

**Critical Theory and Methodology**  
**ENGL 385.02**

Professor Rashna Richards

Office: 307 Palmer

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Semester: Spring 2012

Class: TR 12:30-1:45

Room: 207 Kennedy

***Course Description***

What is literature? How do we interpret it? What is its relationship to reality? How does it represent the self and the world? This course will take on such fundamental questions from multiple, sometimes contradictory, theoretical perspectives. We will examine major developments in literary criticism and critical theory and explore how they can be used for literary analysis. This course is designed to prepare English majors for advanced research.

***Course Policies***

**Attendance:** You are required to attend all classes. You should not email me about your absences. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to get information and/or handouts from a classmate. You are allowed two absences over the course of the semester, no questions asked, for extracurricular activities or medical/personal emergencies. After the second absence, each subsequent absence will result in a deduction of 20 points from your final course grade. After six absences, you will fail the course.

**Tardiness:** You are required to be on time. Habitual tardiness, even if it's only a couple of minutes, will hurt your participation/professionalism grade.

**Late Work:** I do not accept late work. If you do not plan on being here when an assignment is due, it must be in my mailbox before the deadline. You will receive a zero on an assignment if it is not turned in when it is due. Please note that you are required to complete all assignments in order to receive a passing grade.

**Class Participation:** You are required to come to class prepared with the assigned reading for that day. I expect constructive verbal contribution to each class meeting. A student who disrupts class, interrupts another student's presentation, or in any way creates a hostile environment will be subject to disciplinary action. A student who reads the newspaper, chats with a neighbor, does any work for another class, or simply dozes off should expect a low participation grade even if they have contributed to class discussions on other occasions. I will likely say nothing at the time of the incident, but disruptive behavior will adversely affect your participation/professionalism grade.

**Electronic Devices:** The use of all electronic devices is forbidden in this class. You should turn off all electronic devices, including laptops, before class begins.

**Food or Drink:** I don't mind if you bring something to drink, but please avoid bringing any food into the classroom.

**Consultation:** I'll be happy to talk with you about any questions or concerns you have about the class. Feel free to stop by during my office hours. If those times don't work, I can make an appointment to meet with you at a time that is mutually convenient. If you have questions about an assignment, do not wait until the last minute. Remember, I want you to do well in the class and am always willing to work with you.

**Email:** It is always preferable to meet in person to discuss any questions or concerns, since the impersonal medium of electronic communication is a poor substitute for a genuine face-to-face conversation. However, I'm available by email for simple queries (expect a response during business hours: 9am-5pm Monday-Friday). Please regard email correspondence as formal communication. It is always best to ask specific rather than general questions in an email and abide by rules of professional etiquette. It is not advisable to email me the evening before an assignment is due asking for help because there is very little I can do at that point; besides, last-minute emails are very unprofessional. Email is absolutely not the medium for negotiating special requests, addressing grade concerns, or discussing ideas for assignments; those issues must be handled in person.

**Format of Assignments:** All written assignments need to be typed and double spaced, in 12 pt. font, using Times New Roman, with one-inch margins on all sides. The format and citations must conform to MLA specifications, or the assignment may not be accepted. You do not need a title page; instead, include your name, my name, course name/number, and date in the top left corner of the first page. Be sure to number and staple your pages; also, proofread your work before printing up the final draft. I do not accept any assignments via email. A paper copy is expected at the beginning of class on the day the assignment is due.

**Intellectual Honesty:** All work is assumed to be the student's own and produced exclusively for the course in which it is submitted. Papers written for one course, even if revised, are not to be submitted in another without prior approval. Borrowing of ideas or language from other sources (including published material, other student papers, google or other electronic resources, etc.) must be carefully documented. You are advised against posting your work on the internet, since doing so may lead to suspicion of plagiarism. You are also advised to save drafts of your work to verify its originality. Cases of suspected plagiarism will be referred to the Honor Council, and, if convicted, you will receive an F in the course in addition to sanctions assigned by the Council. Clear evidence of plagiarism (failure to use quotation marks around verbatim or copied language, failure to adequately paraphrase, and failure to cite the source of quoted, paraphrased, or borrowed text and ideas), regardless of the Council hearing outcome, may likewise result in failure of the course. Carelessness in documenting sources, even if not technically plagiarism, will be penalized as appropriate. If you are uncertain about how or whether to document sources, consult me.

**Disability Issues:** Students with documented disabilities may be entitled to specific accommodations. Please contact the office of Student Disability Services for more information. In every case, it is your responsibility to provide me with an official letter from SDS.

## *Course Evaluation*

### **Grade Distribution**

|                               |             |                    |
|-------------------------------|-------------|--------------------|
| Participation/Professionalism | 15%         | 150 points         |
| Essay #1 (2-3 pages)          | 15%         | 150 points         |
| Essay #2 (4-5 pages)          | 20%         | 200 points         |
| Essay #3 (4-5 pages)          | 20%         | 200 points         |
| Research Paper (10-12 pages)  | 30%         | 300 points         |
| <b>Total</b>                  | <b>100%</b> | <b>1000 points</b> |

**Assignments** (Additional guidelines will be provided when each assignment is introduced.)

**Participation/Professionalism:** You are required to contribute comments and questions that further class discussion. Simply agreeing or disagreeing with your classmates and/or the readings is not enough. You are expected to add thoughtful ideas to the debate by engaging with the texts in a sophisticated manner. Participation will be evaluated in terms of quantity and quality. From time to time, you will also be quizzed or asked to respond to specific short-answer questions on the week's reading. Quizzes are always unannounced, and they cannot be made up. Failure to follow any course policies or guidelines will hurt your professionalism grade.

**Essays:** Three essays will evaluate your understanding of the theoretical material. You will be given specific questions and/or asked to use theory for literary analysis.

**Research Paper:** The final paper for the class will be a self-designed research paper that engages substantially with two or more theoretical approaches. Research guidelines will be provided.

### **Grading Guidelines**

**A** = 100-94; **A-** = 93-90

**B+** = 89-87; **B** = 86-84; **B-** = 83-80

**C+** = 79-77; **C** = 76-74; **C-** = 73-70

**D+** = 69-67; **D** = 66-64; **D-** = 63-60

**F** < 60

**A range (100-90):** Excellent work; exemplary in argument and organization; professionally presented; free of mechanical errors.

**B range (89-80):** Good, solid work; substantive in argument and organization; meets all requirements, but needs some revisions; no more than five mechanical errors.

**C range (79-70):** Satisfactory work; addresses the assignment adequately, but requires some significant revisions of content and/or mechanics.

**D range (69-60):** Below average work; misses one or more central aspects of the assignment; inadequate focus and/or development; awkwardly written; requires extensive rewriting.

**F range (< 60):** Unacceptable work; fails to meet the requirements of the assignment; incomplete or irrelevant material; lack of focus or development.

### *Course Materials*

- Leitch, Vincent B. et al, eds. *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: W. W. Norton, 2010.
- Additional essays—listed as handout in the schedule

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

#### **Week 1: Introduction**

**Thurs., Jan. 12** Introduction to the course

#### **Week 2: Classical Theory**

**Tues., Jan. 17** Plato (41-44), From *Book VII* (60-64) & From *Book X* (64-77)

**Thurs., Jan. 19** Aristotle (83-87), From *On Rhetoric* (115-19)  
Introduction to Essay #1

#### **Week 3: Romantic Theory**

**Tues., Jan. 24** Wordsworth (556-58), Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (559-79)

**Thurs., Jan. 26** Wollstonecraft (493-95), From *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (496-504)  
Emerson (613-16), "Self-Reliance" (handout)

#### **Week 4: From Humanism to Modernism**

**Tues., Jan. 31** Arnold (691-93), From *Culture and Anarchy* (714-21)  
Pater (721-23), From *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (724-30)

**Thurs., Feb. 2** **Essay #1 due**  
Eliot (951-54), "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (955-61)

#### **Week 5: New Criticism**

**Tues., Feb. 7** Ransom (969-71), "Criticism, Inc." (971-82)

**Thurs., Feb. 9** Wimsatt and Beardsley (1230-32), "The Intentional Fallacy" (1232-46) & "The Affective Fallacy" (1246-61)

#### **Week 6: Marxism**

**Tues., Feb. 14** Marx and Engels (647-50), From *The Communist Manifesto* (657-60) & From *Capital, Volume I* (663-74)

**Thurs., Feb. 16** Althusser (1332-34), From "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" (1335-61)  
Introduction to Essay #2

#### **Week 7: Structuralism**

**Tues., Feb. 21** Saussure (845-49), From *Course in General Linguistics* (850-66)

**Thurs., Feb. 23** Lévi-Strauss (1273-76), From *Tristes Tropiques* (1277-86)

#### **Week 8: Poststructuralism and Deconstruction**

**Tues., Feb. 28** Derrida (1680-85), From *Of Grammatology* (1688-97)

**Thurs., March 1**      **Essay #2 due**  
 Barthes (1316-19), "The Death of the Author" (1322-26)  
 Foucault (1469-74), From *Discipline and Punish* (1490-1502)

**Week 9: Psychoanalysis**

**Tues., March 6**      Freud (807-12), From *The Interpretation of Dreams* (814-24)  
 Lacan (1156-62), "The Mirror Stage" (1163-69)  
**Thurs., March 8**      No Class (lecture at Hendrix College)

**Week 10: Spring Break**

**Week 11: Feminism**

**Tues., March 20**      de Beauvoir (1261-64), From *The Second Sex* (1265-73)  
 Introduction to Essay #3  
**Thurs., March 22**      Gilbert and Gubar (1923-25), From *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1926-38)  
 Cixous (1938-41), "The Laugh of the Medusa" (1942-59)

**Week 12: Gender and Sexuality Studies**

**Tues., March 27**      Sedgwick (2464-65), From *Epistemology of the Closet* (2470-77)  
**Thurs., March 29**      Butler (2536-38), From *Gender Trouble* (2540-53)

**Week 13: Critical Race Theory**

**Tues., April 3**      **Essay #3 due**  
 Hughes (1190-92), "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" (1192-96)  
 hooks (2507-08), "Postmodern Blackness" (2509-16)  
 Introduction to Research Paper  
**Thurs., April 5**      No Classes: Easter Recess

**Week 14: Postcolonialism**

**Tues., April 10**      Fanon (1437-39), From *The Wretched of the Earth* (1440-46)  
 Said (1861-64), From *Orientalism* (1866-88)  
**Thurs., April 12**      Bhabha (2351-52), "Of Mimicry and Man" (handout)

**Week 15: Diaspora and Transnationalism**

**Tues., April 17**      Hall (1779-81), "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" (handout)  
**Thurs., April 19**      Jay, From *Global Matters* (handout)

**Week 16: Why Theory?**

**Tues., April 24**      Nussbaum (2302-05), From *Cultivating Humanity* (2306-28)  
**Thurs., April 26**      Conferences for Research Paper

**Fri., April 27**      **Research Paper due by noon—leave in box on my office door (307 Palmer)**