ENGL 251A: Criticism 1

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Office hours: Monday 2:00-4:00
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Welcome to English 251A, Criticism 1!

Please feel free to contact me with any concerns or questions you have about the class, the readings, or the assignments. I will be in my office during the hours noted, and I’m always very happy to have students drop by during these times, or by appointment at other times. Beyond office hours, contact is probably best initiated via email. I will read your emails within one day, and will try to respond within two business days.

Course description:

The undergraduate calendar describes this course as “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.” Which is exactly what we’ll do here.

This course will challenge you to think in multiple ways about any given piece of text: moving beyond the individual or emotive reaction to a text (“I don’t really like bugs, so this is a crappy book”), we will aim for critical interpretation of it (“Bugs in this text operate as symbols representing the undifferentiatedness of urban ‘hive’ life”). In this way you will be empowered to participate in an interpretive community of scholars as you pursue the rest of your studies in language and literature.

Course meeting times

The course meets twice weekly, Mondays and Wednesdays from 11:30-12:50, in MC 4040.

Required texts

The following texts are required for this course. They are available at the University Bookstore now.


Assignments and Mark Distribution

The following are the graded components of the course:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance / Participation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-term exam 1</td>
<td>October 18</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-term exam 2</td>
<td>November 20</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>(exam period)</td>
<td>40%</td>
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**Participation:** This mark is based on your diligent attendance in and preparation for class, as well as your work on inclass exercises. Five marks are allotted simply for showing up, with the books, and paying attention—you lose one mark for each unexplained absence (after one freebie). The other 5 marks will measure your accomplishment and engagement in class discussion, and on individual and group assignments done in class.

**Mid-term exams:** These will feature short-answer definition questions as well as longer-format interpretive questions. Mid-term 1 will cover material from the beginning of the course to that point, and mid-term 2 will cover material studied after mid-term 1.

**Final exam:** Structured similarly to the mid-term exams, the final exam covers material studied over the course of the entire semester. The exam will be scheduled during the exam period, so do not make any travel plans for that time until you know when the exam will be held.

Absence from class requires advance permission: excused absences are granted only in circumstances both dire and legitimate: “I’m really busy with assignments in all my other courses” is not a legitimate excuse, for example. Medical absences must be documented by a doctor’s note. Missing class on the date of a mid-term is very serious and must be supported by very strong evidence indeed.

Rights and Responsibilities

Every member of this class— instructor as well as students—has rights and responsibilities to ensure a pleasant and productive experience for all. We are all answerable to University policies governing ethical behaviour (Policy 33) and academic integrity (Policy 71), as well as to those outlining grievance or dispute procedures (Policy 70). Here are some more specific expectations for this course:

You will:

- be familiar with the university policies that govern your behaviour
• attend all scheduled classes
• arrive prepared: reading done, books in hand
• be an active participant in your own learning: speaking up, but listening too.
• give thoughtful consideration to instructor feedback on written and oral work

I will:

• be familiar with the university policies that govern my behaviour
• attend all scheduled classes
• be available for consultation in person and over email as per stated policies
• return all assignments within two weeks
• provide helpful and respectful feedback on student work

The Faculty of Arts, which administers this course and is responsible to ensure adherence to codes of academic conduct, requires that the following paragraphs appear in this syllabus:

“Note on avoidance of academic offences: All students registered in the courses of the Faculty of Arts are expected to know what constitutes an academic offence, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for their academic actions. When the commission of an offence is established, disciplinary penalties will be imposed in accord with Policy #71 (Student Academic Discipline). For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students are directed to consult the summary of Policy #71 which is supplied in the Undergraduate Calendar (section 1; on the Web at http://wwwadm.uwaterloo.ca/information/academic/policy_71.html).

“If you need help in learning how to avoid offences such as plagiarism, cheating, and double submission, or if you need clarification of aspects of the discipline policy, ask your TA or course instructor for guidance. Other resources regarding the discipline policy are your academic advisor and the Undergraduate Associate Dean.

“Students who believe that they have been wrongfully or unjustly penalized have the right to gripe: refer to Policy #70, Student Grievance, http://wwwadm.uwaterloo.ca/information/academic/Grievance/policy70.html.”

Students seeking guidance on academic honesty are urged to discuss the issue with their tutorial leader, or to consult the following page of the Arts Faculty Web site, "How to Avoid Plagiarism and Other Written Offences: A Guide for Students and Instructors" (http://watarts.uwaterloo.ca/~sager/plagiarism.html)

**A final word**

Once more, welcome to the course! I hope you find it as valuable as it will be challenging. I am looking forward to a productive and exciting semester, and to getting to know all of you.
Class Schedule

Basic Techniques and Problem Solving

8 September  Introduction: The work of English literary studies

10 September  Getting from Stop to Start: finding questions and finding answers
read: WOR Units 1, 2; GLT “Criticism,” “Affective fallacy,” “Intentional fallacy”

15 September  Form, Structure, Grammar: basic units of meaning
read: WOR Unit 3; GLT “Form and structure,” “Stylistics”

Dimensions of Language Variation

17 September  The word nerd in all of us: language as system
read: WOR Units 5, 6; GLT “Linguistics in literary criticism”

22 September  Register: Place? Time? Gender? Social?
read: WOR Unit 7; GLT “Archaism”

24 September  “Oh, so that’s what political correctness is!”
read: WOR Units 8, 9, GLT “Canon,” “Theories and Movements in Recent Criticism”

Analysing Poetic Form

29 September  Poetic analysis basics: rhyme, pattern, verse, metre
read: WOR Units 16, 17; GLT “Rhyme,” “Meter”

1 October  Trickier poetic analysis: parallelism, deviation
read: WOR Unit 18, 19

6 October  Review, analysing poetic form

8 October  MID-TERM NUMBER ONE

13 October  Thanksgiving: University Holiday

15 October  Prof. at conference: class cancelled

Hey Wait! We Forgot About the Book!

20 October  History of the book: material forms
read: GLT “Format of a Book”
Reading Figures of Speech

22 October
What you mean to say or don’t: Metaphor and Irony
read: WOR, Units 10, 11; GLT “Irony,” “Metaphor, Theories of”

27 October
Meaning what you haven’t said: Juxtaposition and Allusion
read: WOR, Units 12, 13; GLT “Allusion”

29 October
Review, reading figures of speech

Aspects of Narrative

3 November
Longer pieces: genre and narrative
read: WOR Units 4, 20; GLT “Narrative and narratology,” “Genres”

5 November
Deliberate form: narration and point of view
read: WOR Units 21, 22; GLT “Point of view”

12 November
Realism and beyond: analysing narrative
read: WOR Unit 23; GLT “Realism and Naturalism”

17 November
Review, aspects of narrative

19 November
MID-TERM NUMBER TWO

Beyond the Literary Text

24 November
Where and why: locating the ‘reader’ and the ‘writer’
read: WOR Units 15; GLT “Reader-Response Criticism,” “Author and Authorship,” “Death of the Author”

26 November
Beyond the written text: performance, film, multimedia
read: WOR Units 24, 25, 26

1 December
Review: class-directed session