

ENGL1080.36: Literature Core: Doppelgangers  
Eric Weiskott  
Spring 2017, T/R 9:00-10:15  
Office hours: T 2:00-3:00 (Stokes S407)

From *Beowulf* to *Blade Runner*, Western culture is obsessed with representing humanoid monsters and alter egos. The nightmare of a doppelganger impersonating or even replacing an individual has haunted writers as diverse as Mary Shelley and Vladimir Nabokov. Computer technology seems to have made the fantasy of being in two places at once a reality, and each year teams of programmers vie for the Loebner Prize for “Most Human Computer.” In this course we will meet famous doppelgangers of literature and film, with such questions in mind as, Can doppelgangers become fully human? and What if the doppelganger is you?

REQUIRED TEXTS (available at the BC Bookstore)

Brian Christian, *The Most Human Human: What Talking With Computers Teaches Us About What It Means to Be Alive* (Random House, 2011)

William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, ed. Jonathan Crewe (Penguin Classics, 2000)

Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (Signet Classics, 2012)

Vladimir Nabokov, *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) (New Directions, 2008)

SCHEDULE

**Why literature?**

- Jan 17 Introduction to literary analysis  
Borges, “Borges and I”  
Jan 19 Christian, *The Most Human Human*, chapter 1

**Monsters, (were)wolves, and zombies (alliterative poetry)**

- Jan 24 *Beowulf*, ll. 702-836 (in translation)  
\*Discussion post 1 due on Canvas  
Jan 26 O’Brien O’Keeffe, “*Beowulf* 702b-836”  
Jan 31 *Wulf and Eadwacer* (in translation)  
\*Discussion post 2 due on Canvas  
Feb 2 Christian, *The Most Human Human*, chapter 2  
Feb 7 *The Grave* (in translation)  
\*Discussion post 3 due on Canvas  
Feb 9 *St. Erkenwald*, ll. 1-176 (in translation)  
Feb 14 *Erkenwald*, ll. 177-352  
Feb 16 Christian, *The Most Human Human*, chapter 3  
\*Paper 1 due on Canvas (1-2 pp.)

**Twins and inanimate doppelgangers (drama and sonnet)**

- Feb 21 \*Introductory meter assignment: “Jabberwocky” and “Renouncement” on For Better for Verse (prosody.lib.virginia.edu)  
Feb 23 Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*  
Feb 28 *Twelfth Night*, cont’d  
(March 1) Lalami, Lowell Lecture, 7:00pm, Gasson 100 (required)

- March 2 Lalami, *The Moor's Account*, Prologue and chapter 1  
Shakespeare, "Sonnet 17" and "Sonnet 59"  
\*Discussion post 4 due on Canvas: brief response to Lalami lecture
- March 14 Donne, "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning"  
(poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/44131)  
\*Reading quiz 1 (in class)
- March 16 Christian, *The Most Human Human*, chapter 5  
\*Intermediate meter assignment: "Ozymandias" on For Better for Verse
- March 21 Barrett Browning, "Sonnets from the Portuguese," 1  
(poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/43733)  
Stein, "Stanzas in Meditation," 2  
(poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/47978)

### More than twins (short story and novella)

- March 23 Poe, "William Wilson"  
Paper planning exercise
- March 28 Poe, "William Wilson," cont'd  
Dickinson, [Poem 591]
- March 30 Christian, *The Most Human Human*, chapter 9  
\*Paper 2 due on Canvas (3-4 pp.)
- April 4 Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*
- April 6 *Jekyll and Hyde*, cont'd  
Nabokov, "The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde"

### Invisible lives (essay and novel)

- April 11 Du Bois, "Strivings of the Negro People"  
(theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1897/08/strivings-of-the-negro-people/305446/)
- April 18 Ellison, *Invisible Man*, Prologue  
Coates, "My President Was Black"  
(theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/01/my-president-was-black/508793/)
- April 20 Cottom, "The Problem With Obama's Faith in White America"  
(theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/12/obamas-faith-in-white-america/510503/)
- Required film viewing: *Blade Runner* (1982)
- April 25 Nabokov, *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*, chapters 1-7  
Paper planning exercise
- April 27 *Sebastian Knight*, chapters 8-14  
Christian, *The Most Human Human*, chapter 11  
\*Paper 3 skeleton due on Canvas (1 p.)
- (April 30) \*Paper drafts to partner (2-6 pp.)
- May 2 *Sebastian Knight*, chapters 15-20  
\*Reading quiz 2 (in class)
- May 4 Paper workshop/presentations
- May 9 \*Paper 3 due on Canvas (5-6 pp.)

### GRADING

Discussion posts 10%  
Paper 1 (close reading), 1-2 pp. 15%  
Paper 2 (writing for persuasion), 3-4 pp. 20%  
Paper 3 (extended analysis), 5-6 pp. 25%  
Participation (including attending Lalami lecture) 10%  
Reading quiz 1 10%  
Reading quiz 2 10%

### OBJECTIVES

You will learn to read literary texts critically and express arguments about them in class and in writing. You will learn to recognize the conventions of the major genres of English literature. Special emphasis will be given to the tasks of analyzing texts closely and crafting persuasive arguments.

### ASSIGNMENTS

The Discussion posts should reflect your initial reactions to the course material. They can, but need not, articulate an argument about the material. Discussion post 4 is a brief response to Lalami's lecture. For the meter assignments, you will explore the meter of a poem using the interface on For Better For Verse. Papers 1 and 2 should use the reading skills developed in the first half of the semester to pursue coherent arguments about one or more texts covered up to that point. Paper 1 will be assessed primarily for its use of close textual analysis. Paper 2 will be assessed primarily for its ability to persuade through its rhetoric and argument. Paper 3 stages an extended argument, combining both of the skills from the previous papers and making reference to prior scholarship.

### READING QUIZZES

The first reading quiz will consist of 20 multiple-choice questions. It will cover the content of the course texts up to this point in the semester as well as the critical vocabulary we are developing to discuss them. The second reading quiz will consist of three short passages from course texts, of which students will be asked to choose two to identify and analyze in one paragraph each.

### PAPER PLANNING

Students will review each other's prospective topics for Papers 2 and 3, and they will hand in an ungraded skeleton draft of Paper 3. On the final day of class, students will discuss drafts of Paper 3 in pairs and present their partner's ideas informally to the class. Students are invited to meet individually with the instructor during the semester to discuss their writing.

### PARTICIPATION

Students are expected to attend each class having completed the assigned reading and/or film viewing. Students should come to class prepared to discuss literary topics and complete brief writing exercises. This is a discussion-based class, and you will not need laptops or smart phones.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Boston College places great value on academic integrity ([bc.edu/schools/cas/polisci/integrity.html](http://bc.edu/schools/cas/polisci/integrity.html)). I have a zero tolerance policy for intentional plagiarism. All quotations or paraphrases of sources must be cited parenthetically or in a footnote (examples: [libguides.bc.edu/c.php?g=44446&p=281300](http://libguides.bc.edu/c.php?g=44446&p=281300)).

ACCESSIBILITY

If you are a student with a disability seeking accommodations in this course, please contact Kathy Duggan, (617) 552-8093, at the Connors Family Learning Center regarding learning disabilities, or Paulette Durrett, (617) 552-3470, in the Disability Services Office regarding all other types of disabilities.