FOUNDATIONS OF THE ENGLISH MAJOR: TEXT/THEORY
Profs. Pyle and Laskaya

Description
The Foundations of the English Major is a three-course sequence (ENG 303, ENG 304, ENG 305) that introduces students to the discipline of English as it is practiced at the University of Oregon. The sequence provides English majors with a common intellectual experience and a foundation for future coursework in literary, media, and cultural studies and folklore. All English majors are required to take 303 and then (as of Fall 2020) can choose to take one or both ENG 304 and 305. In 2021-22, ENG 303 and 305 are offered; in 2022-23, ENG 303 and 304 will occur.

ENG 305 is part of the required Foundations of the English Major series and is offered every other Winter term. ENG 305 orients students to the intellectual rationale behind the English major by presenting the discipline’s history and debates. We will do this by studying “critical theory,” a form of writing that seeks less to interpret the meaning of cultural objects than to interrogate the historical, social, and ideological forces that underwrite the ways in which meaning is made. Class lectures and discussions will be guided by three goals. First, we will develop strategies for reading and understanding critical theory and literary criticism as a distinct form of writing. Second, we will consider the contexts from which key theory debates have emerged. Third, we will focus on how theoretical frameworks can expand, constrict, and/or complicate our analysis of specific texts.

All theoretical works share at least one of four basic goals: first, to investigate the objects of critical activity (by asking questions such as “what is a text?” or “what is an author?” or “what is the nature of ‘literary’ value?”); second, to formulate general principles about how meaning is produced and circulated (by examining the effect of the material form of the text or artwork, exploring the processes whereby some acts of interpretation can be encouraged while others are ruled out of bounds, or considering the role of historical context); third, to understand how acts of literary and artistic representation make things happen in the world (by, for example, stirring emotions, fostering identifications, reifying or refusing stereotypes, engaging with different ideological positions, forging collective experiences — all things that require us to think about how emotions, identity, ideology, and collectivity actually work); and fourth, to understand and articulate how real-world beliefs, cultural formations, and institutions are created, sustained, and changed. Because of this drive to understand how acts of representation function in the world, critical theory is constantly borrowing from or in dialogue with other disciplines and bodies of knowledge. Fields such as philosophy, rhetoric, political science, history, sociology, psychology and psychoanalysis, feminist studies, queer and trans studies, performance studies, environmental studies, neuroscience, and other hard sciences have, for example, all inspired and invigorated critical theory.

This class will not attempt to offer a comprehensive history or survey of critical theory but will instead attempt to show through a series of examples how our chosen primary texts can illuminate specific theoretical questions or debates — and vice versa.
ENG 305 will pursue these issues by reading primary texts chosen from the Medieval and 19th-century Romantic periods, engaging with secondary, contemporary scholarship that works to understand or interpret the primary texts. Read and reread the primary and secondary material assigned for each class rigorously before attending lecture and discussion sections.

**ENG 305 large class lectures/sessions occur Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12:00-1:20 pm.**
Students also enroll in a one-hour small discussion section with a GE (Graduate Student Employee) who will provide an additional, discussion-section syllabi. Pre- or Co-Requisite: ENG 205.

**Learning Outcomes**
By the end of this course, students will have

1. built a foundation from which to engage with the wider canons of critical theory;
2. become better able to assess the interpretive potential and limits of a variety of theoretical approaches, including what features of a primary text are typically highlighted by different theoretical assumptions and concerns;
3. begun to appreciate the way different theoretical frameworks often inform scholarly criticism;
4. practiced using critical theory in their own essays; and
5. discussed, practiced, and begun refining the use of theoretical questions and frameworks in discussion and multiple writing assignments.

**Required Course Materials and Texts:**
-- Any additional reading materials (beyond the two required texts) will be available on Canvas.
-- Reading Questions to help you prepare for lectures, assignments. (See Canvas.)
-- Lecture sessions will be recorded and uploaded to our main Canvas site after each class.

**Contact information and office hours for professors and GEs:**
Prof. Laskaya (she, hers), email: laskaya@uoregon.edu
Office hours (via Zoom): Mondays 9:30-10:30; Thursdays 2-4, and by individual appointment.
Zoom room for Office hrs: 928 0848 2904

Prof. Pyle (he, his) email: trespyle@uoregon.edu
Office hours (via Zoom): tba, and by individual appointment on Chat or Zoom.

Ashley Ecklund, email: aecklun6@uoregon.edu
Office hours: Fridays 12-3 pm on Zoom (see discussion syllabus for details), and by appointment.

Travis Heeren, email: theeren@uoregon.edu
Office hours: Tuesdays 2-5pm on Zoom (see discussion syllabus for details), and by appointment.
Strategies for Success:

Communication is KEY. Check Canvas and your UOregon email nearly every day for updates concerning all your courses, to be sure you keep track of assignments and the course schedule. Ask your GE’s or professors questions when you have them and, when possible, connect with other students in the course.

Creating a study schedule has been shown to be helpful for students. To stay on track, use a calendar, phone app (reminder), or a paper agenda to keep track of due dates and study times.

It will help you to be active in the course and with the reading if you reread course material regularly. Give yourself some 'thinking time' beyond reading. Take notes on lectures and readings.

Be sure to study, think about, and make notes for yourself addressing each module’s study questions. Even if class sessions do not focus on all the study questions in a particular module, those questions will help you understand the course material and be better prepared for written assignments and discussions.

Write down your own questions about (and responses to) texts, lectures, or discussions. If possible, write on the text in your own handwriting (studies show this is far better than keyboarding). If a reading is posted on Canvas, download it, so you can physically annotate or gloss reading before and perhaps after lecture. Call, text, or message with someone else in our class or speak with a friend or family member about what you are learning. Put what you learn into your own words and reflect on it. Comparing notes with a study partner or a small group can assist you with the course; please feel free to collaborate as you learn (however, see caveat under ‘academic integrity’ below).

Since lectures will be recorded and available on Canvas, each of you will be able to review lectures and large class sessions. See the suggestions on ‘active reading’ and ‘actively reading secondary materials’ (provided on Canvas).

If you need additional assistance, contact your GE first. The UO also offers study skills and time management assistance. Check out https://engage.uoregon.edu/ or https://owl.uoregon.edu/ The UO has compiled a list of other support services you can access remotely, including tutoring, technology troubleshooting, advising, counseling, and more: https://remote.uoregon.edu/student

Useful Resources when Reading, Writing, and Citing
For unfamiliar words, https://www.merriam-webster.com offers a high quality online dictionary; it is also a standard source to assist you with your own writing. You can also access this resource through the UO library online catalog.

For words whose meanings may have changed over time, such as words in Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein, use the OED (Oxford English Dictionary), which tracks such changes and can help you figure out what meanings are likely/possible/impossible in those text. The OED is an excellent resource if a word in our secondary reading isn’t clear. On the UO library’s homepage, click on “databases,” then on the letter O, then on the OED (scroll down to ‘Oxford’) and use your DuckID to log in.

Lectures and our weekly study questions/guides (as well as definitions found within the secondary readings) will point to key terms in the secondary readings.
Nota Bene (abbreviated as ‘NB’ means ‘Note well!’): For Chaucer’s text (and other Middle English texts in the original language), the OED (Oxford English Dictionary) IS NOT reliable or preferred. If you want to explore specific Middle English words we encounter, please consult The Middle English Dictionary (MED) from the University of Michigan (available free online): https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary

The MED can be difficult to navigate, because standardized spelling did not exist in the Middle Ages; contact Prof. Laskaya if you have difficulty using this free online resource. If you are reading Larry Benson’s interlinear translation of The Wife of Bath, unfamiliar words you may encounter in his translation are often defined well in the OED. But when you are citing Chaucer in your graded written work, cite his work in the original Middle English.

SCHEDULE (subject to slight changes: see Canvas for up-to-date information)

Week One

U 1/4 Introductions: the aims, map of course. Why examine literary theory? What is theory?
Before class, read Paul de Man, from “The Resistance to Theory” (see Canvas). This essay was sent to all via Canvas and posted under Announcements and Modules Jan. 1.

Section I: Medieval texts and Theory

H 1/6 ME text. First, read the description of the Wife of Bath from the General Prologue, ll. A445-A476 (pp. 44-43); Second, read the Wife of Bath’s Prologue, ll. 1-856 (pp. 44-73). Use Larry Benson’s line-by-line interlinear translation, if you need it: https://chaucer.fas.harvard.edu/pages/wife-baths-prologue-and-tale-0

Week Two

U 1/11 Come to class having prepared and studied readings in accord with ‘reading questions’ posted on Canvas for Week Two/Module Two.
   -Clifford Geertz’s ‘Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture’

H 1/13 Reread the Wife of Bath's Prologue ll. 1-856 (pp. 44-73) and add the Wife of Bath's Tale, ll. 857-1264 (pp. 73-85).
   Prepare the ‘reading questions’ posted on Canvas for Thursday, Jan 13th.

Week Three

*M 1/18 Martin Luther King day

U 1/19 Framework 1: New Historicism. Read Lee Patterson’s essay (one version of New historicism & the WofB), 133-152. Re-examine passages in the WofB important for Patterson’s discussion.
   * Short writing assignment on Geertz due Tuesday, 1/19 by 5 p.m. uploaded on Canvas

H 1/21 Framework 2: Marxism. Read Laurie Finke’s essay (one version of Marxism & the WofB), 171-187. Re-examine passages in the WofB important for Finke’s argument.
Week Four

U 1/25 Framework 3: Deconstruction. Marshall Leicester’s essay (one version of deconstruction & WofB), 234-54. Re-examine the passages in the WofB important for Leicester’s argument.

H 1/27 Marshall Leicester’s essay concluded. Review passages in the WofB important for Leicester’s argument.

Week Five

U 2/1 Framework 4: Feminist Theory. An influential statement of feminist theory tba

H 2/3 Feminist Theory. Elaine Tuttle Hansen’s essay (one version of feminist theory & WofB), 273-288. Re-examine passages in the WofB important for Hansen’s argument.

*M 2/7 1st Paper on theory and WofB (specific guidelines, tba) 1050-1250 words.

Section II: Nineteenth-Century Texts and Theory

Week Six

*M 2/7 due: 1050-1250 words.

U 2/8 Mary Shelley, Frankenstein (1818), Preface and Volume I (pp. 5-60)

H 2/10 Shelley, Frankenstein, Volume II (pp. 61-105)

Week Seven

U 2/15 Shelley, Frankenstein, Volume III (pp. 107-161); Introduction to Third Edition (1831), pp. 165-169.


Week Eight


H 2/24 Framework 2: Marxism. Franco Moretti, “Dialectic of Fear: Frankenstein” (Canvas)

Week Nine


Week Ten


H 3/10 Conclusions and Review

Finals Week
Final scheduled for Friday, March 18th 8 a.m.-10:00 a.m.

Participation
Come to class lecture and discussion sessions having read/reviewed the assigned material and prepared reading/study questions, if they are posted in the current week’s module. Please arrive to class sessions on time, with appropriate materials on hand (course readings and implements for taking notes); be ready to focus on the day’s activities. Lectures may not be copied, taped, or videotaped. They will be uploaded to Canvas for your review and as a resource, should you need to consult them. Copying, distributing or sharing lecture video/audio files is not allowed; these files are for the use of members of our immediate course community only.

We may use the Chat function (on zoom) during classroom lectures which will allow you to write questions or comments on readings and lecture material. We will turn to questions shared in Chat between sections of lecture, during lecture, and/or at the end of a day’s lecture. Your focused questions and responses to specific issues under discussion or within lecture are important, as is careful listening. If we don’t get to your question or comment, your participation on Chat still records your active learning, listening, and thinking. Some follow up on Chat comments may also occur later in your discussion sections, and those sections will be a great place for you to raise any questions needing further exploration OR questions we didn’t get to during lecture sessions.

The participation grade (see “Grades” below) rewards students who take an active and engaged role in large-class and small discussion section meetings, who are willing to contribute thoughtfully and constructively to the collaborative process of in-class dialogue, who listen well, and who contribute in a collegial and respectful way. Participation can take many forms: asking questions, offering ideas, making room for others to contribute, listening well, responding to the precise issue under investigation, and/or visibly paying attention. Conversely, you can hurt your participation grade by talking over others; surfing or using technology for non-class activities; disrupting class lectures, discussions, or other learning activities; not listening; or by not treating others with generosity and respect.

Please pay attention for the duration of lectures and discussion meetings and do not prevent others from doing so. Surfing the internet or working on other tasks while lecture or discussion is underway will inhibit your own learning and can easily interfere with other students’ focus. Any activity that disrupts or distracts others from course material obviously may inhibit teaching and learning, so GEs may ask you to refrain. Read or reread the UO Code of Conduct regarding our campus community’s classroom and learning expectations. Please be considerate and respectful of those around you and online with you.

Attendance
Attending both lectures and discussion sections consistently is a way you commit to your own education. This is particularly important for an English Major, for whom the close engagement
with texts and interpretive concepts is paramount. Class sessions, as well as written work, provide opportunities for you to participate and demonstrate your commitment to your English Major.

One discussion section absence is allowed, in case you are ill or absolutely need to miss a section meeting; consistent attendance and participation in discussion section meetings will figure into your final course grade. Regular attendance at large lecture sessions is assumed.

COVID Protocols: We will follow the University of Oregon protocols for Covid prevention, containment, and support. Students are expected to wear masks—and wear them properly—at all times. If fully vaccinated and boosted, instructors are permitted to remove masks during instruction. Prof. Laskaya, while fully vaccinated and boosted, has a disability and is seriously immune-compromised; she will likely be instructing via Zoom in accord with Federal ADA regulations. Prof. Pyle is also fully vaccinated and boosted; he plans to be instructing in the classroom, either masked or with the protection of a transparent “face-shield.”

The following is the “Classroom Citizenship” guide published by the university:

Good Classroom Citizenship in the time of Covid
- Wear your mask and make sure it fits you well
- Stay home if you’re sick
- Get to know your neighbors in class, and let them know if you test positive
- Get tested regularly
- Watch for signs and symptoms with the daily symptom self-check
- Wash your hands frequently or use hand sanitizer
- Complete the UO COVID-19 [case and contact reporting form](https://www.uoregon.edu/covid-19/) if you test positive or are a close contact of someone who tests positive.

Resilience Planning: In the event of a campus disruption that impacts our course, note that academic activities, course requirements, deadlines, and grading percentages are subject to change. Information about such changes in our course will be communicated as soon as possible by email, and on Canvas. If we are unable to meet in person, students should immediately log onto Canvas and read any announcements and/or access synchronous online class sessions or alternative assignments. Students are also expected to continue coursework as outlined in this syllabus or other instructions on Canvas. In the event that anyone on the ENG 305 teaching team has to quarantine, we may need to switch to an online format for a period of time.

Grades
English Majors must take ENG 305 for a grade; and it must be passed with a solid ‘C’ grade to count toward the English Major requirements. Final course grades will be based on:

- 10% Participation in section discussion and lecture chat
- 15% Quizzes (5 best out of 6 quizzes)
- 15% 2 Short Essays/writing assignments
- 40% 2 Formal Papers (20% each)
- 20% Final Exam (2 hours writing time, conducted on Canvas at assigned final exam time)
Grading Scale

A+ 100  B+ 88-89  C+ 78-79  D+ 68-69
A 93-99  B 83-87  C 73-77  D 63-67
A- 90-92  B- 80-82  C- 70-72  D- 60-62  F 0-59

Assignments are due by the day/time indicated on the syllabus. Late assignments will be docked approximately 1/3 of a letter grade for each day they are late, unless explicit arrangements have been made in advance with your GE discussion instructor (see “Extensions” below). Assignments given extensions but submitted after the agreed submission date/time will be judged late.

Extensions You may ask for an extension; the earlier the better. When you contact your GE, please let them know how long an extension you are requesting. Using email, confirm with your GE the date and time limits of the extension in writing. This allows the teaching team to maintain equity among the extension requests and eliminate misunderstandings. In case of a brief unexpected disruption in your work, consideration will be given if you keep your instructors in the loop and communicate in advance. Stay in touch.

Academic Integrity: The University of Oregon values academic honesty. Students are informed of the University’s policies and expectations about conduct and academic honesty when they matriculate. You are here because you clearly have the ability to engage your own mind in rigorous intellectual work. If you need a quick review of our campus community's assumptions about academic integrity and conduct, see the Conduct Code on the UO website: https://dos.uoregon.edu/conduct

Writing assignments in ENG 305 will be analytical and ask you to apply what you’re learning in our course; they will not require outside research. You may find yourself curious about something or wanting more information at times; great—read on, and bravo for curiosity! However, students will not receive higher grades simply because they read beyond course materials or use research in papers or exams.

Please consult our library's website: https://researchguides.uoregon.edu/citingplagiarism/styleguides for information on documentation, should you need it, and for discussions of how to avoid plagiarism. See your GE if you have any concerns about documentation and/or academic honesty. For this course, an honest and obvious effort to document is absolutely critical and far more important than commas, abbreviations, or 'correct' formatting. Either MLA or Chicago Style provide acceptable resources and formats for advanced work in literature.

Course policy on Academic Integrity: All work submitted in this course must be your own and be written exclusively for this course. Any use of sources (ideas, quotations, and paraphrases) beyond our lectures and discussion must be properly documented. This includes ideas you get from your classmates (discussion and kicking ideas around is encouraged, so long as you document where discussion with a peer has impacted your argument). Also document any ideas you get from websites as well as books and other media. You are not allowed to cut and paste from internet sites into your paper. N.B. Most internet essays aimed at students are not written at the college level. Lifting material from this work, even in the case that you are not caught, often results in a lower grade. In other words, rely on your own grey matter, and wrestle well, yourself, with the course material. Protect the integrity of your own work and that of others’. In cases of clearly established plagiarism or cheating, a final course grade of “F” will be recorded, and all incidents will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct, as required by the University.
Inclusion and Accessibility
This is an inclusive learning environment. We will do our best to assist any student facing challenges. We recognize our primary texts are drawn from white, hetero-dominant cultural material and encourage you to think about ways each may directly, or subtly, contribute to (or resist) oppressive power dynamics. Because our primary texts come from other historical periods, they offer a challenge to our 21st century world views and so challenge us to listen and read thoughtfully. Listening and responding thoughtfully to others is a central tenet of literary study. The interpretive essays (secondary texts) will help you hone your close reading skills, and will help us reflect on issues of power, ethics, aesthetics, and meaning that arise in the primary material, given the textual features and historical contexts of each text. As we will discuss the first day of class, literary theory can disturb our initial assumptions about what a passage, a character, or a narrative may represent. Being willing to rethinking our initial assumptions and reactions to readings is central to the intellectual project that is the university, regardless of field. The work we do this term can apply to your subsequent readings of texts from any historical period and human community, as well as any communication you hear, see, or read, whether literary or not.

Please notify one of the professors teaching this course by the end of week 2 if there are aspects of the instruction or course design that result in disability-related barriers to your participation, so that we may make accommodations in line with what the Office for Accessible Education recommends. It is your responsibility to contact the Accessible Education Center (formerly Disability Services) in 164 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or uoaec@uoregon.edu for resources and support.

NB: If your work with AEC determines you may need accommodations, you must meet with your GE or one of the faculty within a week of meeting with the AEC to discuss details of the accommodations.

A note about student names and pronouns: class rosters provide instructors with only students' legal names. Please let us know (in person or by email) if the names or pronouns we have for you are not accurate. And do let us know if we are not pronouncing your name correctly. It is important to us that you are addressed correctly and respectfully.

Course Content
You should be aware that the texts we will read this term deal with adult themes and subject matter. Encountering, analyzing, and discussing aesthetic, political, and cultural differences—including differences that challenge and even offend current day beliefs and ideals—and learning about the histories that helped shape current urgent debates, struggles, and conflicts are essential aspects of the discipline of the English major and the work of majoring in English. We believe that cultivating these skills will help best prepare students to live as effective and ethical citizens. To develop these skills, we remind all of you that it is vital that each of you is able to take risks and explore arguments—arguments you may continue to revise or may move away from. Similarly, we ask each of you to be respectful of viewpoints with which you may disagree strongly.