I. Proposed Course Title: Literary Interpretation

II. Credit Hours: 3

III. Course Level (1000-4000): 2000 level

IV. Department or Departments responsible for teaching course: English

V. Proposed Description (1 to 2 sentences): This course will equip students to analyze and appreciate literary works in English from a range of genres, such as poetry, drama, prose fiction, and sophisticated non-fiction prose. In keeping with Baylor’s vision for global and interdisciplinary education, instructors will be encouraged to organize literary works of diverse regions and eras around special themes of their choice that reflect their areas of expertise (e.g., “Portraying Urban Life,” “Imagination and the Environment,” “Literature and Social Reform,” “The Body in Literature and Medicine,” “Faith and Literary Form”). Students will develop the critical thinking, sensitivity to language and literary heritage, and effective written and verbal communication conducive to a richer life and to responsible citizenship.

VI. Core Curriculum Objectives (list 2-4):

As a common course, Literary Interpretation will equip students with foundational knowledge, key concepts, and critical language (genre, narrative, canon, allegory, irony, intertextuality, national epic, etc.) that they can productively synthesize with the study of history, religion, philosophy, the fine arts, the natural sciences, etc. This kind of integration will be encouraged by the ability of instructors to organize this course around special topics that could draw upon the perspectives and content of multiple disciplines.

1. Students will develop cultural literacy by studying diverse and complex literary texts (an activity that we can no longer assume they independently pursue), and by considering the contexts in which these works were created, the roles they can play in society and in our personal lives, and the terms and standards we can use to describe, evaluate, and debate them.

2. Through the study of literature students acquire critical reading skills. Students reading challenging poetry and prose gain new skills in parsing meaning from words, deciphering connotations of phrases, and identifying a writer’s explicit and implicit connections to other texts. Ultimately, reading imaginative, challenging, and thought-provoking literature makes students better readers of every kind of writing.
3. Effective **writing** entails revision; thus acquiring **critical reading skills** helps make students better writers by equipping them with a critical lens that they can apply to their own writing. Moreover, the study of literature exposes students to a wide array of writing styles.

4. By requiring student readers to inhabit imaginatively the minds of other people, the study of literature fosters **empathy** and a deeper understanding of the **human condition**, which are crucial for living in an increasingly pluralistic society and for pursuing Baylor’s Christian mission.

5. The study of literature helps students examine **critical thought** as writers wrestle with the complex moral, ethical, social and epistemological questions of humanity such as: *How should I think about God? How should I relate to those around me? How should a leader behave? How do I know what I know?* Moreover, while reading, discussing, and writing about these texts, students engage in their own critical thought.

6. The study of literature teaches students a deeper understanding of **metaphorical thinking**, which is often at the heart of creative expression in art, music, and writing, and also the basis of innovation and discovery in the sciences and numerous disciplines.

VII. **Justification for course from A&S Core Curriculum Vision (using quotations):**

Part II, D. “Students will develop critical language for discussing art and literature, as well as skills for articulating their informed response to such works.”

Part II, D. “The core curriculum will provide meaningful experiences with art and literature, such as the opportunity to appreciate, perform, or create works of art, theatre, music, and literature.”

Part II, B. “Students will develop the skill of critical reasoning in many ways, including . . . composing essays. In doing so, the core curriculum will encourage students to cultivate patience and intellectual humility in the search for truth.

Part II C. “As citizens of local, national, and global communities, students must be equipped for constructive civic engagement. [The core curriculum will therefore] teach students to communicate effectively through various means such as ... discussion-based classes, essay writing”

Part II, C. Students “will also gain a deeper understanding and empathy for people from other societies, races, genders, ethnicities and socioeconomic statuses.”

VIII. **Principal author(s) of the proposal:** Lisa Shaver
IX. **Subcommittee supporting recommendation:** Creativity

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\(^1\) References to Baylor University’s General Education requirements may also be included here.