AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

In this second part of the Practice and Theory of Criticism we will continue training in close reading, applying it to drama and prose fiction. Also, we will study the ideas that have shaped and controlled the changing ways in which authors have written, readers have read, and critics have examined literature. We will study two kinds of tragedy -- Sophocles' Antigone and Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra and a popular comedy, Wycherley's The Country Wife. Among the critical ideas are the seminal works of ancient writers -- Plato, Aristotle, Horace and Longinus -- and in the work that made them accessible to the English -- Sidney's Apology for Poetry. Also we will survey selected ideas from the work of succeeding Britons and Americans. Finally, we will sample current literary theory and its application. We will look at one piece of recent fiction, Ledbetter's Too many Blackbirds, to see how critical theory has affected it and how we can use critical theory to understand it better.

WORK REQUIRED

Texts:

Bonnycastle, In Search of Authority, Broadview.
Gosselin, Literary Criticism from Plato to the Present, Kinko.
Ledbetter, Too Many Blackbirds, Stoddart.
Shakespeare, Antony and Cleopatra, Pelican.
Wycherley, The Country Wife, University of Nebraska.

Reading:

Read all the assigned works before we take them up in class. You cannot hope to benefit fully from the lectures (which, unlike book reviews, assume a reading of the book) or discussions unless you have the expected listening and participating readiness. As you read, take notes, make marginalia, ask yourself questions, answer them as you read on; don't just sit there running your eyes across the page; get actively involved with the reading experience. "Escape" reading or reading strictly for pleasure is great fun, but we don't learn as much as when we pay more active attention. When you finish a work or a section, sum up. Write a brief response, critique, ask questions about elements that puzzled you. Keep a reading journal. Bring it to class and draw on it. Think about what you have read and be prepared at any time to comment usefully or to ask perceptive questions (or both) about your reading. Have opinions; express them; defend them with citation and interpretation from the works, your critical reading, and your experience of life. If you contribute significantly in class you may earn 20% of your mark that way.

Order of Readings:

Sophocles, Antigone.
Bonnycastle, Chapter 1; Plato, Republic X.
Bonnycastle Chapter 2; Aristotle, Poetics.
Bonnycastle, Chapter 2; Horace, The Art of Poetry (selections).
Longinus, On Literary Excellence (selections).
Sidney, Apology for Poetry (selection).
Shakespeare, Antony and Cleopatra.
Bonnycastle, Chapter 4; Dryden, Selected criticism (in Norton).
Pope, Essay on Criticism (Norton 1090-1108).
Johnson, Preface to Shakespeare (Norton 1266-76).

Fish, "Is There a Text in this Class?" Todorov, "Reading as Construction"; Iser, "Interaction Between Text and Reader." Bonnycastle, Chapter 13; Baym, "Melodramas of Beset Mankind"; Showalter, "Toward a Feminist Poetics." Bonnycastle Chapters 14-15.

* The semi-colon between selections act as in sentences -- separate yet tie together. Read the selections so separated for the same class.

Written Work

You will have opportunity to submit two critiques on drama (2 June and 7 July) and one on fiction (early in August) of 1000 words each. You may also write two tests on theory and its practice (16 June & early in August). Each written assignment is worth 20% of your mark.

Oral Participation

You may wish to participate actively enough to earn marks for class discussion. Announce your intention to me in writing by 2 June. Participation is worth 20% of your final mark. In addition or instead, you may present an oral seminar (15 minutes) on one of the readings (20%).

EVALUATION

If you have been counting, the work so far totals 140%, intentionally so. You may wish to do only 100% or you may wish to try 120-140%, forcing me to consider only the best 100%. However, be sure you submit at least five pieces of work (oral and written). There will be no excuses for coming up short. Late critiques will not be allowed and missed exams will not be made up without appropriate medical documentation. Concentrate on submitting work early in the term to guard against a bad day, falling behind in your work, and/or the inevitable end of term increase in workload. With freedom comes responsibility.

You must write at least one exam and one critique.

THE PROFESSOR

I am available outside of class as well as in and enjoy talking with students, professionally and socially, so come by. I'm famous/notorious for my tea and sympathy. Co-op students should and all students may consult me on general matters of curriculum, since I am departmental co-op officer. Feel free to discuss anything that interests or concerns you.

Although I am often in my office, I also work elsewhere (in the library or at home), so please do not come by expecting to find me outside office hours. That does not mean I am not happy to see you at any mutually convenient hour. Stop after class or call me for an appointment. If I'm not in when you phone, leave a message with the secretary who answers my phone. I will return your call as soon as possible.

Office HH 255
Phone: 2419

Office Hours:
10-12 MW
and by appointment