

Gordon Bigelow  
English 485, Section 1  
MW 3-4:15, Palmer 207  
Off Hrs: MF 1-2, TR 2-3

Fall Semester, 2007  
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## CRITICAL THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

This course is designed with three central goals in mind. These goals are:

- To clarify the connection between modern theories of literature and the longer tradition of philosophical inquiry from which these theories emerged.
- To provide students with basic understanding of terms and concepts central to the range of theoretical perspectives that guide contemporary scholars of literature.
- To allow students to interrogate and ultimately, through writing and class discussion, to evaluate these theoretical perspectives.
- To enable students to evaluate literary criticism with greater insight and rigor.

### Texts

Vincent Leitch, ed., *Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*  
Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* (Ed. Linda H. Peterson, 2nd edition).  
Colson Whitehead, *The Intuitionist*  
Penelope Fitzgerald, *The Bookshop*  
Jamaica Kincaid, *A Small Place*

Various reserve readings at Barret Library

### Course Requirements

#### **Reading.**

Purely in terms of page numbers, the reading load in this class will be light when compared to other upper division English classes. I have made this choice partly because some of the material is difficult, but mostly because I expect a very high degree of critical engagement from you -- significant passages marked, questions and comments noted, etc.

**Class Discussion.** I expect each of you to contribute comments and questions to every session of this class. If you haven't had much to say during a given class, you can anticipate being called on. But in addition to speaking, I expect you to listen to each other carefully, both with critical attention, and with a spirit of generosity and respect. Disagreements, debates, differing perspectives, divergent assumptions: these are the very substance of literary theory, and indeed of literature itself. If we cannot cultivate and explore differences among ourselves in this room, we can have little hope of learning in this field.

**Grades** will be figured as follows:

Essay Exam I	20%
Essay Exam II	20%
Essay Exam III	25%
In-Class Presentation	10%
Presentation Essay	25%

**Late Essay Exams or Papers** will be penalized 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of a grade per day. (E.G. a B paper one day late becomes a B-, two days late becomes a C+, etc.)

### Essay Exams.

There will be 3 regular writing assignments for the course, and each will function as a take-home examination. These exams will involve essay writing only: no short answers, identifications, etc. In literary studies, and in other professions where critical reading and writing is necessary, there is little value accorded the skill of memorization. If you cannot recall Ferdinand de Saussure's terms for the elements which make up a sign, you simply pull his book off the shelf and look them up.

The more valuable and broadly useful skills in this field are the higher-order skills of application and interpretation. These come into play only after basic facts and information have already been learned, and they involve synthesis, imagination, often creativity. They require you to combine what you know about a particular theoretical or philosophical perspective -- say that of Sigmund Freud, or Edward Said -- with what you know about a given text or movement -- say Chaucer's *Pardoner's Tale*, or contemporary French drama. In this class, I take it as a given that you will assimilate the basic facts and information conveyed in all the readings and lectures, like, for example what Matthew Arnold means by "science," or what Judith Butler means by "performance." What I will ask for when you write will be for you to use these concepts, to employ them in a particular analysis, to interrogate, critique, and evaluate them.

Each paper/exam will offer you a choice of essay questions. For some you'll be able to write one essay of 6-7 pages; for others I'll ask you to write shorter essays of 2-4 pages each. These exercises will all be cumulative; that is, each may ask you to draw from everything we have read up until that point.

### Presentations

At least once during the semester, each of you will choose one major text to present in class. Eligible candidates for presentations are marked in the schedule of readings below. A good presentation should offer:

- An ordered explanation of the reading's central ideas and arguments, as you see them.
- A tentative evaluation of these ideas and arguments. I don't expect you to take a definitive position yet. But, to open our discussion: do you find the reading successful, useful, persuasive? Why or why not.

Presentations should last at least 5 and no more than 15 minutes. Collaborative presentations may be ok, but I will expect the collaboration to be substantial, involving significant interaction between the ideas of the presenters. Collaborators write individual papers.

**Presentation Papers**, roughly 5 pages, are due one week after your presentation. They should develop and defend a specific argument about the reading you presented. Papers need not recap the presentation. They may focus on one particular aspect of a reading, rather than offering a comprehensive discussion. But they should provide some explanation of the basic argument presented in the reading, and some evaluation of that argument: its overall significance, its successes and failures, its relevance or usefulness, etc.

**Schedule of Readings and Assignments\***  
**Section 1: MW 3-4:15, Palmer 207**

Date	Assignment	Presentation?
<b>Romanticism &amp; its Critics</b>		
M 8/27	William Wordsworth (N); Augustine <i>Christian Doctrine</i> Book 2, I-IV and <i>Trinity</i> (pp 192-4 only) (N)	--
W 8/29	Matthew Arnold "Function of Criticism" (N)	Arnold
<b>Marx &amp; Marxist Literary Criticism</b>		
M 9/3	<i>No Class: Labor Day</i>	
W 9/5	Karl Marx (N), selections on pp 759-767, 773-783 Irving Howe (N)	--
M 9/10	Mikhail Bakhtin(N), Pierre Bourdieu (N)	Bakhtin or Bourdieu
<b>Formalism &amp; the "New Critics"</b>		
W 9/12	Cleanth Brooks, "Well-Wrought Urn" (N) Wimsatt & Beardsley "Intentional Fallacy" (N)	Both texts
<b>Structuralism and its Aftermath</b>		
M 9/17	<b>Structural Linguistics:</b> Saussure (N)	--
W 9/19	<b>Structural Marxism:</b> Barthes, from <i>Mythologies</i> (N); Althusser (N)	Barthes or Althusser
M 9/24	<b>Narrative Theory:</b> Tzvetan Todorov (N), Hayden White (N), Seymour Chatman (Reserve)	Any or All
W 9/26	<b>Novella:</b> Penelope Fitzgerald: <i>The Bookshop</i>	Fitzgerald
<b>Poststructuralism</b>		
M 10/1	Derrida from <i>Of Grammatology</i> (N); Barthes "Death of the Author" (N)	--
W 10/3	continue	
<b>Monday, October 8, Exam I due at 316 Palmer by Noon</b>		
<b>Psychoanalysis</b>		
M 10/8	Freud, <i>Interpretation of Dreams</i> (N)	--
W 10/10	Freud "Uncanny" (N) and Chabon "Black Mill" (Reserve)	Both Readings
M 10/15	<i>No Class - Fall Break</i>	
<b>Reading <i>Wuthering Heights</i>, I</b>		
W 10/17	Finish Brontë's <i>Wuthering Heights</i> by today Ewbank, "Structure and Pattern" (Reserve)	Ewbank
M 10/22	Philip Wion (WH); "What is Psychoanalytic Criticism" (in the WH volume); <b>Terry Eagleton (WH); "What is Marxist Criticism" (in the WH volume)</b>	Wion <b>Eagleton</b>

\* N = Norton Anth. of Theory & Criticism; WH = *Wuthering Heights* volume; R = On Reserve at Burrow Library. Expect some adjustments to the schedule as the semester progresses.

<b>Feminism</b>		
W 10/24	Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar (N)	Gilbert & Gubar
M 10/29	Hélène Cixous (N)	--
W 10/31	Judith Butler (N)	Butler

<b>Foucault &amp; New Historicism</b>		
M 11/5	Foucault (N), Greenblatt (N)	Foucault

<b>Readings of <i>Wuthering Heights II</i></b>		
W 11/7	Pykett (WH); "What is Feminist Criticism?" (in the WH volume); Nancy Armstrong (WH), "What is Cultural Criticism" (WH)	Pykett Armstrong

**Friday, November 9: Exam II due at 316 Palmer by noon**

<b>Postcolonial Studies</b>		
M 11/12	Edward Said (N)	Said
W 11/14	Frantz Fanon, "National Consciousness" and "National Culture"	Fanon
M 11/19	<b>Memoir:</b> Jamaica Kincaid, <i>A Small Place</i>	Kincaid

W 11/21 *No Class: Thanksgiving Break*

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<b>Theory and African American Literature</b>		
M 11/26	Henry Louis Gates "Blackness" (Reserve), bell hooks (sic) (N)	Gates or hooks
W 11/28	<b>Novel:</b> Colson Whitehead, <i>The Intuitionist</i>	Whitehead
M 12/3	Whitehead	Whitehead
W 12/5	Wrap up	

**Final Exam: Due Monday 12/10 by noon at Palmer 316**