

INTRODUCTION TO LITERARY CRITICISM

ENG 300
CRN: 36121
Spring 2015
MW 10:00-11:20
300 Villard Hall

Instructor: Corbett Upton
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Hours: MW 12:00-2:00
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Course Description: ENG 300 offers an introduction to literary criticism. This course will acquaint you with many of the important issues and debates in literary studies and introduce you to 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.

Course Outcomes: By the end of this course, you will be able to read literary and cultural texts with more discernment and comprehension; you will be able to better perform critical, formal analyses of literary texts; you will improve your ability to employ logic, creativity, and interpretive skills to produce original, persuasive arguments; 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 65 %

Presentation 15%

Daily assignments 10%

Attendance and Participation: Punctual, regular attendance is a requirement for this class. You are allowed two 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. Laptops and tablets for note taking are permitted in lecture, but **cell-phone use during lecture or discussion is forbidden**. Students using laptops and tablets must sit in the front of the lecture hall. Texting or surfing the web during class time is distracting and disrespectful to your instructor and your classmates. Students who violate this policy will be asked to leave lecture or marked as “absent (unexcused)” for the discussion section in question; final grades will be negatively impacted.

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 one 500-600-word formal responses to the assigned critical reading. These should include approximately one page clearly summarizing the main argument of the assigned text

in your own words (i.e., without quoting the text), followed by one page of analysis, explaining how the reading helps you to answer a question you have about literary studies or how it contradicts, complicates, hinders 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 10-15 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. 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: *UO strives to create inclusive learning environments.* If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations, please notify me and the Accessible Education Center (164 Oregon Hall; <http://aec.uoregon.edu>), so we can make appropriate arrangements.

Mandatory Reporting Policy: The UO is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of prohibited discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence and gender-based stalking. Any UO employee who becomes aware that such behavior is occurring must report that information to the Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity: (<http://aaeo.uoregon.edu/>). *The University Health Center and University Counseling and Testing Center provide assistance to and have a greater ability to work confidentially with students.*

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: *Some questions about literature that theory asks and seeks to answer*

M 3/30 Introduction.

W 4/1 **Read:** Culler, "Preface," Ch. 1 "What is Theory?" (1-17), Ch. 2 "What is Literature and Does it Matter?" (18-41), Ch. 3 "Literature and Cultural Studies" (42-54),

Week 2: *Some questions (cont.); Liberal Humanism, Structuralism, and Narratology*

M 4/6 **Read:** Ch. 4 "Language, Meaning, and Interpretation" (55-68), Ch. 5 "Rhetoric, Poetics, and Poetry" (69-81), Ch. 6 "Narrative" (82-93), Ch. 7 "Performative Language" (94-107), Ch. 8 "Identity, Identification, and the Subject" (108-20), Ch. 9 "Ethics and Aesthetics" (121-33).

Due: Writing Assignment #1

W 4/8 **Read:** Poe, "The Oval Portrait" (Appendix 1, 318-21); Barry, Ch. 1 "Theory before 'theory'— liberal humanism" (11-35); Ch. 2 "Structuralism" (38-58); Ch. 12 "Narratology" (214-37).

Week 3: *Formalism and Structuralism (cont.); Post-structuralism and Deconstruction*

M 4/13 **Read:** Brooks, "The Formalist Critics" (BB [7pp.]); Saussure, "Course in General Linguistics" (BB [14 pp.]).

W 4/15 **Read:** Barry, Ch. 3 "Post-structuralism and Deconstruction" (59-76); 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).

Due: Writing Assignment #2 (on Brooks OR Saussure).

Week 4: *Post-structuralism and Deconstruction (cont.); Psychoanalysis.*

M 4/20 **Read:** Derrida, "Différance" (BB [22 pp.]); Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge* (BB [7 pp.]).

W 4/22 **Read:** Barry, Ch. 5 "Psychoanalytic criticism" (92-113)

Due: Writing Assignment #3 (on Foucault).

Week 5: *Psychoanalytic criticism (cont.); Marxist criticism, New Historicism, and Cultural materialism*

M 4/27 **Read:** Freud "The Interpretation of Dreams" (BB [22 pp.]); Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience" (BB [6 pp.]).

W 4/29 **Read:** Barry, Ch. 8 "Marxist criticism" (150-65); Ch. 9 "New Historicism and Cultural Materialism" (166-82).

Due: Writing Assignment #4 (on either Freud OR Lacan).

Week 6: *Marxist criticism, New Historicism, and Cultural materialism (cont.); Feminist criticism*

M 5/4 **Read:** Marx, "The German Ideology" (BB [5 pp.]); Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" (BB [10 pp.]).

W 5/6 **Read:** Barry, Ch. 6 "Feminist criticism" (116-31)

Due: Writing Assignment #5 (on either Marx OR Althusser).

Week 7: Feminist criticism (cont.); Postcolonial criticism

M 5/11 **Read:** Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and narrative Cinema” (BB [11 pp.]); Lorde, “Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference (BB [7 pp.]).

W 5/13 **Read:** Barry, Ch. 10 “Postcolonial Criticism” (185-94); Rivkin and Ryan, “English Without Shadows, Literature on a World Scale” (BB [4 pp.]).

Due: Writing Assignment #6 (on either Mulvey OR Lorde).

Week 8: Postcolonial criticism (cont.); Lesbian/gay criticism and queer theory

M 5/18 **Read:** Said, *Orientalism* (BB [14 pp.]); Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (BB [8 pp.]).

W 5/20 **Read:** Barry, Ch. 7 “Lesbian / gay criticism” (134-47).

Due: Writing Assignment #7 (on either Said OR Bhabha).

Week 9: Lesbian/gay criticism and queer theory

M 5/25 MEMORIAL DAY. NO CLASS.

W 5/27 **Read:** Sedgwick, “Queer and Now” (BB [20 pp.]).

Week 10: Lesbian/gay criticism and queer theory (cont.); Theory after theory

M 6/1 **Read:** Ch. 15 “Theory after ‘Theory’” (287-371).

Due: Writing Assignment #8 (on Sedgwick).

W 6/3 **In-class: Conclusions, redesigning the English major.**

Final

M 6/8 **DUE: Writing Assignment #9 and revisions (including original with my comments) by 10:15 a.m. in 375 PLC.**

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) Name
 - b) Dr. Upton
 - c) ENG 300
 - d) Writing Assignment #3
 - e) Word Count: 500
- 6) Last name and page number in upper right corner of following pages (e.g. Your Last Name 4)
- 7) Titled (use a title that gives a sense of both your subject and your argument)
- 8) Document your sources & use correct citation form (*MLA format for this course*)
- 9) Proofread and spell-check