WINTER 1999, UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO

English 251b - Criticism 2

Literary Theory

section 01: MWF 9:30, HH139
section 02: MWF 10:30, ES1 350
Instructor: Kevin McGuirk

office HH263/ phone: x2419/ office hours WF 11:30-12:30 & by appointment (I usually will see students without an appointment - try me if my office door is open)

This course will introduce you to theories of literature and theories of criticism. A primary concern will be representation: how does something called "life" or "reality" get into and out of texts? This will lead us to theoretical questions about what writers and readers do with literature, and about the social and political contexts in which literary texts are both created and received. Along the way we'll also attend to questions about the material forms of literature (stage, verse and prose, originals, reproductions, sound, etc. and, of course, language), and how these make literature meaningful in specific ways. This course is not a historical survey, but our readings from The Theory of Criticism will trace the shift from 19th to 20th-century thinking about literature. Our final emphasis will be on recent critical approaches represented by essays on James Joyce's story "The Dead."

TEXTS:
Raman Selden, ed. The Theory of Criticism. Longman (at the bookstore; also on 1-hour reserve)
James Joyce. The Dead: Case Studies in Contemporary Criticism. Edited by Daniel Schwarz. Bedford - St. Martin's (at the bookstore; also on 1-hour reserve)
Gerald Graff, "Disliking Books at an Early Age" (on 1-hour reserve)
Stephen Lynn, "Critical Worlds" (on 1-hour reserve)

APPROXIMATE SCHEDULE:

We will read from The Theory of Criticism for about eight weeks; then we'll read primarily from The Dead. Page numbers below from The Theory of Criticism refer in most cases only to the page on which each reading begins: read the whole excerpt. Minor adjustments may be made to the schedule as we proceed.

- week of

Jan 4 introductions, preliminaries
Graff, "Disliking Books at an Early Age"

Jan 11 literature and "life": Arnold 494-501 inclusive
James 501, 503; Lawrence 505-09 inclusive

19th-century theories of poetry and the poet: Wordsworth 86, 175

Jan 18 Mill 178-182 inclusive; Keats 306
"idealistic" & "realist representation: Plato 12-18 inclusive; Yeats 31
Zola 51, 54

Jan 25 "decadence": Pater 249; Huysmans 251; Wilde 252
modernist re-visions: Eliot 310, 313
Feb 1  Schlovsky 275
       structuralism: de Saussure 113, 351
       Barthes 76, 318

       ESSAY #1 DUE FRIDAY FEBRUARY 5

Feb 8  Jakobson 367
       Lodge 371; Propp 353

Feb 15  ** reading week **

Feb 22  poststructuralism: Nietzsche 383, Derrida 386
       Kristeva 238; Hartman 394
       politics & ideology: Althusser 459

Mar 1  Benjamin 449
       Brecht 66, 70
       de Beauvoir 533

       ESSAY #2 DUE MONDAY MARCH 8

Mar 8  “The Dead” (the story); James 335, 336; Genette 365
       “The Dead” continued; excerpt from the film version of The Dead
       Lynn "Critical Worlds"

Mar 15  psychoanalytic criticism: Dead 85-96
       Dead 102-24
       reader-response criticism: Dead 125-33 [recommended: Aristotle 191, Poulet 200, Iser 214]

Mar 22  Dead 137-49
       the “New Historicism”: Dead 50-58 [recommended: Foucault 437]
       Dead 163-77

Mar 29  feminist criticism: Dead 178-85 [recommended: Showalter 537, Cixous 541]
       Dead 190-20

Apr 5  review or test

COURSEWORK AND WHAT IT'S WORTH:

participation and in-class assignments: 10%
group presentation: 10%
essay #1: 20%
essay #2: 40%
test (at the end of term): 20%

participation and in-class assignments: 10%
“Participation” means, at a minimum, attendance in class; at a maximum, it means participation through questions and engaged commentary on the readings. This latter includes responding to presentations by
your fellow classmates. I will regularly give you writing tasks in class. These will be relevant to the work under discussion. Some tasks may be quizzes; some may invite interpretation or speculation on your part. Your success in these will depend on careful attention to assigned readings and lectures. The point, however, is not so much to evaluate you as to keep you engaged with the readings. NOTE: you need not perform every task in order to be evaluated for full marks. I will use 3/4 of them to come up with a mark (in other words, 1/4 of the tasks - missed or flubbed - will not count).

**group presentation: 10%**

About once a week a group of four students will present to the class a discussion of a text (literary or non-literary) and a theorist. Choose a text (or excerpt) that can be presented (dramatically, or through summary), passed around on xerox, or placed on overhead. The presentation should include a review of the theory (since we will all have read the theory, this should be brief), and it should take about ten minutes - at thirteen minutes I will make you stop and mark down your grade accordingly. You will receive a grade as a group; however, I reserve the right to give extra marks to individuals whose performance is particularly strong. You will be marked for clarity of presentation (how you organize your material); for interest and accuracy of your analysis of text and theorist; and for the effectiveness of your engagement with your audience. Creative approaches are encouraged. *I would emphasize that you must remember your audience:* do not simply read from text: *conduct us* through your presentation, and illuminate the text and theorist for us. A sign-up sheet will be passed around during the second week of classes.

**essay #1: 20%**

This essay should provide a discussion of a brief literary or non-literary text of your choice (or excerpt from a text) in connection with two theorists read to date. Do not provide a 251a-style close-reading, and do not try to revamp an essay from that course by inserting a few quotes from theorists - it doesn’t work. I will give you a handout with more detailed directions closer to the due date. **800 words. Due Friday February 5.**

**essay #2: 40%**

This essay should build on essay #1. Use the same text for discussion, unless there’s a good reason not to. Essay #2 should be **1500 words** in length *at most*, and it should draw on **three** theorists (you may use **one** of those you used in essay #1). The essay should reflect consideration of my response to your first essay: I encourage you strongly, therefore, to see me after you get back your first essay. **Due Monday March 8.**

**One-hour test: 20%**

You will prepare an essay on the material in *The Dead*. Details will be given in class later in the term. We will discuss whether the test will take place on April 5 during the last class-period, or during the exam period - or whether students will have a choice of either.

**NOTES:**

Essays will be expected on the due date. Late penalties (3% per day) will apply. Essays will not be accepted later than one week after the due date without proper documentation. If you have a problem that affects your ability to complete work in several or all of your courses, see counselling at Needles Hall and have them forward documentation to your instructors.

Plagiarism is a serious academic offense. It is your responsibility to understand what plagiarism is. If you’re not sure, find out. Consult your UW Calendar.