ENGL E-100b/W: INTRODUCTION TO LITERARY CRITICISM & THEORY II
Tentative Syllabus
Fall 2015
Course Website: https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/4331

WELCOME!

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PURPOSES OF THE COURSE: ENGL E-100A introduced students to the debate that has persisted for more than 2000 years among philosophers, writers, and critics over the following kinds of questions: What is the nature, function, and value of literature? How can we deal objectively with literary art? How can readers gain greater access to the richness and complexity of literary texts? What criteria do we use to determine a work’s “greatness”? What do we mean when we speak of the “beauty” of a literary work? What is the function of the artist, the critic, and of criticism and theory itself? Can we know the artist’s true intentions in a work? How do we account for multiple interpretations of a text? What is the relationship between the content and the form of a literary work? Does literary language differ from ordinary language? Readings were drawn from the Classical period to the beginning of the 20th century. (The syllabus for E-100A will be available on the course website.)

This semester, ENGL E-100B continues this study by surveying the major schools of 20th- and 21st-century literary criticism and theory, ranging from Russian formalism and structuralism to New Criticism and post-structuralism (including neo-Marxism, gender and queer studies, psychoanalysis, deconstruction, phenomenology, narratology, hermeneutics, reader-response theory, race and ethnicity studies, post-colonial theory, and cultural studies). Emphasis is on the continuity of key ideas in the history of criticism, as well as the gradual displacement of once-revered concepts such as “greatness,” “meaning,” and “beauty” as goals of aesthetic inquiry. We also consider the ideological debates surrounding multiculturalism, political correctness, textual authority, and the literary canon and learn what their impact has been on the current practice of literary criticism.
Our investigations will assist us in answering three main questions: (1) What practical tools for reading and analyzing literature can we derive from each of these approaches? (2) How can we arrive at valid interpretations of literary texts? (3) What does theory tell us about the function and social value of literature in the postmodern world? Frequent writing assignments give students the opportunity to apply diverse critical theories to the analysis of selected works of literature.

This course is strongly recommended for literature concentrators, particularly those contemplating or pursuing graduate studies. But anyone interested in aesthetic inquiry, in the psychodynamics of the reading/writing/interpretive process, or in the relationship of artworks to the culture at large (whether textual or visual—from three-dimensional works of art to films) will find the material in this course equally valuable. Although the readings are challenging, I can promise you that you’ll never look at literary texts in the same way as you once did. Instead, you will become a more attentive and insightful reader.

Please note: Students need not have taken Part I in order to enroll in Part II. However, previous formal study of literature and/or philosophy is recommended before attempting this course. The introductory lecture on Sept. 1 will summarize many of the key concepts covered in Part I, and frequent reference will be made throughout the course to writers from Part I—particularly Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Marx, and Freud whose ideas are central to modern and contemporary theory. Students who have not taken Part I may find it useful to read the selections by the 5 authors mentioned above in the Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism. Students will also benefit from reading (or re-reading) the text’s “Introduction,” in preparation for the work to be undertaken in Part II.

REQUIRED TEXTS (sold at the Harvard Coop and available through Amazon.com):


***N. B. An early reading of Dracula, prior to the start of the course, is highly recommended. For graduate students, an early reading of Validity in Interpretation is likewise recommended. Doing so will make your re-readings of these texts later in the course, prior to the writing assignments on them, move along more smoothly.***

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Please note: Works marked as “Background” were covered in ENGL E-100a and constitute the intellectual background to the assigned readings here; however, they are not part of the assigned reading in this course. I will frequently make reference to them in my lectures. Writing assignments appear in red. A few assigned works on the syllabus are located on the course website, as indicated.
I. READING and WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

Sept. 1  **Introduction to course:** Why study theory? The Eternal Questions. M. H. Abrams’ Basic
Critical Orientations. Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Marx, Freud and their offspring.
**RUSSIAN FORMALISM** [Eichenbaum, “The Theory of the Formal Method”]
Read: E. D. Hirsch, “Objective Interpretation” (on course website)

Sept. 8  **NEW CRITICISM**
[**Background:** Aristotle, Poetics; Kant, from Critique of Judgment]
Wimsatt & Beardsley, “The Intentional Fallacy” and “The Affective Fallacy”
Brooks, from The Well-Wrought Urn, “The Heresy of Paraphrase”

**Warm-up Exercise: Paraphrase of poem due in class (1 page)**

Sept. 15  **STRUCTURALISM**
Saussure, from Course in General Linguistics
Jakobson, from Linguistics and Poetics; and from Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of
Aphasic Disturbances
Lévi-Strauss, “The Structural Study of Myth” (on course website)

Sept. 22  **MARXISM/NEO-MARXISM**
[**Background:** Marx, from Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy and
from Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844, and from Capital, “The Fetishism of
Commodities”; Marx and Engels, from The German Ideology, from The Communist Manifesto;
Trotsky, “The Formalist School of Poetry and Marxism”]
Lukács, from The Historical Novel
Gramsci, from The Prison Diaries, “The Formation of the Intellectuals”
Althusser, from Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses

Sept. 29  **MARXISM/NEO-MARXISM**
Horkheimer & Adorno, from Dialectic of Enlightenment
Jameson, from The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act
Williams, “Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory”

**Paper #1 due (4 pp.)**

Oct. 6  **RACE/ETHNICITY STUDIES**
Anderson, from Imagined Communities
Gates, “Talking Black: Critical Signs of the Times”
Anzaldúa, from Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza

Oct. 13  **POST-COLONIAL STUDIES**
Said, from Orientalism; from Culture and Imperialism
Fanon, from The Wretched of the Earth, “On National Culture”
Achebe, “An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad’s Heart of Darkness”
**Required Revision of Paper #1 due**

Oct. 20  
Read all of *Dracula* and the critical essays at the end of the Norton Critical Edition for class discussion this evening and in preparation for the writing of 2 papers on the novel.

**Oct. 27**  
**PSYCHOANALYTICAL CRITICISM**  
*[Background: Freud, from *The Interpretation of Dreams*, “The Uncanny,” and “Fetishism”]*

Bloom, from *The Anxiety of Influence*

**Paper #2 due (4 pp. UNs, 5 pp. GRs)**

Nov. 3  
**GENDER AND QUEER STUDIES**  
*[Background: Woolf, from *A Room of One’s Own]*

Gilbert and Gubar, from *The Madwoman in the Attic*  
Cixous, “The Laugh of the Medusa”  
Butler, from *Gender Trouble*  
Foucault, from *The History of Sexuality*, Volume I  
Sedgwick, from *Epistemology of the Closet*

Nov. 10  
**CULTURAL STUDIES/NEW HISTORICISM**  
Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”  
Bourdieu, from *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, and from *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*  
Greenblatt, from *Resources and Wonder*; from *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (on course website)

**Optional Revision of Paper #2 due**

Nov. 17  
**POST-STRUCTURALISM**  
*[Background: Plato, from *Cratylus* (on course website); Nietzsche, “On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense”]*

Derrida, “Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences”; and “Différance” (on course website)  
Johnson, “Melville’s Fist: The Execution of Billy Budd”  
*Warning*: the Derrida selections are arguably the most difficult reading assignments of the term. Expect them to take longer than usual to prepare.

Nov. 24  
**POST-STRUCTURALISM**  
Barthes, “The Death of the Author”; and “From Work to Text”  
Foucault, “What Is an Author?”; and from *Discipline and Punish*

**Paper #3 due (4 pp. UNs, 5 pp. GRs)**
Dec. 1  
**POSTMODERNISM**  
Habermas, “Modernity—An Incomplete Project”  
Lyotard, “Defining the Postmodern”  
Jameson, “Postmodernism and Consumer Society”  
Baudrillard, from “The Precession of Simulacra”

Dec. 8  
**PHENOMENOLOGY/HERMENEUTICS/READER-RESPONSE CRITICISM**  
[Background: Schleiermacher, from *Hermeneutics*]  
Revisiting Hirsch, “Objective Interpretation”  
Iser, “The Interaction between Text and Reader,”  
Fish, “Interpreting the Variorum”

Dec. 15  
**Paper #4 due:**  
Graduate students’ book review of E. D. Hirsch’s book *Validity in Interpretation* (5 pp.)  
Undergraduate students’ final paper (5 pp.)

**NOTE:** IF YOU WISH TO HAVE YOUR WORK RETURNED TO YOU AFTER WE HAVE GRADED IT, PLEASE INCLUDE A SELF-ADRESSED, STAMPED ENVELOPE [WITH ADEQUATE POSTAGE] WHEN YOU HAND IN YOUR PAPER AND YOUR BOOK REVIEW.

II. HOW TO PREPARE THE READINGS FOR CLASS EACH WEEK

Students should complete each week’s assigned readings before coming to class. In addition to the selections by each author, I recommend that you also read the introductory material prefacing each selection. (The intros will facilitate your reading of the essays; however, they cannot take the place of the essays.) Make every effort not to fall behind, for it will be exceedingly difficult to catch up. Most of the essays deal with complex philosophical and aesthetic conceptions that cannot be absorbed in a single, quick reading; so make sure that you set aside plenty of time each week to prepare the assignment. **You can count on approximately 8 hours of reading per week.** Do not be surprised if you find that you are reading at a maximum rate of about 10 pages per hour; this is perfectly normal when reading theory (and especially so if this is your first exposure to aesthetics). With experience, you will gradually become accustomed to the style and technical vocabulary of this mode of discourse, although you should never expect to be able to “speed read” the assignments. Only in this way can one develop good close reading skills and gain the self-confidence necessary to undertake intelligent literary analysis. Literary and critical texts are complicated things, and thus one can seldom grasp all of their important features in a single reading.

Each week in class, I shall lecture for a portion of the evening; but discussion and comments from students are invited and expected. Always bring questions that you have about the readings to class or to our discussion section. In addition to providing you with information about the writers and movements we are studying, my purpose in the Tuesday classes will be to illustrate for you the techniques of literary and critical analysis, through close reading, that you can then apply yourselves to the various assignments.
III. ON THE WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

Writing-intensive courses require a special commitment from both the student and the instructor and her staff. Such courses are predicated on the notion that students will write frequently, at regular intervals, submit papers of various lengths, and be given the opportunity to revise their work. The emphasis is on practicing the mode of writing appropriate to the particular subject being studied—in this case, literary criticism. The theory behind this practice is that engagement with the subject matter in writing facilitates a deeper understanding of the material and of the kind of analysis associated with a given discipline.

All of the writing assignments have been designed to introduce you to a variety of critical approaches to literature, to the special techniques they employ, and the unique kinds of insights into the text that they provide. They challenge you to learn how to think about a text from several different perspectives, which may depart radically from the way you are accustomed to thinking about literature. But it is exactly this flexibility of mind and fluidity of perspective that opens up a text’s many layers to readers and critics and enlarges our understanding of a work.

There will be 4 literary critical papers assigned to all students. The first will focus on a poem, the second and third on the novel *Dracula*, and the fourth will ask you either to consider the aesthetic theories of critics within a single “school” (UNs only), or to review a complete work of literary criticism (GRs only). Essays will vary in length. One revision is required; a second revision is optional.

Goals of the Assignments: The writing assignments have been designed to help you develop (and us evaluate) your skills in three areas: (1) the application of a particular mode of literary theory to a work of literature; (2) the precise analysis of a literary text; (3) clear, correct written expression within the framework of a well-organized essay.

ON PLAGIARISM: You are requested not to use any secondary sources at all, aside from the course texts, in the preparation of your papers, unless licensed to do so for a particular assignment. If for some reason you do consult and make use of ideas from an outside source, you must scrupulously document it in your paper, citing the source in a footnote, using quotation marks around any verbatim quotes, and attributing to the author any material that you have paraphrased. Proper documentation of secondary sources is absolutely necessary—whether electronic publications and websites, printed books or journal articles. Do not plagiarize by accident or design, for academic theft will receive the severest penalty: a failing grade in the course and rustication from the university (See the Harvard Extension School website, "Student Conduct," http://www.extension.harvard.edu/resources-policies/student-conduct/academic-integrity). Do not be tempted by the apparent ease of downloading a paper from the web. If you find yourself in desperate straits, contact me or your TA to discuss the problem. Most important, remember that we are interested in reading your ideas and in watching your writing and analytical skills develop—not those of someone outside our course.

Ungraded “5-minute” Response Papers: On several nights, around 7:20 pm, I’ll stop the class discussion and ask you to write for 5 minutes, primarily on the following questions: (1) What did you learn tonight that was most useful or helpful? (2) What do you not yet fully understand? You will hand these in before departing the class, and they will assist us in understanding what needs to be addressed in section or at the next class meeting. Always bring paper and pen to class for these exercises.
IV. CLASS POLICIES

POLICY ON LATE AND UNSUBMITTED WORK:

ALL PAPERS ARE DUE ON THE DATES SPECIFIED. NO EXTENSIONS WILL BE GRANTED, UNLESS YOU HAVE SUFFERED A SERIOUS PERSONAL OR MEDICAL EMERGENCY. If you have suffered such an emergency, contact me, not your TA, immediately: do not wait several weeks to explain why your work is late, for it will not be accepted then. Any unexcused late work will be automatically lowered one full letter grade for every day that it is late (e.g., one day late = no grade higher than "B" possible for a paper of “A” quality; two days late = no grade higher than "C" possible for a paper of “A” quality, etc.). Papers must be submitted in two drafts and in a timely, consistent manner throughout the semester, as assigned. A two-draft assignment will be considered incomplete and the grade reduced accordingly if one of the two drafts is missing. Please do not ask if you may submit your work in one draft only, or submit all of the papers at the end of the semester, or according to some other unorthodox arrangement.

CLASS ATTENDANCE: Attendance at all lectures is expected (and yes, we will notice). If for some reason you must miss class, it is your responsibility to obtain information about the lecture, any alterations that may have been made to the syllabus in regard to forthcoming reading and writing assignments, and handouts that were distributed. Students who fail to attend class will not be allowed to submit papers and receive credit for the course.

V. OPTIONAL WEEKLY, POST-CLASS DISCUSSION SECTIONS

From 7:35 to 8:35 each week after class, I will host an optional discussion section. The purpose of these meetings will be to provide students with additional time to discuss and raise questions about the readings and/or the writing assignments—or anything else related to literary study, literary history, or theory.

On Sunday evenings (TBA), Rob Fox will host a one-hour section meeting, primarily for graduate students. But undergraduates are also welcome to attend.

NON-CREDIT STUDENTS: Students taking the course for non-credit are welcome to ask questions and participate in class discussions and section meetings. But we will not be able to read the written work of any non-credit students. The Extension School provides support staff for grading only the work of credit students. Please do not ask us to make an exception for you.

VI. ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONFERENCES: If you are having difficulties either with the reading or the writing assignments, you are urged to talk freely and often with the course assistant who is responsible for grading your papers and who will be monitoring your progress throughout the term. I will be happy to meet with you as well. Such discussion and feedback are an invaluable part of the process of learning to improve your writing and one of the principal advantages of being in a "W" course.
THE WRITING CENTER: Credit students with severe writing problems in need of remedial help can obtain it, free of charge, through the Extension School's Writing Center, located in Grossman Library. Call 495-4163 to schedule an appointment with a writing preceptor, if you feel the need for additional help. On the Extension School website, at http://www.extension.harvard.edu/resources-policies/resources, you will find additional resources available to students.

N. B. The instructor reserves the right to make changes in the syllabus during the semester as she deems necessary.

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