ENGLISH 2100: THE UNRELIABLE NARRATOR
Instructor: Dr. Beth Howells

In his *Rhetoric of Fiction* published in 1961, Wayne Booth argues that "[t]he history of unreliable narrators from Gargantua to Lolita is in fact full of traps for the unsuspecting reader." He makes a case for the rhetorical nature of literature and the need to understand the precise narrative stance to best make meaning of a text. In the standard English 1102 class, students learn about narration: first-person, second-person, and third-person points of view either with omniscient or limited narrators. This course will take the basic premises of narration and explore them in some depth. The person who tells the story, the intended audience for that story, and the context of that story, whatever it may be, determines how it is told: the way narrators tell the story influences the text's meaning. This class will look at the complexities of narration.

Supposedly, with a transparent narrative form such as third person omniscient, the narrator is trustworthy, reliable, even objective. However, an "unreliable narrator" poses a problem in his or her overt subjectivity. The narrator is now opaque and no longer disinterested. The narration is rhetorical. What happens, then, when you can't trust your host? What happens if your only access to a story is through an unreliable source?

But, ultimately, all stories are told from a point of view, and in some ways, unreliable narrators merely make visible the subject position that is always there. Perhaps unreliable narrators are just more honest about their subjectivity. Perhaps this form of narration is the most reliable of all.

**Required Texts:**
various handouts

Bronte *Jane Eyre* longman
Edson *Wt* faber and faber
Eugenides *The Virgin Suicides* picador
Shakespeare *Hamlet* longman
Morrison *The Bluest Eye* longman
Coetzee *Summertime* viking
Maxwell *So Long See You Tomorrow* vintage
Millet *My Happy Life* soft skull press

**REQUIREMENTS**
1. Daily In-Class Responses. In order to encourage you to keep up with the reading and to ensure your preparedness to participate in class discussions, you should expect to be asked to respond to your reading in class every day. These in-class reading responses will sometimes take the form of quizzes, sometimes they will be a
written response to a particular prompt, and sometimes they may be more creative or experimental. They will require that you read the assigned texts in order to be successful. This grade will be 20% of your final grade.

2. Exams. At mid-term and at the end of term, you will be required to take exams reflecting on your learning experience. You will want to address how you have synthesized your reading, writing, and thinking. Written assignment sheets and test maps will follow. These exams will be worth 20% and 15% respectively for a total of 35% of your final grade.

3. Two Formal Papers. Earlier in the term, you will be required to write an argument paper on a topic of your choosing relating to an approved text. This essay needs to be an argument using textual analysis to prove your thesis to be true. The second paper can be thought of as an elaboration of the first in some ways. You are to construct an argument using textual analysis along with secondary sources to prove your thesis to be true. This will necessitate outside research. We will turn to the library to understand strategies for research and will perfect our understanding of correct documentation. These essays will be worth 20% and 25% respectively or 45% of your final grade.

GRADE SCALE
A=90-100
B=80-89
C=70-79
D=60-69
F=GRADES BELOW 59

ATTENDANCE
This is a class that depends on your being there. Your participation and daily writings cannot be made up. Therefore, you must be in class. After 4 absences, your grade will drop a letter until you have failed the course.

WRITING CENTER
The Writing Center located in 109 Gamble Hall can be a good resource for revising your essays if you would like a little extra help with your writing. It is a free service. Please consider taking advantage of it.

PLAGIARISM
Be aware that plagiarism can result in dismissal from the university, failure of the course, or failure of an assignment. Cite any sources you use at any time in this class whether you are quoting directly or
paraphrasing. See me or consult the Armstrong Atlantic State University Handbook if you are ever uncertain about
the issue. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. You will be required to take and submit the Plagiarism Tutorial to me by
midterm for two RR grades:
http://library.armstrong.edu/plagiarismtutorial.html

**SCHEDULE**

**T 8.17** Introduction

**Th.8.19** Handouts: Poe, “Cask of Amontillado” and “Tell-tale Heart”; Gilman, “Yellow Wallpaper”

**T.8.24** Handouts: Faulkner “Rose for Emily”; Delillo “Videotape;” Tim O Brian, “The Things They Carried”
**Th.8.26** Shakespeare, Hamlet, Act I, 2-35

**T.8.31** Shakespeare, Hamlet, Act II, 35-61
**Th.9.2** Shakespeare, Hamlet, Act III, 61-104

**T.9.7** Shakespeare, Hamlet, Act IV-V, 104-148
**Th.9.9** Bronte, Jane Eyre (9-164: Chapter 1-XIV)

**T.9.14** Bronte, Jane Eyre (165-370: Chapter XV-XXVII)
**Th.9.16** Bronte, Jane Eyre (370-521: the rest of the novel)

**T.9.21** Browning’s dramatic monologues, Eliot’s “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,” and select poems (handouts)
**Th.9.23** Edson, Wit (5-53)

**T.9.28** Edson, Wit (53-85)
**Th.9.30** Morrison, The Bluest Eye, (opening, Autumn, and Spring—1-93)

**T. 10.5** Morrison, The Bluest Eye (Winter-Epilogue—93-203)
**Th. 10.7** MIDTERM EXAM

**T.10.12** FALL BREAK
**Th.10.14** WORKSHOP; DRAFT DUE

**T.10.19** Rashomon film viewing; PAPER ONE DUE
**Th.10.21** Rashomon film viewing
T.10.26 Eugenides, Virgin Suicides (3-140: Chapters 1-3)
Th.10.28 Eugenides, Virgin Suicides (141-249: Chapter 4)

T.11.2 Maxwell, So Long See You Tomorrow (3-135)
Th.11.4 Millet, My Happy Life (1-149)

T.11.9 Millet, continued
Th.11.11 NO CLASS; PAPER RESEARCH

T.11.16 Coetzee, Summertime (1-153, opening-Margot)
Th.11.18 Coetzee, Summertime (153-266, Adriana-conclusion)

T.11.23 NO CLASS; PAPER RESEARCH
Th.11.25 HAPPY THANKSGIVING

T.11.30 WORKSHOP; DRAFT DUE
Th.12.2 FINAL PAPER DUE

Th.12.9 at 11am FINAL EXAM