

Department of English Language and Literature - University of Waterloo  
ENGL 251A section 03, Criticism I  
Fall 2015 T, Th 4-5:20, EV 3408

Instructor: Judy Ehrentraut  
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Office: PAS 1062  
Office Hour: Tuesday 2:30-3:30

### Course Description:

“An introduction to the theorizing of literary and non-literary texts. Emphasizing contemporary theories, the course will focus on the text, the reader, and culture.” (Undergraduate Calendar)

In the next 12 weeks, we will explore the interdisciplinary roots of critical theory to look at the ways in which theory informs current practices of reading. This course is structured as a survey, focusing primarily on essays written in the twentieth century. We will look at some of the most influential schools and movements, including New Criticism, Post-Structuralism, Post-Colonialism, Gender Studies and Psychoanalysis. By the end of the term, students will become familiar with a wide variety of different analytical approaches and theoretical schools and will be able to understand different ways to derive “meaning” from a text. We will also look at some primary texts for the purpose of analysis in the form of short stories, films and other media.

### Required Texts:

*Critical Theory: A Reader for Literary and Cultural Studies*. Ed. Robert Dale Parker. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Introductory excerpts from Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan’s anthology (uploaded onto LEARN)

Additional critical essays and short stories (uploaded onto LEARN)

### Optional Texts (but highly encouraged as a resource):

John Hopkins Encyclopedia of Critical Theory – <http://litguide.press.jhu.edu>

### Course Breakdown

Attendance and participation:	10%
Short Story Analysis	5% - <b>Nov 10<sup>th</sup>, in class</b>
Individual Presentation:	15%
Short Composition:	20% - <b>DUE: one week later, by 11:59pm</b>
Long Essay:	50%

(Outline: 10% + Workshop: 5% - **Dec 3<sup>rd</sup>, in class**  
Essay: 35% - **DUE: Dec 14<sup>th</sup>, by midnight**)

Week 1: New Criticism - Read "Formalism Intro" (LEARN)

**All readings can either be found in the anthology, or uploaded to LEARN, where indicated.**

September 15<sup>th</sup> Intro and overview of schools of literary criticism, and course expectations

September 17<sup>th</sup> Brooks, "The Language of Paradox" AND "The Formalist Critics"  
Arnold, "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" (LEARN)

Week 2: Structuralism - Read "Structuralism Intro" -(LEARN)

September 22<sup>nd</sup> De Saussure, "Course in General Linguistics"  
Shklovsky, "Art as Technique"

September 24<sup>th</sup> Levi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth"  
Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*

Week 3: Post-structuralism to Deconstruction - Read "Deconstruction Intro" (LEARN)

September 29<sup>th</sup> Derrida, "The End of the Book and the Beginning of Writing"  
De Man, "Semiology and Rhetoric"

October 1<sup>st</sup> Baudrillard, "Simulacra and Simulations" (Excerpt on LEARN)  
Hooks, "Essentialism and Experience"

Week 4: Psychoanalysis - Read "Psychoanalysis Intro" (LEARN)

October 6<sup>th</sup> Freud, "Psycho-analysis"  
Eckert, "Archetypal/Mythological/Jungian Approaches to Literary Criticism" (Excerpt on LEARN)

October 8<sup>th</sup> Lacan, "Seminar on the Purloined Letter"  
Zizek, "Why Does a Letter Always Arrive At its Destination? Imaginary, Symbolic, Real"

Week 5: Marxism - Read "Marxism Intro" (LEARN)

October 13<sup>th</sup> Marx, "The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof"  
Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Mechanical Reproduction"

October 15<sup>th</sup> Williams, "Dominant, Residual, and Emergent"  
Jameson, "Cognitive Mapping"

Week 6: Historicism and Cultural Studies - Read "Historicism Intro" (LEARN)

October 20<sup>th</sup> White, "The Historical Text as Literary Artifact"  
Strier, "Why Formalism Became a Dirty Word, and Why We Can't Do Without It"

October 22<sup>nd</sup> Foucault, "Panopticism"  
Hall, "Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation"

Week 7: Reader-Response Criticism - Read "Reader-Response Intro" (LEARN)

October 27<sup>th</sup> Gibson, "Authors, Speakers, Readers, and Mock Readers" (LEARN)  
Barthes, "Death of the Author"

October 29<sup>th</sup> Fish, "Introduction: Or How I Stopped Worrying and Learned to Love Interpretation"  
Hall, "Encoding/Decoding"

Week 8: Feminism - Read "Feminism Intro" (LEARN)

November 3<sup>rd</sup> Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema"  
Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa"

November 5<sup>th</sup> Irigaray, "This Sex Which Is Not One"  
Moi, "Images of Women Criticism"

Week 9: The Short Story

November 10<sup>th</sup> Short story analysis (TBD, to be uploaded to LEARN)

November 12<sup>th</sup> Short story analysis (TBD, to be uploaded to LEARN)

Week 10: Gender and Queer - Read "Gender and Queer Intro" (LEARN)

November 17<sup>th</sup> Wittig, "The Straight Mind"  
Halberstam, "Queer Temporalities and Postmodern Geographies"

November 19<sup>th</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*  
Sedgwick, "Gender Asymmetry and Erotic Triangles"

Week 11: Post-colonialism and Race - Read "Post-colonialism Intro" (LEARN)

November 24<sup>th</sup> Fanon, "On National Culture"  
Bhabha, "On Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse"

November 26<sup>th</sup> Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?: Speculations on Widow Sacrifice"  
Said, "Narrative and Social Space"

Week 12: Essay Workshop

December 1<sup>st</sup> Overview of essay outline structures and topics

December 3<sup>rd</sup> Essay outline due + workshop

## Detailed Course Breakdown

### **Participation: 10%**

Attendance and preparation for each class is expected; we will spend each week talking about the readings, so each student must come to class having read the required essays for that day. If you miss more than two classes without any explanation or communication with me beforehand, your participation grade will be affected.

### **Short Story Analysis: 5%**

In Week 9, we will be discussing a short story (TBD) and applying the readings we have done so far from the various schools of criticism. Everyone must come to class with an idea for how to approach this particular story using a method of criticism, and this will make up the participation grade for that day.

### **Individual Presentation: 15%**

On the first day of class, a sign-up sheet will be distributed and each student will need to select a reading from the syllabus and do a short presentation. We will begin the presentations in Week 2.

This short oral presentation is a chance for everyone to practice speaking in front of an audience made up of their peers. The presentation should last 10 -15 minutes and focus on one of the two essays listed for that class. No visual aids are necessary, and the student should concentrate on explaining the essay and summarizing the important points for the rest of the class.

### **Short Composition: 20%**

Students will submit a short composition (4-6 pages) one week after their presentation (uploaded to LEARN, by 11:59pm) that expands on the selected reading. Students should not hand in any point-form presentation notes; this composition should have proper sentences and paragraphs, and outline the key points of the reading chosen for the original presentation. It should also provide more details about that theorist's contribution to the larger scope of the school of literary criticism (i.e. Shklovsky's "Art as Technique" and how it has influenced structuralism as a method of criticism).

At least one secondary source should be used outside of the original essay (Wikipedia, while helpful, should only be used as an aid and not as a main source of research). Please include a title page in MLA format, and a bibliography.

### **Long Essay 35%**

This longer essay (8-10 pages) will be expected to grow out of each student's outline that will be peer-reviewed in Week 12. This essay will compare and contrast two essays from the syllabus from two different schools of literary criticism. In addition to these two essays, each student must choose a primary text to analyze. This can be a short story, film, comic, or any piece of media, and should either help support the main argument being discussed in the essays chosen,

or a primary text that could be used to apply a theoretical concept from the essays chosen. I will accept a wide variety of different primary texts, so long as a justification can be made before the essay outline is submitted on Dec 3<sup>rd</sup>. The essay is due on LEARN by 11:59pm on Dec. 14<sup>th</sup>.

### **Essay Outline (10%) + Workshop (5%):**

In Week 12, we will be going over how to create a proper essay outline, and will discuss short stories and other pieces of media that can be applied to the schools of criticism within the course. These will be uploaded on LEARN a week before so that everyone has a chance to look at them and start thinking about how their outline will take shape. Attendance is highly encouraged for this class, as it will help with the formation of the outline that will be due the following class.

Everyone will be expected to come to class on the last day (Dec 3<sup>rd</sup>) with their completed outline, ready for peer-review. We will spend the class going over any questions about the essay assignment and students will peer-review each other's outlines and give feedback.

### Course Policies and Other Information

#### **Late Policy:**

Given that there are only two assignments to hand in outside of class, the deadlines in this course are firm. Late papers will be penalized at a rate of 5% a day, including weekends, and will not be accepted more than 2 weeks after the due date. No extensions will be given unless there is a clear and verified medical reason or emergency. Note: Being busy with other courses does not count as an emergency or as justification for an extension; planning for course assignments is part of learning how to manage time in University.

#### **Student Responsibilities:**

Students should be prepared to discuss all of the assigned texts in class. In my experience, English courses are the most successful when students are actively engaged and asking questions, rather than just letting the instructor do all the talking.

#### **Electronic Devices:**

Electronic devices can be a nuisance in the classroom and disrupt the ability of students to concentrate during lectures and discussion. Please be respectful of your peers. Mobile devices, specifically laptops and tablets, may be used in this course for educational purposes only (i.e., learning directly related to the course).

#### **Contacting the Instructor**

I encourage students to contact me about the course with any questions via e-mail. If you want to receive thorough feedback for your question, you should come to my office and speak with me in person during my office hour, or by appointment. I will answer short e-mail and check my messages regularly, but always assume it will take at least 48 hours for me to respond and plan accordingly. If you wish to dispute a grade because you believe I have made an error, please contact me via e-mail and we will discuss it.

## **\*\*Essay Formatting\*\***

When formatting your essays, conform to MLA style. This includes the following:

- In the top left-hand corner of the first page, list on four separate lines, alongside the left margin: your first and last name and student number; my name; the course name and number; the date on which you submit the essay.
- On the same page as the above information, provide a title for your essay in the center of the page that is interesting and on-point. Something other than “ENGL251 Essay.”
- Use one-inch margins (except for page numbers), and indent each paragraph. I will know if your margins are larger or smaller to accommodate an essay that is too short or too long.
- Use 12-point Times New Roman font or equivalent. Again, I will notice if you use a different size font to make your essay seem either longer or shorter.
- Double-space all text, and number your pages.
- Include a Works Cited list on your last page. Include all sources used, including the essays from the syllabus.

## **Academic Integrity**

The Faculty of Arts requires that I make you aware of the following: “Students are expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for their actions. Students who are unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who need help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about ‘rules’ for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Assistant Dean.

For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy #71, Student Academic Discipline, <http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm>

The Internet has made plagiarism and other forms of cheating much more tempting; it has also made it easier to detect. I will investigate and report to the Associate Dean all cases of suspected plagiarism. Proven cases will result in academic penalty, proportional to the extent of the infraction, and could include an official written reprimand from the Associate Dean that will be placed in your file. Please consult the following web site, “Avoiding Academic Offences” for a comprehensive explanation of plagiarism and how to avoid it  
[http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academic\\_responsibility.html](http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academic_responsibility.html)

Students who believe that they have been wrongfully or unjustly penalized have the right to grieve: refer to Policy #70, Student Grievance:

<http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy70.htm>

### **Note for Students with Disabilities**

The Office for Persons with Disabilities (OPD), located in Needles Hall Room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with OPD at the beginning of each academic term.

### **The Writing Centre**

The Writing Centre works across all faculties to help students clarify their ideas, develop their voices, and write in the style appropriate to their disciplines. Writing Centre staff offer one-on-one support in planning assignments and presentations, using and documenting research, organizing and structuring papers, and revising for clarity and coherence.

You can make multiple appointments throughout the term, or drop in at the Library for quick questions or feedback. To book a 50-minute appointment and to see drop-in hours, visit [www.uwaterloo.ca/writing-centre](http://www.uwaterloo.ca/writing-centre). Group appointments for team-based projects, presentations, and papers are also available.

**Please note** that writing specialists guide you to see your work as readers would. They can teach you revising skills and strategies, but will not proofread or edit for you. Please bring hard copies of your assignment instructions and any notes or drafts to your appointment.