classmates, and revising it significantly.

"If you show someone something you've written, you give them a sharpened stake, lie down in your coffin, and say, 'When you're ready.'" David Mitchell, *Black Swan Green*

## NOVELIST DAVID MITCHELL



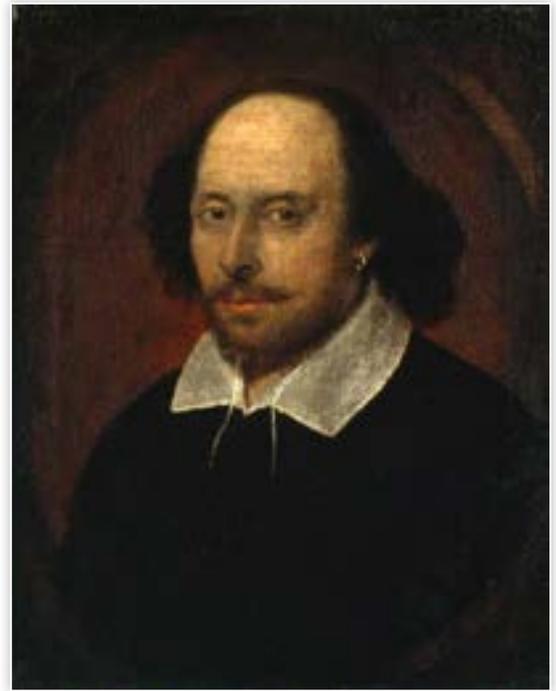
## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

“Plagiarism,” from the Latin word for kidnapping, is presenting another person’s work as your own. When you deliberately use someone else’s language, ideas, images, or other original material or code without fully acknowledging its source by quotation marks as appropriate, in footnotes or endnotes, in works cited, and in other ways as appropriate, you will be in violation of Emory Oxford’s Honor Code.

### [Honor Code](#)

### [Process for academic misconduct](#)

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Taylor, John. *William Shakespeare*. 1651. Oil on canvas. National Portrait Gallery, London.

## MISTAKES ARE WELCOME

A writing teacher I admire, Nick Carbone, has this to add about plagiarism:

Unfortunately, the term “plagiarism” is more technical than practical. It’s used to describe equally mistakes in handling and citing sources and deliberate cheating and lying about the authorship of the work you hand in. In fact, one refuge of many cheaters is to say that they merely made mistakes in source handling. So by plagiarism in this course I want us all to distinguish between fraud and cheating, which is always wrong, and mistakes in learning, which are inevitable, correctable, and for many people, necessary for learning. Mistakes are welcome; deliberate fraud is not. (“Talking about Plagiarism: A Syllabus Strategy”)

## THE QUALITY OF FAILURE

One of the greatest obstacles to learning is the fear of failure. Students have sometimes been taught that they need to be perfect – or as close to perfect as possible – in order to be validated, approved, and rewarded. But I think that there are things far more important than perfection: curiosity, risk taking, persistence, integrity, self-awareness, and often failure itself. I want you, in the words of Edward Burger, to make for yourselves “a mind enlivened by curiosity and the intellectual audacity to take risks and create new ideas, a mind that sees a world of unlimited possibilities.”

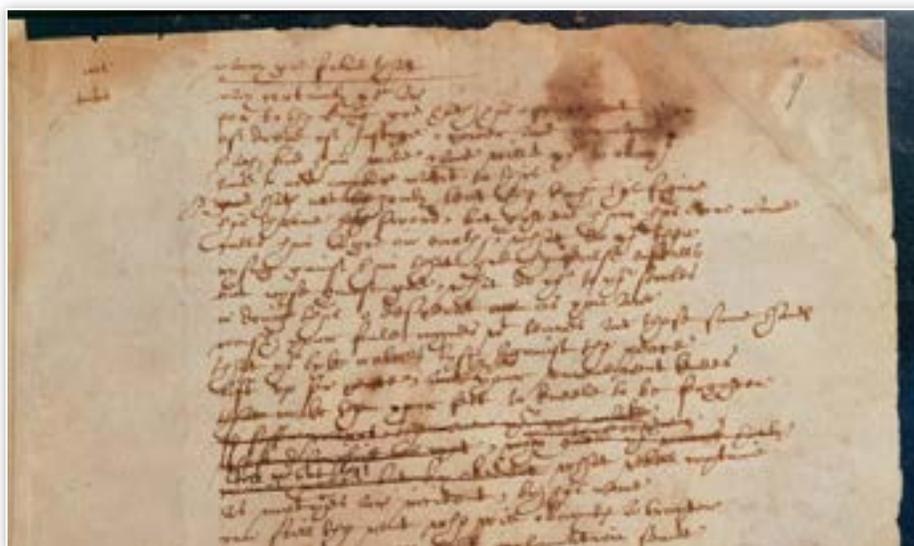
For this reason, part of the course will involve addressing how you handled failure this semester in English 185. Have you been willing to challenge yourself and take risks that might result in failure? Have you been aware of when you have failed, and refused to give up in the face of failure? Have you found ways to use your failure to create something new and interesting? Have you grown from your failures? I hope – in the spirit of Shakespeare’s and Mitchell’s own risk-taking – that you will allow yourself to take risks and learn from them.

## REVISION

In addition to the final project, which is a significant revision of a project, you have the opportunity to revise any of your other projects this semester. The ability to accept and act on criticism is one of the most important critical abilities you can develop. Can you hear constructive criticism with an open mind, build on lessons learned, and make revisions in response to suggestions? If so, I will assess your revised project a second time. A revision isn't just a quick fix of the obvious errors, but a "re-vision," or another look at your project, in which you address feedback. If you choose to revise, it can only help, not hurt your grade. The revision must include a cover letter, in which you explain to me what and why you revised what you did. You may send revisions as e-mail attachments, but make sure I respond and tell you I received the revision. If I do not respond within a day, I did not receive the revision.

Revisions are due one week from when you receive a grade and feedback from me. If you revise an assignment, I will average the two grades as your assignment grade.

**Please note:** Some scholarships and academic tracks require that you maintain a certain grade point average. My grading policies are fair, and I'm always willing to discuss concerns you have over any specific grades when I return them to you. But I will not negotiate an overall course grade based on your jeopardized scholarship (or any other social or funding pressures).



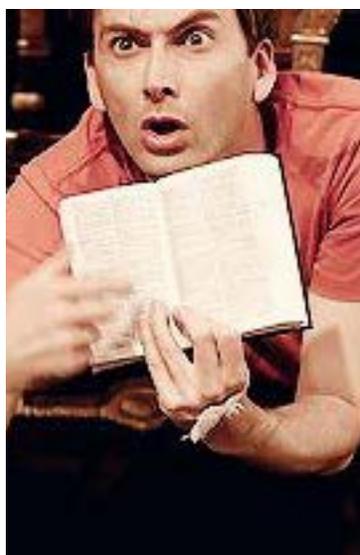
Munday, Anthony and Henry Chettle. Rev. by William Shakespeare. *Sir Thomas More*. c. 1590. British Museum. Facsimile.

## DISAGREEMENTS

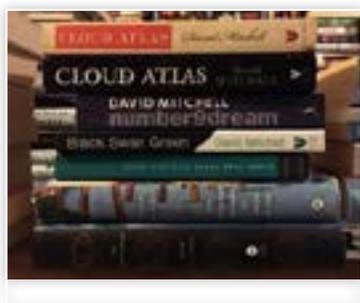
I think most of what I have learned that is of any consequence has arisen from disagreeing with someone else. I welcome your respectful disagreements with me. If we all interpret what we read and discuss in the same way, we have a problem, because no true thinking will occur. At the prison where I teach, the new students are very hesitant to disagree with their peers, or me, because in the prison universe, disagreements almost invariably escalate into violence. But the incarcerated students gradually learn that disagreements make the classroom environment more interesting, productive, generative, and challenging. My classroom is not Plato's Cave.

Please note that the college classroom is a place where ideas are exchanged respectfully. I look forward to an environment where this will occur, but I don't have much tolerance for distracting behavior, such as rudeness, texting, sleeping, or talking to others during class. If your participation is disruptive to the classroom discussion, if it creates a hostile, intimidating, or offensive environment, you are subject to removal from the classroom at my discretion.

[Emory's policy on respect and consideration in the Code of Conduct](#)



David Tennant as Hamlet



David Mitchell's novels

# LATE ASSIGNMENTS

In order to make the evaluation process fair to students who submitted their work on time, I will accept late assignments only if you communicate with me about it before the assignment is due. Every day an assignment is late, the maximum grade you can receive will be lowered by a letter grade (ten points). This includes weekends and there are no exceptions.

Any assignment that is not submitted will be recorded as a 0 (“zero”) and averaged with the rest of your grades. This can damage your course average severely: For example, if you have completed five assignments with a 92 average but don’t submit a sixth assignment (which is counted as a “zero”), your overall average will be a 77.

## COMMON POLICIES

Emory Oxford common policies, course completion, attendance requirements, participation in class, non-discrimination, accommodations, academic misconduct, syllabus modifications, and learning outcomes are available on the website. You will be responsible for these policies, and when you sign the Statement of Understanding, you affirm that you are familiar with these policies.

## CLASSROOM POLICIES

In addition to respectful, engaged participation, I have the following classroom policies: 1) no laptops unless we are specifically using them, for example during the workshop days; 2) cell phones on silent and in your bags; 3) you should ask at least two questions or make two comments in each class. If speaking during class is extremely uncomfortable for you, you may write down your comments and/or questions and give them to me at the end of class. Alternatively, if you are very enthusiastic about speaking in class, please refrain from making more than five comments or asking more than five questions. You may write down what you were not able to say and I will read it after class. I also urge you to come to my office hours, and if they do not suit your schedule, arrange alternative office hours with me. This is to keep the entire class equitably participating during the time we have together.



Oxford College, Emory University.

## THE WHOLE EAR

Now, Hamlet, hear.

‘tis given out that, sleeping in mine orchard,

A serpent stung me. So the whole ear of

Denmark

Is by a forged process of my death

Rankly abused. But know, thou noble youth,

The serpent that did sting thy father’s life

Now wears his crown. 1.5.39 - 45

## WEEKLY SCHEDULE

THURSDAY JANUARY 18	INTRODUCTIONS, SYLLABUS <a href="#">“AWE AS PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR”</a>
TUESDAY JANUARY 23	HAVE READ <i>HAMLET</i> , ACT 1 “ON SHAKESPEARE,” JOHN MILTON (1632)
THURSDAY JANUARY 25	HAVE READ <i>HAMLET</i> , ACT 2 HAVE READ <i>THEY SAY/I SAY</i> , PREFACE AND CH. 12
TUESDAY JANUARY 30	HAVE READ <i>HAMLET</i> , ACTS 3-4
THURSDAY FEBRUARY 1	HAVE READ <i>HAMLET</i> , ACT 5 HAVE READ RICHARD DAWSON’S “LISTENING” AND “METAPHOR”
TUESDAY FEBRUARY 6	HAVE LISTENED TO JACK HITT’S <a href="#">“ACT V”</a> HAVE READ <i>THEY SAY/I SAY</i> , INTRODUCTION AND CH. 1
THURSDAY FEBRUARY 8	HAVE READ <i>THEY SAY/I SAY</i> , CH. 2, CH. 17
TUESDAY FEBRUARY 13	LIBRARY ROOM 230, 1:30 - 2:30 SAMMIE BYRON GUEST CLASS
THURSDAY FEBRUARY 15	<b>HAMLET ESSAY DUE</b>
TUESDAY FEBRUARY 20	HAVE READ <i>BLACK SWAN GREEN</i> , CHAPTERS 1-5
THURSDAY FEBRUARY 22	HAVE READ <i>BLACK SWAN GREEN</i> , CHAPTERS 6-10
TUESDAY FEBRUARY 27	HAVE READ <i>BLACK SWAN GREEN</i> , CHAPTERS 11-12 HAVE READ “SIMPLICITY” AND “CLUTTER,” WILLIAM ZINSSER
THURSDAY MARCH 1	<b>QUOTATION PROJECT</b> HAVE READ <i>THEY SAY/I SAY</i> , CH. 6, CH. 7
TUESDAY MARCH 6	HAVE READ <i>THEY SAY/I SAY</i> , CH. 3, CH. 4, CH. 12 MLA <a href="#">DOCUMENTATION AND CITING</a>
THURSDAY MARCH 8	<b>RESEARCH PROPOSAL DUE</b> <b>LIBRARY WORKSHOP</b>
TUESDAY MARCH 13	SPRING BREAK
THURSDAY MARCH 15	SPRING BREAK
TUESDAY MARCH 20	HAVE LISTENED TO JOHN F. KENNEDY, <a href="#">REMARKS AT AMHERST COLLEGE</a>
THURSDAY MARCH 22	MLA-APALOOZA
TUESDAY MARCH 27	<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE</b> THIS AMERICAN LIFE, <a href="#">“FIASCO” (IN CLASS)</a>
THURSDAY MARCH 29	WORKSHOP
TUESDAY APRIL 3	<b>RESEARCH DRAFT ESSAY DUE</b>
THURSDAY APRIL 5	<b>RESEARCH ESSAY DUE</b>
TUESDAY APRIL 10	<b>CONFERENCES</b>
THURSDAY APRIL 12	<b>CONFERENCES</b>
TUESDAY APRIL 17	<b>RESEARCH ESSAY REVISION DUE</b> (OPTIONAL)
THURSDAY APRIL 19	QUOTATION PROJECT EXHIBIT
TUESDAY APRIL 24	<b>Final Due (Substantial Revision of one Project)</b>
THURSDAY APRIL 26	LAST CLASS