COURSE INFORMATION

Purpose of Course

The main purpose of this course is to introduce you to the study of English literature as a discipline. Consequently, we will concentrate not on literature per se but on how we read literature, on what assumptions we make when we analyze, interpret, and evaluate literature, and on how these assumptions influence and even determine our analyses and evaluations. We will also look at some of the current debates surrounding literary studies, including the questioning of the canon as well as the questioning of the merit of literary studies.

No attempt will be made to give an historical survey of literary theory and criticism through the centuries, although we will look at a few classic statements, namely those by Plato and Aristotle (texts will be supplied). Instead, we will concentrate on the contemporary situation and on contemporary approaches and debates, but once again no attempt will be made at complete coverage. Some approaches, especially those which seem most relevant to or most helpful for advanced undergraduate English studies, will be given greater emphasis than others. By the end of the course, the student should have, to a greater or lesser extent, an understanding of formal or New Critical, textual, psychological, feminist, Marxist, reader response, and New Historical approaches to literature as well as some understanding of what is meant by structuralism, semiotics, poststructuralism, and deconstructionism.

We will also spend some time looking at standard methods for citing source materials, following the current MLA style sheet.

Texts

David H. Richter, ed., Falling into Theory: Conflicting Views on Reading Literature (Bedford)
Susanne L. Wofford, ed., Hamlet: Case Studies in Contemporary Criticism (Bedford)
Joseph Gibaldi and Walter S. Achtert, MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (MLA)
M. H. Abrams, A Glossary of Literary Terms, 6th ed. (Harcourt)

Requirements

Colloquium – 10%
2 page write-up of an aspect raised in the colloquium – 5%
1st essay (summary of an assigned critical essay) – 15%
2nd essay (fight over canon) – 30%
Final Exam, time and date set by scheduling office – 40%
(Note: Extra credit can be earned through positive involvement in classroom discussions)

Office Information

Office: HH 246 Phone: Ext. 2124
Hours: 11:30 to 12:30 Tuesdays and Thursdays
Also, normally 2:30 on Thursdays (check with me in advance)
Other hours by chance or by appointment