

INTRODUCTION TO LITERARY CRITICISM

ENG 300
CRN: 40856
Summer 2013
MTWR 9:00-9:50
260 Condon Hall

Instructor: Corbett Upton
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Course Description: This course offers an introduction to literary criticism and to the various theoretical schools with examples of each type. We will engage two introductory texts to literary and cultural theory as well as explore some of the classic texts from the history of literary criticism and theory. Through class discussions, presentations, and short writing assignments, we will consider how these critical concepts apply to both literature and culture. Ultimately, students will gain a sense of the ongoing conversations within literary studies and consider which discourses are most relevant to their own critical interests and concerns.

Required Texts (The Duck Store):

Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*. 3rd ed. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2009.

Culler, Jonathan. *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997.

Regular access to Blackboard (Bb) and a printer.

Recommended:

Childers, Joseph, and Gary Hentzi, eds. *The Columbia Dictionary of Modern Literary and Cultural Criticism*. New York: Columbia UP, 1995.

A good dictionary and a guide to MLA format.

Active reading will require marking significant passages. Plan to access texts accordingly.

Assignments and Grading:

Attendance and Participation 10%

Writing Assignments 55 %

Presentation 15%

Daily assignments 20%

Attendance and Participation: Punctual, regular attendance is a requirement for this class. You are allowed three absences; each subsequent absence lowers your final grade by 1 step (A to A-, B+ to B, C to C-, etc.). You must be prepared to discuss the reading assignment on the day that it is due, and to participate in a respectful and lively *discussion*. Be prepared to read assigned texts closely, share your ideas, and ask questions of your peers and your instructor. **Turn off** cell phones and music during class. You may **not** use a laptop in class though exceptions will be made for those with applicable documentation from The Accessible Education Center.

Assignments:

Reading Assignments: All **readings** are due by the beginning of the class time indicated on the assignment schedule attached to this syllabus. You are responsible for printing all Blackboard readings and bringing them to class on the days they are due. Failure to bring the appropriate texts to class on the assigned days will affect your participation grade.

Writing Assignments: Each week you must complete a 600-word formal response to the assigned critical reading. These should include approximately one page clearly summarizing the main argument of the text in your own words (i.e., without quoting the text), followed by one page explaining how the reading helps you to answer a question you have about literary studies or how it contradicts, complicates, or furthers your theoretical investigations. All **writing** assignments are due at the beginning of class on the due date listed in the course schedule. No secondary reading is required or encouraged, but if you do choose to use sources, they must be properly documented. I am happy to help you in advance of the due date on any assignment. All written work will be graded for form as well as content, so be sure to get help on writing and essay form (including grammar) in plenty of time if you need it. English classes are

writing intensive and expect you to write at your best and use writing assignments to demonstrate and improve your writing skills. Refer to the “Essay Checklist” at the end of this document for formatting guidelines.

Presentation: With a group, you will present one of the required readings to the class in order to open up discussion. Your presentation should last about 10 minutes, beginning with a focused yet detailed 5-minute summary of the author’s argument and main supporting points. During the second 5 minutes, you may introduce any material you feel would help the class to engage further with the reading. For example, you might invite the class to apply the author’s arguments to a particular text that you have excerpted and photocopied. What methods of reading may the author’s argument suggest or inspire? You might instead choose to place the assigned reading in dialogue with an excerpt from another theoretical or critical essay, which perhaps informs, extends, or takes issue with its argument. What can we learn by reading the two texts together? Alternately, you might decide to “historicize” the essay by providing additional information on the particular critical and social context in which it was produced. Does this context alter the ways in which we read and understand the essay or its methods? At the end of your presentation, you should pose 2 or 3 specific questions you would like the class to consider during discussion. Finally, your group’s presentation *must include at least one visual element*. You should begin reading the text for your presentation and meet with your group early in the term. You must attend class on the day of your scheduled presentation. No make-ups will be allowed.

Daily Assignments: For each reading assignment, write one informal paragraph (at least 3-5 sentences) that asks and attempts to answer a question you have about that reading. Keep these questions in a notebook, and bring them to class with you each day. You may miss one written question without penalty. Along with your daily questions keep a vocabulary notebook: write down and define any specific terms discussed in the reading and any words with which you are unfamiliar.

I will call on you in class to read these questions aloud, and they will serve as the springboards for our discussions. If I call on you, and you are unprepared, you will lose participation points.

Policies:

Please review the University policy regarding academic honesty (in *Schedule of Classes*), which will be strictly enforced in this class. If you plagiarize or cheat, you will automatically fail the course.

No late assignments will be accepted (unless you’ve made arrangements with me well in advance of the due date). Incompletes will be given for documented medical emergencies only.

A final grade of C or better for the course is required for English major credit.

Accommodation: If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please arrange to meet with me soon, and request that the Counselor for Students with Disabilities send a letter verifying your disability.

Broken Printers & Computer Crashes: These things happen. However, you should always back up your files. If your computer crashes and you are unable to produce a copy of your work before the beginning of class, your paper will be late. If your printer breaks and you are unable to produce a copy of your work before the beginning of class, e-mail it to me. Do not submit it via attachment; simply paste it into the body of the e-mail. This will not take the place of a hard copy. You must produce a hard copy and deliver it to my office no later than the next day. Remember, your e-mailed paper must arrive before the beginning of class or it will be considered late.

Course Schedule:

Note: All writing and reading assignments are due on the day listed. This schedule is subject to change.

Week 1: What is Theory? What questions does Theory seek to answer?

M	6/24	Introduction.
T	6/25	Read: Culler, "Preface," Ch. 1 "What is Theory?" (1-18), Ch. 2 "What is Literature and Does it Matter?" (19-42)
W	6/26	Read: Culler, Ch. 3 "Literature and Cultural Studies" (43-55), Ch. 4 "Language, Meaning, and Interpretation" (56-69), Ch. 5 "Rhetoric, Poetics, and Poetry" (70-82)
R	6/27	Read: Culler, Ch. 6 "Narrative" (83-94), Ch. 7 "Performative Language" (95-108), Ch. 8 "Identity, Identification, and the Subject" (109-20)

Week 2: Liberal Humanism, Structuralism, and Narratology

M	7/1	Read: Culler, Ch. 9 "Ethics and Aesthetics" (121-33); Poe, "The Oval Portrait" (Appendix 1, 318-21); Barry, Ch. 1 "Theory before 'theory'—liberal humanism" (11-35) Due: Writing Assignment #1
T	7/2	Read: Barry, Ch. 2 "Structuralism" (38-58), Narratology" (214-37)
W	7/3	Read: Saussure, "Course in General Linguistics" (Bb)
R	7/4	No class. Independence Day.

Week 3: Post-structuralism and deconstruction

M	7/8	Read: Barry, Ch. 3 "Post-structuralism and deconstruction" (59-67) Due: Writing Assignment #2
T	7/9	Read: Barry, Ch. 3 continued (68-76); Thomas, "A Refusal to Mourn the Death, by Fire, of a Child in London" (Appendix 2, 321-22); Cowper, "The Castaway" (Appendix 3, 322-24)
W	7/10	Read: Derrida, "Différance" and "Semiology and Grammatology" (Bb).
R	7/11	Read: Foucault, <i>The Archeology of Knowledge</i> (Bb)

Week 4: Psychoanalytic criticism

M	7/15	Read: Barry, Ch. 5 "Psychoanalytic criticism" on Freud (92-103) Due: Writing Assignment #3
T	7/16	Read: Freud, <i>The Interpretation of Dreams</i> (Bb)
W	7/17	Read: Poe, "The Purloined Letter" (Bb); Barry, Ch. 5 "Psychoanalytic criticism" on Lacan (104-13)
R	7/18	Read: Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience" (Bb)

Week 5: Marxist criticism, New historicism, and cultural materialism

M	7/22	Read: Barry, Ch. 8 "Marxist criticism" (150-64) Due: Writing Assignment #4
T	7/23	Read: Ch. 9 "New historicism and cultural materialism" (166-82)

- W 7/24 **Read:** Marx, *The German Ideology* (Bb)
- R 7/25 **Read:** Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” (Bb)
- Week 6: Feminist criticism
- M 7/29 **Read:** Barry, Ch. 6 “Feminist criticism” (116-20; 128-30)
Due: Writing Assignment #5
- T 7/30 **Read:** Barry, Ch. 6 “Feminist criticism” (121-28)
- W 7/31 **Read:** Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (Bb)
- R 8/1 **Read:** Lorde, “Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference” (Bb)

Week 7: Postcolonial criticism

- M 8/5 **Read:** Barry, Ch. 10 “Postcolonial Criticism” (185-94)
Due: Writing Assignment #6
- T 8/6 **Read:** Rivkin and Ryan, “English Without Shadows, Literature on a World Scale” (Bb)
- W 8/7 **Read:** Said, *Orientalism*
- R 8/8 **Read:** Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*

Week 8: Lesbian/gay criticism and queer theory

- M 8/12 **Read:** Barry, Ch. 7 “Lesbian / gay criticism” (134-47)
Due: Writing Assignment #7
- T 8/13 **Read:** Sedgwick, “Queer and Now” (Bb)
- W 8/14 **Read:** Barry, Ch. 15 “Theory after ‘Theory’” (287-317), simply peruse the main ideas rather than the “in practice” sections or bibliographies.
- R 8/15 **Due: Writing Assignment #8 by 12:00 p.m.**

Essay Checklist

The following list is meant to assist you in formatting your essays to my specifications. Failure to comply with these specifications will result in lost points from your final grade for that essay.

Your essay must be:

- 1) Typed and of the appropriate length for the assignment
- 2) Double Spaced with one-inch margins
- 3) Stapled
- 4) In *Times* or *Times New Roman* 12-point font
- 5) Upper left corner of 1st page:
 - a) your name
 - b) date
 - c) description of the assignment
- 6) Last name and page number in upper right corner of following pages (e.g. Name 4)
- 7) Document your sources & use correct citation form (*MLA format for this course*)
- 8) Proofread and spell-check