

How to do a Viva Voce.

How to say “Viva voce”: <https://youtu.be/QXFBtodND88>

It’s Latin for “with living voice.”

In lots of colleges and universities, the “viva voce” is an oral exam, held in real time. In this class, the vv is held in real time over Zoom, and will be a form of participation in lieu of being able to attend classes due to quarantine. It is not an exam in that it is not graded, but functions as a Credit/No-Credit that will become part of the “Discussion” element of the overall course grade.

Viva voces are different in kind from what happens in a regular office hours appointments. Usually office hours are held for anything a student wants to discuss: you can come in and talk about confusions, ask questions, float ideas, register the fact that you absolutely loathed the book and wish the author had never been born, go over papers in order to understand how to improve, or whatever you feel comfortable discussing. With a viva voce, you’re not asking questions; you’re presenting your understanding of something, and answering questions.

You will meet with me for 30 consecutive minutes, scheduled during the usual office hours or another time that works for us, present an idea you’ve prepared in advance, and answer questions about it, and the text(s).

So: You come to the office hours link for a 30 minute slot of time, ready to chat specifically about something in one novel/short story/the missed material. Depending on the material missed, you may or may not have the topic chosen for you; if you choose the topic, you will have had it approved in advance of the meeting. This is all to say it will take preparation: you need not just to have finished the material (a novel in its entirety), but to have thought seriously about the thing, and be ready to discuss it in terms of a specific idea.

If the thought of talking with a professor freezes you in your tracks, you can come in with something prepared—even reading it aloud is fine. (Very British.) Regardless, you will be asked questions—and you answer them. (It’s also good training for lots of things, ranging from job interviews to public presentations.)

Depending on the number of classes missed, and the material covered in those classes, one or more viva voces will be arranged. This will be determined in consultation with JB on a case-by-case basis.

By appointment only. You must receive written confirmation from me both of the time slot and topic(s). You can schedule a viva voce without knowing your topic—but **you must have your topic approved in writing by me 2 days** in advance of the vv.