Senior Seminar: Critical Theory and Methodology

COURSE DESCRIPTION: One purpose of this course is to explore questions related to reading, writing, and the production of meaning. A second purpose, which is also a means to accomplish the first, is to become conversant in some recent developments in literary and cultural theory. We will begin by considering the basic terms in the literary event—author, text, and reader—and how their interaction produces meaning. Then we will explore structuralism and how it led (some say inevitably) to deconstruction; next we will see this pattern repeated in the areas of psychoanalysis, materialism, feminism, and race theory. Along the way various theoretical ideas will be tested in relation to selected literary texts. In the concluding unit, groups of students will consider works of contemporary fiction from the perspectives of various critical and theoretical positions.

TEXTS:

REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION:
Participation 15%
Since this class is a seminar, each member’s participation is vital to the overall disposition and accomplishment of the group. The participation grade will be based on the regularity and quality of attendance and contributions to discussion. Comments that help to advance discussion and that enable all class members to contribute are highly valued. Another important component of the participation grade will be your pre-class questions: on five occasions of your choice, you should submit a question about the assigned reading. Send your question through email, at least 24 hours before a class meeting; I will reproduce and distribute them through email to the class, and we will use them as prompts for discussion.

Presentation and paper 15%
Each student will be responsible for one in-class presentation of 10-15 minutes. These must be delivered on the scheduled date. Reports should both summarize and critique the reading.
An essay of 1000 words (3-4 pages) on the subject of the report will be due one week after the presentation date.

Group project 15%
Working in groups, students will lead class discussion of a work of contemporary fiction (by Earley) insights and class readings to enable a multifaceted encounter with the text.

Three essay / examinations 55%
You will be assigned topics on which to write papers due on 2/18, 3/20, and 5/1.

Please refer to the statement of Expectations and Policies of the Department of English for other relevant guidelines.
SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS: All writing and reading assignments are due on the date listed. Please bring the appropriate text to class.

1/16  Introduction
1/21  Arnold, “The Function of Criticism at the Present Time” (N)
1/23  Wimsatt and Beardsley, “The Intentional Fallacy” and “The Affective Fallacy” (N)
1/28  Eliot, “Tradition and the Individual Talent” (N)
1/30  Fish, “Interpreting the Variorum” (N)
2/4   De Saussure, from Course in General Linguistics (N)
       Plato, from Republic, Book VII
2/6   no class
2/11  Barthes, “Mythologies,” “The Death of the Author,” “From Work to Text” (N)
2/13  Foucault, “What is an Author?” (N)
2/18  DUE: Essay/Exam 1
       Wofford, “A Critical History of Hamlet” (H)
2/20  Culler, from On Deconstruction (handout)
2/25  Derrida, “Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences” (handout)
       “What is Deconstruction?” (H)
2/27  Freud, from The Interpretation of Dreams, “The Uncanny” (N)
3/4   Adelman, “Man and Wife Is One Flesh” (H); “What is P/A?” (H)
3/6   Lacan, “The Mirror Stage” (N)
       Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (N)
3/18  Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” (N)
3/20  DUE: Essay/Exam 2
       Marx, selections from Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, German Ideology,
       Grundrisse, Preface to A Contribution . . .
3/25  Williams, from Marxism and Literature (N)
       Bristol, “Funeral-Bak’d Meats” (H); “What is Marxist Criticism?” (H)
3/27  Said, from Orientalism (N)
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Assignment/Activity</th>
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<tr>
<td>4/1</td>
<td>Woolf, from “A Room of One’s Own” (N)</td>
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<td>Beauvoir, from <em>The Second Sex</em> (N)</td>
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<td>4/3</td>
<td>Cixous, “Laugh of the Medusa” (N)</td>
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<td>Showalter, “Representing Ophelia” (H); “What is Feminist Criticism?” (H)</td>
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<td>4/8</td>
<td>Sedgwick, from <em>Between Men</em> (N)</td>
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<td>Butler, from <em>Gender Trouble</em> (N)</td>
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<td>4/10</td>
<td>no class</td>
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<td>4/15</td>
<td>bell hooks, “Postmodern Blackness” (N)</td>
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<td>Gates, “Talking Black” (N)</td>
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<td>4/17</td>
<td>no class – Easter break</td>
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<td>4/22</td>
<td>Group project</td>
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<td>4/29</td>
<td>no class – student research symposium</td>
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<td>5/1</td>
<td>DUE: Essay/Exam 3</td>
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<td>Group project</td>
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ENG 485  
Spring 2003  
Dr. Marshall

Return this sheet to me by Tuesday, January 21, indicating your top three choices and letting me know of any readings on which you would not like to report. Multiple readings by one author will be assigned to a single student (who may negotiate on which readings to discuss). When two authors are listed for one date, two students may give reports.

1/28  Eliot, “Tradition and the Individual Talent” (N)  
      TODD WATSON

1/30  Fish, “Interpreting the Variorum” (N)  
      TED GENTLE

2/11  Barthes, “Mythologies,” “The Death of the Author,” “From Work to Text” (N)  
      MATT HRDLICKA

2/13  Foucault, “What is an Author?” (N)  
      PETE MOORE

3/4   Adelman, “Man and Wife Is One Flesh” (H)  
      ANN YOUNG

3/6   Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (N)  
      LIZ COFFEE

3/18  Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” (N)  
      CAKI WILKINSON

3/25  Williams, from Marxism and Literature (N)  
      ANDREW MEDLIN
      Bristol, “‘Funeral-Bak’d Meats’” (H)

3/27  Said, from Orientalism (N)  
      ANNE MAZYCK

4/1   Woolf, from “A Room of One’s Own” (N)  
      ANDI BATTAGLIA
      Beauvoir, from The Second Sex (N)
      ARIEL ROADS

4/3   Cixous, “Laugh of the Medusa” (N)  
      GINNY BULLINS
      Showalter, “Representing Ophelia” (H)

4/8   Sedgwick, from Between Men (N)  
      YVONNE GODFREY
      Butler, from Gender Trouble (N)  
      ANNE SCHABERG
4/15
bell hooks, “Postmodern Blackness” (N)
Gates, “Talking Black” (N)