To what extent are masters of the essay form also artists? What are the hazards for poets writing criticism? What are the hazards for poems that are criticism? When an author considers the same theme in different genres, how does genre constrain our own criticisms of the works? As scholars of literature, we are accustomed to writing essays about literature, but should we hold our writing to the standards of art? How do those standards differ from the standards of criticism? This tutorial will ponder the writing of authors known for their contributions in different genres but all of whom confront the questions of criticism in their work.

The class also serves as an introduction to writing longer critical papers; the tutorial culminates in the junior essay, a research paper of 20 to 25 pages. Throughout the semester, smaller assignments leading up to the essay will be due. These include a practice abstract written about one of our readings, an annotated bibliography, a prospectus for the essay, and a draft. Tutorial meetings will provide a forum for discussing these assignments and the developing project of the essay. We will also meet with Odile Harter, the English Department’s Research Librarian, to explore the remarkable resources available through Harvard’s libraries that may spur and sustain excellent projects.

Assessment will follow the framework below and all assignments, including those not noted on the syllabus, must be completed to receive a passing grade in the course:

- **Abstract (1 page):** 5%
- **Annotated Bibliography (2 pages):** 5%
- **Short Critical Paper (5-6 pages):** 10%
- **Prospectus (2 pages):** 10%
- **Draft (12-15 pages):** 20%
- **Junior Essay (20-25 pages):** 25%
- **Participation including Short Conference Talk:** 25%

Individual as well as broader considerations of the junior essay are built into the requirements of the tutorial. Meeting with the Departmental Writing Fellow at least once is mandatory as is attendance at the departmental wide Junior Tutorial Workshops.

Finally, participation in a course is what makes it transformative or dull. Please come to each tutorial session ready to make contributions and to listen intently to your colleagues. *Ad astra per aspera.*
**Week One**

*Epigraph: What Should Critics Do?*

Horace, *Ars Poetica* (c 19 BCE)


Terrance Hayes, “Ars Poetica for the Ones Like Us” from *How to be Drawn* (2015).


**Week Two**

*Samuel Johnson: The Choice of Life of a Poet*


*We will also read and discuss entries from Johnson’s dictionary after agreeing on a short list of terms important for the questions of our tutorial.*


What defines an argument?

Abstract (1 page) of one of the Damrosch chapters due Week Two

**Week Three**

*Samuel Taylor Coleridge: The Poet as Philosopher as Critic*

*Prose.* Essays 2 and 3 from *Essays on the Principles of Genial Criticism* (1814).

*Biographia Literaria I* (1818).


Short critical paper (5-6 pages) due Week Three

**Week Four**

*Appraising the Critic: Coleridge at continuation*

*Secondary Reading.*


*How should we evaluate the authority of sources?*
Week Five

**William Hazlitt: The Artist Becomes Critic**


What counts as evidence?

Prospectus (2 pages) due Week Five

Week Six

**Matthew Arnold: Pedagogy and Poetry**


**Secondary Reading.** Lionel Trilling, *Matthew Arnold* (1949): Chapter VII—The Spirit of Criticism; Chapter IX—Culture or Anarchy.

What does not count as evidence and how may it be useful in a critical paper?

Annotated bibliography (2 pages) due Week Six

Week Seven

**Oscar Wilde: Is Art Separate from Life?**

*Fiction.* *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890).

*Dialogue as Essay.* “The Critic as Artist” (1891).

**Secondary Reading.**


How do transitions work? Identify three from this week’s secondary reading and analyze them.

Week Eight

**Virginia Woolf: The Common Reader**

*Fiction.* “Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street” (1922).


How do transitions work (continued)? Identify two transitions from this week’s Woolf essays and another two from the essays about Woolf and analyze all.

Week Nine

Ralph Ellison Writes Music
From Living with Music (comp. 2001):
Fiction. “This Music Demanded Action”. “Trueblood’s Song”. “Peter Wheatstraw, the Devil's Son-in-Law”. “Keep to the Rhythm”.


How have you evaluated the authority of sources for your essay?

Week Ten

Maggie Nelson: Once Again, is Art Separate from Life?


Junior essay draft (12-15 pages) due Week Ten

Weeks Eleven and Twelve

Open Workshops to Discuss Junior Essay Progress and Consider Parting Questions

What are different methods to invite a reader into an essay?
How conclusive are conclusions?
Discuss these questions in reference to your current draft, your ideal one, and a secondary reading from the course that you found excellent.

Finally, what is an essay and what can it do now? Ponder this while you read David Foster Wallace’s Introduction to Best American Essays 2007, “Deciderization 2007—a Special Report.”

Required Junior Tutorial Conference and Junior Essay Due
Dates to be announced for the Conference and essay submission deadline
Submit the essay in person to the English Department and via email to Porter White.
Note on the Honor Code

Becoming a responsible scholar demands that you read secondary literature carefully and discuss nascent ideas with intellectually precise people both within and outside the academy. Acknowledging the influence that others have on your own thought is critical to encouraging an open exchange of ideas. Cite clearly and when in doubt, please get in touch.