English 251A Section 2: Criticism I
Course Syllabus, Fall 2000
HH 139; Tues/Thurs 1:00-2:30

Prof. V. Lamont
Office Hours: Mondays 1:00-2:00; Tues/Thurs 2:30-3:30.
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Course Description and Goals
"An introduction to strategies of reading, interpretation, and analysis of literary and non-literary
texts, focusing on narrative, poetics, discourse, and rhetoric, and the acquisition of critical
vocabulary." (University of Waterloo Calendar, 2000-2001).

Through lectures as well as class and group discussion, this course will focus on the acquisition of
close reading skills that can be applied to both "literary" and "non-literary" texts. "Close reading" is
a term we use for a specific kind of reading—not the passive reading we are used to doing when we
watch TV, flip through a magazine, or get lost in a good page-turner—but a more structured,
rigorous kind of reading which requires that we read the text several times over and pay careful
attention to both the general shape of the work (its "form"), and the way in which its component
parts work together to make meaning (its "structure"). In textual analysis, we look not only at what
a text means, but how it means. Like all academic disciplines, textual analysis uses a specialized
language, the purpose of which is to identify the building blocks of texts and to shed light upon
aspects of language and text that we don't necessarily notice in our everyday life; hence, acquiring a
critical vocabulary is an important component of this course. You are encouraged to think of critical
vocabulary as the set of tools you will use to make sense of texts and the way they communicate.

Upon successful completion of this course, you should be able to use accepted critical vocabulary
to identify and name the fundamental elements of texts, analyze the ways in which these elements
work together to produce meaning, and use this analysis to formulate arguments (in essays and
exams) about what texts mean and how they mean.

Texts

Required
Gray, Martin. A Dictionary of Literary Terms. 2nd Ed.

Highly Recommended

(Note: all royalties earned from the sale of The Little, Brown Compact Handbook will go to the
Department of English Scholarship Fund.)

Copies of both required and recommended texts are available in the bookstore. The library copy of
Everyday Use has been placed on reserve in the Dana Porter library.
ASSIGNMENTS & EVALUATION

In the interest of fairness, all students will be evaluated on the basis of the following assignments. There will be no exceptions (i.e. substitute assignments, second exam sittings, etc.) without supporting documentation (usually medical) which convincingly justifies the request for special treatment.

Unless otherwise indicated, values indicated below represent percentage of final mark for the course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mid-term exam #1</td>
<td>Oct. 3</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-term exam #2</td>
<td>Oct. 26</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essay</td>
<td>Nov. 9</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>TBA</td>
<td>50%</td>
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1. Exams:
The course has been divided into roughly three units. The first two units will each end with a mid-term exam on the material covered in that unit. The final exam will cover the entire course, with emphasis on material covered in Unit III. Further details about these exams will be provided in class.

2. Essay
Essay: 6-8 pages (1 page=250 words, double-spaced, 1-inch margins, 12-pt font)

Details about the essay, including guidelines and topics, will be supplied in a separate handout, but in general this assignment will ask you to perform a close reading of a text, synthesizing your analysis into a central argument that you present and support in essay form.

Classes have been canceled for the week of Oct. 30 in order to allow for one-on-one essay consultations. Consultations are optional; however, you are strongly encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity for early feedback on your essay. To get the most out of the consultation, you should arrive prepared with your essay topic, thesis, essay plan (i.e. structure and progression of argument), and supporting evidence. The more work you have completed on your essay, the more feedback I will be able to offer.

Evaluation
Essays will be evaluated according to the originality, interest, and level of intellectual challenge of the thesis; coherence and persuasiveness of the argument; analysis and integration of supporting evidence; and mechanics (organization, sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, correct use of MLA citation format).

If you are having difficulty with any aspect of these assignments, it is important that you consult with me early on in the process.

Note on avoidance of academic offenses: All students registered in the courses of the Faculty of Arts are expected to know what constitutes an academic offense, to avoid committing academic offenses, and to take responsibility for their academic actions. Ignorance of what constitutes an academic offense is not an excuse.

This course does not require the use of secondary sources in your term papers and presentations; however, if you choose to do so, you must use correct citation and documentation. If you are uncertain of how to use secondary sources, consult The Little, Brown Handbook. If you are still
uncertain, consult with me. Incorrect citation and documentation is a form of plagiarism, a serious academic offense, and could result in academic penalty.

When the commission of an offense is established, disciplinary penalties will be imposed in accord with Policy #71 (Student Academic Discipline). For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students are directed to consult the summary of Policy #71 (Student Academic Discipline), which is supplied in the Undergraduate Calendar (p. 1:11). If you need help in learning how to avoid offenses such as plagiarism, cheating, and double submission, or if you need clarification of aspects of the discipline policy, ask me for guidance. Other resources regarding the discipline policy are your academic advisor and the Undergraduate Associate Dean.

**LATE POLICY**

In order to ensure that all students receive fair and equal treatment with respect to lateness or absence, the policy for this course regarding late or missed assignments is as follows:

**General Expectations:** All students are expected to make their education a top priority. Requests for special treatment will be considered only if circumstances which are **totally** beyond the student's control make it impossible for the student to meet his or her academic obligations without special dispensation.

**Exams:** If a student misses a mid-term exam, that student will receive a grade of zero for that assignment, except in the case of documented emergencies. There will be no second sittings for exams without a documented, medical excuse.

All other assignments are due **at the beginning of class** on the designated deadline date. Extensions will be considered provided the student consults with me **before** the deadline. The penalty for late assignments is a deduction of 3% per day or part thereof, including weekends. Assignments submitted on the deadline date, but **after class has started**, will be considered late. Submit assignments outside of class at your own risk. Late assignments submitted outside of class will be penalized based on the date I receive them, regardless of when they were actually submitted. Always back up your work on disk, and save hard copies of all assignments you submit. I accept no responsibility for lost assignments.

*Emergencies (usually medical) will be fairly dealt with, provided you contact me (by phone, email, or in person) within three working days of the assignment due-date, and are able to provide documentation to explain and justify the missed/late assignment. Documentation requirements for medical emergencies are outlined in the University of Waterloo calendar (p. 1:10). Students are also expected to know University and Faculty regulations regarding exams and assignments (University Calendar p. 1:9-1:11 and 9:8). Non-medical emergencies will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis, and must be accompanied with appropriate documentation. While I sympathize with students who encounter computer/printer malfunctions, I do not consider these to be emergencies.*

I will not accept any essays at all after the last class of the term.
**Schedule of Classes & Readings**
Readings for each unit are indicated below for those of you to wish to get a head start. Readings for particular classes will be announced ahead of time in class. Additional readings may be assigned in the form of hand-outs or reserve readings. You are responsible for keeping track of all assigned readings.

**Please bring your texts to class.**

**Unit I: Form (Sept. 12-Oct. 3)**
*Text Book*, chapter 1 (pp. 1-44)
Alice Walker, "Everyday Use."
Additional readings may be assigned.

**Note: Mid-term #1 is scheduled for Tuesday, Oct. 3.**

**Unit II: Language (Oct. 5-26)**
*Text Book*, chapter 2 (pp. 45-128)
Additional readings may be assigned.

**Note: Mid-term #2 is scheduled for Thursday, Oct. 26.**

**Essay Consultation Week – Classes Canceled (Oct. 31-Nov. 2)**

**Unit III: Intertextuality, Interpretation, Ideology (Nov. 7-28)**
*Text Book*, chapter 3 (pp. 129-208)
Additional readings may be assigned.

Nov. 30: Review and Exam Preparation

**Note: Term papers due at the beginning of class on Thursday, November 9.**