

# ENG 300: Introduction to Literary Criticism and Theory

CRN 26994  
Winter 2017  
MWF 2-2:50  
140 ALL

Dr. O'Kelly  
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**Course Description:** ENG 300 introduces you to literary criticism and literary theory. We will examine major modes and schools of criticism—engaging in depth with the theories that inform them—to provide you with a strong background for comprehending contemporary literary studies as an academic discipline and inspire you to view literary and cultural texts through a new set of lenses. F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* will serve as a common text for applied readings that exemplify particular modes of criticism, while samplings from philosophers and theorists that range from Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud to Judith Butler and Edward Said will lay out the philosophical grounds for such readings.

## Required Texts:

F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*. Scribner

978-0743273565

Lois Tyson, *Critical Theory Today*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Routledge, 2014.

978-0415506755

Additional readings on Canvas, print out/download and bring to class. Electronic texts are fine, but must be on a dedicated reading device, not phones.

A good dictionary, such as the Oxford English Dictionary: <http://oed.com.libproxy.uoregon.edu/>

## Coursework and Grading

**Attendance:** I take attendance every class. You are allowed three absences without penalty. Each subsequent absence will result in a deduction of 1/3 of a letter grade from your final grade (i.e. B to B-, B- to C+, etc.) except in the instance of a documented medical or family emergency. **On a sixth unexcused absence you may automatically fail the course.** If you miss class, contact a classmate for notes and review them in detail before contacting me with any specific questions. You are responsible for keeping track of your attendance. Do not ask me how many absences you have.

**Participation:** You are expected to participate in class discussion. Productive, regular participation will benefit your overall grade for the course (even beyond the participation component of the grade). You must show respect for the ideas and opinions of other students. Disrespectful or disruptive classroom conduct (side conversations, use of electronic devices for purposes unrelated to class) will result in a marked absence for that day's class. Laptops and tablets for notes and readings are permitted in class, but cell-phone use is not allowed. Texting, instant messaging, shopping, and all other internet use unrelated to class is distracting to and disrespectful of your fellow students and instructor. If you violate this policy, you will be asked to leave class and marked absent, which will negatively impact your final grade. There may be reading comprehension quizzes and short in-class writing exercises that will factor into your participation grade.

**Reading:** You are required to complete theoretical reading assignments—those in pdf format on Canvas—before the date they are listed on the course schedule. Readings from Tyson's text provide useful background and context for the theoretical readings and should be completed before the date they are listed on the syllabus. However, Tyson's readings of *The Great Gatsby* should ideally be read after the theoretical texts. You should finish reading *The Great Gatsby* by the end of the second week of class.

**Reading Analysis Essays:** You will write a total of four approximately 500 word formal responses to assigned critical readings. **Essays are due on Canvas before class by 12:00 p.m. on the day the reading is assigned and you can only submit one essay per week.** Your first essay will be due during the third week of class. Final deadlines for each essay submission will be noted on Canvas. You choose which texts you want to write on, but each essay should only focus on one reading. I encourage you to write an essay on the text you do your presentation on. Essays should include approximately 250 words that clearly summarize the main argument of the text you choose in your own words (i.e. without quoting the text beyond precise terminology). The remainder of the essay should analyze the essay in a productive manner. Options include: close reading a particular section of the text to unpack its meaning beyond your summary; explaining how the reading helps you to answer a question you have about literary studies or how it contradicts or complicates how you traditionally read literature. These are formal writing assignments and are evaluated for form and content. These essays also provide the basis for strong participation in class discussion; therefore, I expect you to contribute to the conversation on days you submit essays. Analysis essays will be graded on a 100 point scale. A rubric

will be available on Canvas. Late essays will not be accepted unless you've made arrangements with me well before the due date.

**Application Essay:** You will write a final application essay of ~2000 words that approaches a literary text of your choice through the lens of one of the schools of criticism we've studied. I will provide additional details on this essay at least two weeks before the due date (3/22 at 11:59 p.m). Essays will be submitted through Canvas. Late Application Essays will not be accepted.

**Presentation:** With a group, you will present on one day's assigned reading to the class to facilitate discussion (if there are two readings that day, you can choose one or present on both). Presentations should last 15-20 minutes. The first 5 minutes of the presentation should provide a focused and detailed summary of the reading's argument and main points. During the next 5-10 minutes, you can bring in any material you think would help the class engage further with the text. i.e. you might briefly put the text in conversation with an excerpt from another theoretical essay that we've read that it either draws from or contradicts. On the other hand, you might apply the author's argument to a brief text or image that you will distribute to or display before the class. Or, you might explain how the text's historical context informs it. i.e. does considering the reading's historical context change how we interpret it? You should conclude your presentation by posing 2 or 3 specific questions you would like the class to address in discussion. You are welcome to use the projector, chalkboard, etc. I encourage you to begin work on your presentations early and I am happy to discuss them with you in office hours beforehand. I will pass around a sign-up sheet during the first week of class and post it on Canvas. You must present on the scheduled day. No make-ups are allowed.

**Grade Breakdown:**

Participation:	10%
Presentation:	20%
Reading Analysis Essays:	35%
Application Essay:	35%

**The English Department's assessment procedure is built around six desired learning outcomes:**

1. Read literary and cultural texts with discernment and comprehension and with an understanding of their conventions;
2. Draw on relevant cultural and/or historical information to situate texts within their cultural, political, and historical contexts;
3. Perform critical, formal analyses of literary, cinematic, and other cultural texts;
4. Write focused, analytical essays in clear, grammatical prose;
5. Employ logic, creativity, and interpretive skills to produce original, persuasive arguments;
6. Employ primary and/or secondary sources, with proper acknowledgment and citation, as they contribute to a critical essay's thesis.

**Academic Integrity:**

All work must adhere to standards of academic honesty outlined in the Student Handbook. Do not turn in work prepared for other classes. Document all sources consulted, including websites and other Internet content. Plagiarism will result in failure for the course and additional sanctions as determined by the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards: <http://uodos.uoregon.edu/StudentConductandCommunityStandards.aspx>

**Accommodations for students with disabilities:**

In compliance with UO policy and equal access laws, I am available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that may be required for student with disabilities. Requests for academic accommodations are to be made during the first two weeks of the quarter, except for unusual circumstances, so arrangements can be made. Students are encouraged to register with the Accessible Education Center (<http://aec.uoregon.edu> to verify their eligibility for appropriate accommodations.

### **Recommended Study Habits and University Resources:**

University accreditation standards require at least 2 hours of work outside of class for each credit earned. This means that you are expected to dedicate ~8 hours/week of *outside of class* work. This will usually mean reading the assigned texts, but will also include time spent completing assignments, writing papers, and working on larger projects.

Numerous campus resources are available which you should avail yourself of if you desire assistance with academic or extra-academic issues. For a full list, please see the Canvas document “University Resources”; I will also discuss relevant resources throughout the quarter.

### **Writing Associates:**

Writing Associates are available to help students with any aspect of their writing for this course. They are peer tutors who can work with you one-on-one on your writing assignments. They are advanced English majors who have been trained to tutor writing. They can help you understand the process of writing about literature and criticism and show you how to make your written work for this class more clear, correct, and effective. To make an appointment with a Writing Associate, go to <http://english.uoregon.edu/writingassociates/>

**WARNING:** This class may include readings or viewings that contain explicit depictions of sex, violence, adult themes, coarse language, and material that some might find offensive. If you think that this might be a problem for you, please come talk to me about whether we can find a solution, or if this is the best class for you.

### **Course Schedule** (subject to change)

#### **Week 1: Introduction, New Criticism, and *The Great Gatsby***

1/9: Introduction

1/11: Tyson, “Everything You Wanted to Know About Critical Theory...,” pg. 1-10  
Read at least the first two chapters of *The Great Gatsby* (through pg. 42).

1/13: Brooks, “The Formalist Critics” [Canvas]

Tyson, “New Criticism,” pg. 129-58

Read at least the first half of *The Great Gatsby* this week (through pg. 85)

#### **Week 2: New Criticism, continued, and Structuralism**

1/16: **Martin Luther King, Jr. Day – No class**

1/18: Saussure, from *Course in General Linguistics* [Canvas]

Tyson, “Structuralist Criticism,” pg. 198-232

1/20: Lévi-Strauss, extracts from “The Structural Study of Myth” [Canvas]

Roland Barthes, “The World of Wrestling” [Canvas]

Finish *The Great Gatsby* this week.

#### **Week 3: Psychoanalysis**

1/23: Freud, from *The Interpretation of Dreams* [Canvas]

Tyson, “Psychoanalytic Criticism,” pg. 11-48

1/25: Freud, extract from “The Uncanny” [Canvas]

Lacan, “The Mirror Stage” [Canvas]

1/27: Lacan, “The Symbolic Order” [Canvas]

#### **Week 4: Marxism**

1/30: Marx, from *The German Ideology* [Canvas]

Marx, preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* [Canvas]

Gramsci, from *The Prison Notebooks* [Canvas]

Tyson, “Marxist Criticism,” pg. 51-76

2/1: Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” [Canvas]

2/3: Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” [Canvas]

### **Week 5: Deconstruction and Poststructuralism**

- 2/6: Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences"  
Tyson, "Deconstructive Criticism," pg. 235-65
- 2/8: Derrida, "*Différance*" [Canvas]
- 2/10: Continue Derrida  
Barthes, "The Death of the Author" [Canvas]

### **Week 6: Poststructuralism, New Historicism, and Cultural Studies**

- 2/13: Foucault, from *The Archaeology of Knowledge* [Canvas]  
Tyson, "New Historical and Cultural Criticism," pg. 267-298
- 2/15: Foucault, from *Discipline and Punish* [Canvas]
- 2/17: Bourdieu, from "Forms of Capital" [Canvas]

### **Week 7: Gender Studies and Queer Theory**

- 2/20: Gilbert and Gubar, from *The Madwoman in the Attic* [Canvas]  
Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" [Canvas]  
Tyson, "Feminist Criticism," pg. 79-126.
- 2/22: Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa" [Canvas]
- 2/24: Foucault, from *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1* [Canvas]  
de Lauretis, from *Technologies of Gender* [Canvas]

### **Week 8: Gender Studies and Queer Theory / Ethnic and Postcolonial Studies**

- 2/27: Sedgwick, "Queer and Now" [Canvas]  
Tyson, "Lesbian, Gay, and Queer Criticism," pg. 302-340
- 3/1: Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination" [Canvas]
- 3/3: Du Bois, from *The Souls of Black Folk* [Canvas]  
Gates, "The Blackness of Blackness" [Canvas]  
Tyson, "African American Criticism," pg. 343-93

### **Week 9: Ethnic and Postcolonial Studies**

- 3/6: Anzaldúa, from *Borderlands/La Frontera* [Canvas]  
Minh-ha, "Not You/Like You" [Canvas]
- 3/8: Fanon, from *Black Skin/White Masks* [Canvas]  
Tyson, "Postcolonial Criticism," pg. 398-441.
- 3/10: Said, from *Orientalism* [Canvas]

### **Week 10: Postcolonial Studies / Beyond Subjectivity**

- 3/13: Bhabha, from *The Location of Culture* [Canvas]
- 3/15: Meillassoux, from *After Finitude* [Canvas]
- 3/17: Vogl, "Becoming-Media" [Canvas]  
Tyson, "Gaining an Overview," pg. 448-453.