

Fayetteville State University
College of Arts and Sciences
Department of English and Foreign Languages
English 271.01: Introduction to Literary Theory and Criticism
Fall 2009

I. Locator Information:

Instructor: Dr. Jeff Sychterz

Course # and Name: English 271.01

Semester Credit Hours: 3

Day and Time Class Meets: TR 9:30-10:45

Total Contact Hours for Class: 2.5

Email address: jpsychter@uncfsu.edu

Class meets: Butler 361

Office Location: Mod Hut 110

Office hours: MTWR 12:00-2:00

Office Phone: 672-2505

FSU Policy on Electronic Mail: Fayetteville State University provides to each student, free of charge, an electronic mail account (username@uncfsu.edu) that is easily accessible via the Internet. The university has established FSU email as the primary mode of correspondence between university officials and enrolled students. Inquiries and requests from students pertaining to academic records, grades, bills, financial aid, and other matters of a confidential nature must be submitted via FSU email. Inquiries or requests from personal email accounts are not assured a response. The university maintains open-use computer laboratories throughout the campus that can be used to access electronic mail.

Rules and regulations governing the use of FSU email may be found at

<http://www.uncfsu.edu/PDFs/EmailPolicyFinal.pdf>

II. Course Description: This course will introduce students to contemporary trends in literary theory and criticism against the historical background, which contemporary theory is often a reaction against.

More specifically you will study the Western heritages of ideas and some of the central intellectual traditions and debates--aesthetic, hermeneutic, linguistic, political, sociological, psychoanalytic, semiotic, etc.--that inform, inspire, challenge and enrage today's professional thinkers and critics. Over the semester you will join this community of readers and critics in an ongoing discussion and debate of the place of literature in the world. This context should start you on the road to professionalizing your own reading and writing.

III. Disabled Student Services: In accordance with Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ACA) of 1990, if you have a disability or think you have a disability to please contact the Center for Personal Development in the Spaulding Building, Room 155 (1st Floor); 910-672-1203.

IV. Textbook: Leitch, Vincent B., et. al. The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism. New York: W. W. Norton, 2001.

V. Student Learning Outcomes: Upon completion of this course, you will be able to:

- 1) Describe characteristics of major theoretical approaches.
- 2) Apply major theoretical works to analyze a text.
- 3) Arrange literary criticism movements in a historical order.
- 4) Employ the vocabulary of critical literary studies in their own interpretations and criticism of texts.
- 5) Use at least one theoretical perspective to analyze at least one text.

VI. Course Requirements and Evaluation

A. Grading Scale : A=100-92%; B=91-83%; C=82-73%; D=72-64%; F=63% or less

B. Attendance Requirements: Class attendance is required for all students enrolled in courses at the 100 and 200 levels. You are also expected to arrive to class on time and remain in class for the entire scheduled period. If you must miss class for unavoidable reasons, such as illness, family emergencies, or participation in official university sponsored activities, you are responsible for informing me of the reasons for the absences, in advance if possible, and completing all missed assignments. When you miss class for one of these unavoidable reasons, please see me as soon as possible and we will discuss how you can make up any work that you missed. Excessive absenteeism or tardiness will detract from your final grade, and may even lead to a grade of “FN” (failure due to non-attendance). More importantly, participation in class discussion is critical to the learning objectives of this course; therefore, multiple absences will directly impede your learning and understanding.

C. Graded Assignments:

1. Papers: (You must turn in all written assignments to pass the class)

a. Paper 1: A response to or analysis of a critical text or author; 4 pages; due October 1st.

b. Paper 2: An analysis of a cultural object using a specific critical lens; due December 3rd. I will hand out complete instructions for each paper well in advance of the due dates.

c. Response Papers: Each week of class you will produce a 2 page type-written response to the reading. These responses will be informal and can take as many forms as your imagination will allow. You can:

- summarize, analyze or criticize the texts;
- show how they relate to each other or to other texts we have read in this class or even those you've read in other classes;
- use the theories to shed light on a cultural practice or object (movies, song, clothes, mathematical equations, violent video games, etc.)
- explore questions not raised by the text but you think should have been.
- explore your own confusion with some aspect of the text(s) (be careful with this one—it is probably the most difficult one to do right).

The point of this exercise is to move from passive to active reading. Good readers speak back to the text as they read; so, put down in writing what you are thinking as you read (or right after you read):

We will begin each class by sharing our responses. You will not be required to write responses in weeks that you have formal papers due (weeks 7 and 16) or exams (week 9). In addition, you can

choose one week to skip a response. Overall you must produce ten (10) response papers over the course of the semester.

I will grade the responses by how well they demonstrate your familiarity with the day's readings. If in the first couple of weeks the responses (and class discussion) generally fail to show that familiarity I will give quizzes to test completion of the reading. Quizzes might be fill-in-the-blank, short answer or essay. Quizzes will count toward the participation grade and cannot be made up (so come to class on time).

2. Exams:

a. Midterm: The midterm will be a take home exam that tests your comprehension of the material from the first half of the semester. It will include essay and short answer questions.

b. Final Exam: The exam will include a vocabulary portion, which will cover terms that a student of critical theory must know. You should, therefore, keep a vocabulary list and update it frequently throughout the semester (I recommend keeping it in the back of your notebook). I will be sure to point out important terms from your reading and go through them in class to ensure we understand what they mean and how to use them.

2. Participation: The history of literary criticism is an ongoing debate and conversation between critics, beginning with the Socratic dialogues. These ideas have been developed and tested through the sometimes raucous give and take of debate and disputation. A fine critical theory cannot stand on its own; it must be submitted to and undergo the criticism of others. As burgeoning literary critics, you cannot develop your own interpretative and critical skills by passively absorbing analyses developed by others; you must actively engage in the analytic process. In this course, therefore, you must participate daily in class discussions; for disputing ideas with your peers is the most essential element of the critical process. As a side benefit, participating daily will get you an A in participation and help focus your reading so that you do better on papers. Additionally, participating in class helps make the class more interesting and time go faster.

D. Value of Each Assignment:

Participation	15%
Paper 1	15%
Paper 2	15%
Response Papers (10)	20%
Midterm	15%
Final Exam	20%

You must turn in all written assignments to pass the class

E. Late Assignments: I will grant extensions to due dates under the following two criteria: 1) you make your request **in advance**—preferably a week, but **at least 48 hours prior to the due date**; 2) you inform me of the date you will submit the paper—no later than a week and a half after the due date. Late papers

without extensions will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade for each calendar day they are late (except, of course, in emergency cases, such as illness or death).

F. Classroom/Course Behavior:

1. FSU Policy on Disruptive Behavior in the Classroom

The *Code of the University of North Carolina* (of which FSU is a constituent institution) and the *FSU Code of Student Conduct* affirm that all students have the right to receive instruction without interference from other students who disrupt classes.

FSU Core Curriculum Learning Outcome under Ethics and Civic Engagement (6.03): All students will “prepare themselves for responsible citizenship by fulfilling roles and responsibilities associated with membership in various organizations.” Each classroom is a mini-community. Students learn and demonstrate responsible citizenship by abiding by the rules of classroom behavior and respecting the rights all members of the class.

The FSU Policy on Disruptive Behavior (see FSU website for complete policy) identifies the following behaviors as disruptive:

Failure to respect the rights of other students to express their viewpoints by behaviors such as repeatedly interrupting others while they speak, using profanity and/or disrespectful names or labels for others, ridiculing others for their viewpoints, and other similar behaviors;

1. Excessive talking to other students while the faculty member or other students are presenting information or expressing their viewpoints.
2. Use of cell phones and other electronic devices
3. Overt inattentiveness (sleeping, reading newspapers)
4. Threats or statements that jeopardize the safety of the student and others
5. Failure to follow reasonable requests of faculty members
6. Entering class late or leaving class early on regular basis

The instructor may take the following actions in response to disruptive behavior. Students should recognize that refusing to comply with reasonable requests from the faculty member is another incidence of disruptive behavior.

1. Direct student to cease disruptive behavior.
2. Direct student to change seating locations.
3. Require student to have individual conference with faculty member. At his meeting the faculty member will explain the consequences of continued disruptive behavior.
4. Dismiss class for the remainder of the period. (Must be reported to department chair.)
5. Lower the student’s final exam by a maximum of one-letter grade.
6. File a complaint with the Dean of Students for more severe disciplinary action.

Students who believe the faculty member has unfairly applied the policy to them may make an appeal with the faculty member’s department chair.

2. Dishonesty in Academic Affairs: Acts of dishonesty in any work constitute academic misconduct. Such acts include cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation, fabrication of information, and abetting any of

the above. Any plagiarism will result in failure of the assignment and possibly of the class. Remember, you must turn in all written assignments to pass the course. If I determine that the assignment does not constitute any original work by you (i.e. it is wholly or almost wholly someone else's work), then you have not completed that assignment and you will fail the class. If you are unsure of what plagiarism is, please ask me rather than risk crossing the line and costing us both a lot of grief.

3. Cell phone/behavior policy: Cell phones should be off while in the classroom--you can answer your messages on break; however, if you are waiting on an important call (really important, i.e. death in the family) then put it on vibrate and in your pocket. If your cell rings, you are to leave the room quietly to answer it. I do not want them out on a desk or in view at any time.

VII. Academic Support Resources: The English and Foreign Languages **Computer Lab** is located in Butler 312. The department also has a **Writing Center** located in the Helen T. Chick Building; the center is designed to give students one-on-one tutorial assistance with writing their papers; instructors receive weekly reports of students who attend the center. Writing tutors are also available through the online service, **Smarthinking.com**, which you can access via Blackboard. Tutors are available for one-on-one chats or to read and comment on drafts of your paper. Papers submitted to Smarthinking.com normally are returned within 24 hours, so if you intend to use the service, be sure to plan ahead.

VIII. Course Outline and Assignment Schedule: (subject to change with advance notice)

Week 1 Introduction

Thu, Aug 20 Class Introduction and Syllabus

Week 2 Classical--Plato

Tue, Aug 25 Plato, from *Ion* (37-48),

Thu, Aug 27 from *Republic* (64-80)

Week 3 Classical--Aristotle

Tue, Sep 1 Aristotle, from *Poetics* (90-117)

Thu, Sep 3 Aristotle, cont.

Week 4 Classical--Roman

Tue, Sep 8 Horace, from *Ars Poetica* (124-35)

Thu, Sep 10 Longinus, from *On Sublimity* (138-54)

Week 5 Renaissance/18th Century

Tue, Sep 15 Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry* (326-62)

Thu, Sep 17 Pope, "An Essay on Criticism" (441-58)
Assessment Exam

Week 6 Romantic

Tue, Sep 22 Wordsworth, Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (648-68)

Thu, Sep 24 Shelley, *A Defence of Poetry*, (699-17)

Week 7 Romantic

Tue, Sep 29 Keats, Letters (blackboard)

Thu, Oct 1 Emerson, "The Poet" (725-39)

Paper #1 due

Week 8 19th Century

Tue, Oct 6 Poe, "The Philosophy of Composition" (742-50)
Wilde, from "Critic as Artist" (900-12)

Thu, Oct 8 Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lying . . ." (874-84)

Week 9 Midterm

Tue, Oct 13 Midterm

Thu, Oct 15 Midterm Break: NO CLASS

Week 10 Marxism

Tue, Oct 20 Marx & Engels, from *The German Ideology* (767-69)
from *The Communist Manifesto* (769-73)
from *Capital*, Volume 1 (776-83)

Thu, Oct 22 Althusser, from "Ideology . . ." (1483-1508)

Week 11 Psychoanalysis

Tue, Oct 27 Freud, from *Interpretation of Dreams* (919-29)

Thu, Oct 29 Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (2181-92)

Week 12 Modernism/New Criticism

Tue, Nov 3 Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1092-98)
Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" (1313-17)

Thu, Nov 5 Ransom, "Criticism, Inc." (1108-18)
Brooks, "The Heresy of Paraphrase" (1353-65)

Week 13 Feminism/Structuralism

Tue, Nov 10 Woolf, from *A Room of One's Own* (1021-29)
De Beauvoir, from *The Second Sex* (1406-14)

Thu, Nov 12 de Saussure, from *Course in General Linguistics* (960-76)

Week 14 Poststructuralism

Tue, Nov 17 Barthes "Death of the Author," "From Work to Text" (1466-75)
Derrida, from *Of Grammatology*, (1822-29)

Thu, Nov 19 Foucault, from *Discipline and Punish* (1636-47)
From "Truth and Power" (1667-70)

Week 15 Postcolonialism/Ethnic Studies

Tue, Nov 24 Achebe, "An Image of Africa . . ." (1783-94)
Gates, "Talking Black . . ." (2424-32)

Thu, Nov 26 Smith, "Toward a Black Feminist Criticism" (2302-15)

Week 16 Review

Tue, Dec 1 Sontag, "Against Interpretation" (blackboard)

Thu, Dec 3 Review and Exam Prep

Paper #2 Due

Final Exam, TBD

IX. Teaching Strategies

This course will be discussion-oriented and student-centered, following a discussion/lecture format.

X. Bibliography and Application List

As we discuss different critical and interpretative methods, it will be useful to refer to and practice on short pieces of literature. To that end, please ensure that you are familiar with and have read the following works:

William Shakespeare, sonnets 18 and 130

Kate Chopin, "The Story of an Hour," "Desiree's Baby"

Claude McKay, "To the White Fiends," "America," "The White City," "The Tropics in New York,"
"Harlem Dancer," "If We Must Die"

These works are available on Blackboard under Course Documents. Print them out and bring them to every class.

In addition, you might be interested in the following student friendly introductions to Literary Theory:

Booker, Keith M. A Practical Introduction to Literary Theory and Criticism. White Plains, NY: Longman, 1996.

Eagleton, Terry. Literary Theory: An Introduction. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1996

Tyson, Lois. Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide. London: Garland, 1999.

Relevant chapters from each of these texts are available on Blackboard under Course Documents.