

BOWIE STATE UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Honors English 102 (3 credits)
Spring 2003
Dr. Renee H. Shea

The Search for Self-Knowledge

... to know oneself is, above all, to know what one lacks. It is to measure oneself against Truth, and not the other way around. The first product of self-knowledge is humility... (Flannery O'Connor)

...A man can know nothing of mankind [humankind] without knowing something of himself. Self-knowledge is the property of that man [woman] whose passions have their full play, but who ponders over their results. (Benjamin Disraeli)

*There is no self-knowledge but an historical one.
(Friedrich Von Schlegel))*

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Office Hours: Monday and Friday by appointment
Tuesday 2 – 5
Wednesday 4- 5, 7:30 – 8:30 pm
Thursday 10 – 11, 2 – 4

Course Description:

Honors English 102 builds on the skills developed in English 101, focusing on analysis, synthesis and evaluation, logical thinking, the techniques of argument, writing about literature, and preparation of the documented essay. Students will write a series of analytical and argumentative essays that center on literary works but involve both primary and secondary research. They will conduct online discussions with one another, and they will attend literary readings, visit museums, and view films. Collaborative learning projects, including peer critiques, are essential to the course.

This Honors English class will explore the theme of self-knowledge in three major works: a memoir, a novel, and a classic play. Each will be analyzed as an individual work of art and considered in terms of its cultural context. In a final project, students will work in groups to further examine this theme in terms of an event, a person, or a theme.

Required Texts:

The New Century Handbook, 2nd Edition.
The Unwanted by Kien Nguyen
Song of Solomon by Toni Morrison
Othello by William Shakespeare
Othello: New Essays by Black Writers edited by Mythili Kaul

Student Outcomes:

Upon completion of English 102, students will be able to:

1. Conduct research in the library and on the Internet
2. Carry out basic primary research, such as questionnaires and interviews;
3. Evaluate and use sources in the development of an argumentative essay;
4. Demonstrate improvement in critical reading skills by identifying, defining, and locating the formal elements of argument;
5. Analyze and interpret assigned literary works, particularly fiction, in terms of formal elements as well as historical and cultural context;
6. Show an awareness of writing process by taking essays through phases of planning, drafting, and revising;
7. Demonstrate proficiency in organizing, controlling, and developing the formal essay with an emphasis on documentation;
8. Document according to MLA Style, both in-text and in a Works Cited page;
9. Edit and proofread paragraphs and essays to correct common errors in grammar, mechanics, and usage;
10. Demonstrate an appreciation of the diverse cultures that make up American society.

Course Requirements:

The final course grade will be computed as follows:

Essay #1 (<i>The Unwanted</i>)	20%
Essay #2 (<i>Song of Solomon</i>)	20%
Essay #3 (<i>Othello</i>)	25%
Final Project	25%
Class attendance and participation	10%

All essays will be argumentative in nature and require several sources.

Following are brief descriptions of each assignment; students will receive detailed explanations prior to each reading and essay or project.

In the first essay, students will consider whether the memoir *The Unwanted* is an example of protest literature, specifically whether it is an antiwar piece. This essay will require an understanding of the cultural context of Vietnam as a colonized country and of the role of the U.S. in the Vietnam Conflict.

The *Song of Solomon* essay will also be an argument, this time a defense of the novel in response to a scenario about a public school district's efforts to ban the book. This essay will require students to consider the nature and history of censorship as well as the various themes and motifs of the novel.

The *Othello* essay will be part of a larger project that involves the play and several film interpretations. Students will respond to the question, "Is race the central theme of *Othello*?" – a question they will address by considering the play and one film. A group project will make up part of the grade for this essay.

The *final project* will involve a group presentation and an individual essay on the theme of self-knowledge. Students might focus on one figure, such as the controversial artist Frida Kahlo, and conduct research that includes a biography, a novel told from the point of view of her sister, a film representation of her life, and her paintings. Another possibility is to further explore the larger topic of Vietnam, possibly looking at representations of the "war" such as the Vietnam Memorial, films, novels, poetry, etc. Another approach would be to consider a theme, such as literacy narratives that connect to the first few readings done for class: that is, the nature and power associated with literacy as depicted in film (e.g., *Eight Mile*, *Finding Forrester*) or fiction. This project will require submission of CD-Rom that includes written text as well as audio and visual materials. The last two weeks of class will be devoted to this work, and students will present during final exam week. This project will replace the final examination.

Faithful attendance and thoughtful participation are simply the expected norm in the honors class!