ENGLISH 251B/LITERARY CRITICISM: THEORY
SPRING 1997, T/Th 11:30-1:00
PROFESSOR KATHY ACHESON
HH 225/EXTENSION 2122/E-MAIL koa@watarts.uwaterloo.ca

Office Hours: Monday, 12:00, Tuesday, 1:30-2:30, or by appointment. Please e-mail me at any time.

Policies

Exam Schedule: The University’s policy is that alternative exams will not be scheduled for ‘elective’ conflicts, including travel plans, and this is also my policy.

Late Policy: Extensions will be granted for up to a week if they are arranged in advance of the due date. Late assignments will be penalized at the rate of 2% a day, including weekend days and holidays; no assignments will be accepted after the last class. Assignments which are on time will receive thorough and extensive commentary; assignments which are late will receive only brief marginal comments. If your work is late because of extraordinary circumstances, come and talk to me.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism occurs when you fail to distinguish adequately between your ideas and those of others. It is illegal (see the University calendar, Section 1.7). It is your responsibility to learn and use conventions of documentation in your work. I investigate all cases in which I have reason to suspect that proper conventions of documentation are not observed.

Attendance and participation: Attendance in university courses is not, as you know, mandatory. It is my experience, however, that students who attend more often than not receive better marks. This is probably because students who attend have a higher level of interest in the course, and therefore work harder overall or bring to the course useful experience. These advantages are enhanced, however, by regular contact with the materials of the course, and regular engagement with the questions that the course presents. Students who attend with frequency are also more likely to form friendships within the class which can also help to increase interest and learning. Finally, the more you make your presence known to me, and the more you speak your concerns, questions and answers, the more I can contribute directly to your accomplishments in the course.

Course Objectives

In this course we will learn how to recognize, evaluate and implement critical paradigms. This study will enable students to perceive the underlying assumptions, frames of reference and modes of persuasion in argumentative, critical discourse, in both academic and non-academic writing and speech. It will also help students learn how to use secondary materials as the basis for argument in English and other courses of study.

To these ends we will survey a selection of important critical models, analyze their presentation of key relationships in literary study (between text and context, writer, reader, external reality, and other texts), and compare the models with each other. The last third of the course will be devoted to reading Shakespeare’s Hamlet and various applications of critical theory to the play.

Texts


You should also have available a style guide which asserts conventions of documentation such as *The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* or *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

**Assignments**

**In general:**

Essays should be **typewritten or wordprocessed**, the pages should be numbered, and all citations should be fully documented. The word counts that I give are guidelines, but you should know whether your essay is longer or shorter and by how much. Courier 12 point font will give you pages which are 250 words each. For any other font, please use your spell-checker to count the words and include this number on the last page after your essay concludes.

I remind you that there are computers and laser printers available for your use on campus.

**Spelling, punctuation, and grammar** count, and you will lose valuable marks for errors. You could think of the spelling and grammar marks as freebies: that is, whatever the quality of your essay otherwise, you can get big marks here easily. For example, if the overall level of your essay is a C, but you get 10/10 on spelling and grammar and another 10/10 paragraphing, style and language, you will raise your mark to a B or B+.

You should consult a handbook if you are unsure, for example, how to use apostrophes and commas, or what pronoun agreement means. Use a dictionary to back up your spell-checker for spellings, as the spell-checker will not stop you when it recognizes the word as a word -- for example, fate and fat, or the sun's raise.

**Vocabulary** also counts. Use the full range of your vocabulary, but only if you are sure you know what the words mean. Use a dictionary. Remember that precision is of paramount importance.

All university-level essays should begin with a **thesis paragraph** which states the topic of the argument, outlines its stages, suggests the evidence that will be used to support the argument, and states the conclusion. All essays should be written in complete paragraphs which each have a beginning, middle and end, and which fall logically in place in the overall argument.

One more thing: your feelings are very important, and will underscore your choice of topic, your approach, and your conclusions. The mark is based, however, on your thoughts: I can not evaluate your feelings. The difference, in this context, is that thoughts can and must be supported by evidence, whereas feelings need not be.

**The Assignments:**

**Essay 1: 1000 words/20%**: Compare and contrast two or three of the theoretical formulations in Part I, one of which must be from unassigned material, with particular attention to relationships between writer, text and reader. Due Thursday, May 22. The essay will be marked as follows:

- Thesis statement (quality of argument and organization): 30%
- Quality and structure of argument in essay: 20%
- Use of evidence, including documentation: 30%
- Style, paragraphing, precision of language: 10%
- Spelling and grammar: 20%

**Quiz on Section II; Thursday, June 5; 10%** (short answer)

**Essay 2: 1000-1500 words/20%**: Using at least two of the critical statements from section III, analyze one of Shakespeare's sonnets (I will hand out copies). There are various ways to approach this assignment: you could integrate the two approaches, and then apply the hybrid model to the sonnet, or you could compare the interpretations gained by application of the two models. The point is to show the value of the approach or approaches in elucidating the meaning, method or power of the poetry. Due June 19.
Thesis statement: 20%
Quality and structure of argument in body of essay: 30%
Use of evidence, including documentation: 30%
Sentence structure, paragraphing, style: 10%
Spelling and grammar: 10%

Seminar: 20 minutes per group of four/10%. In groups of four, you will offer an analysis of any scene in *Hamlet* using the model offered in one section of our reading in Selden. I will assign the section to your group, and you will decide on a scene in consultation with the other members of your group. Each of you will take one section of the assigned reading, and report briefly to the class on what kinds of things it brings to our attention in the scene, what direction it takes our understanding of the scene, and how it might affect our interpretation of the play as a whole. There are various formats to use, ranging from the simplest, which is four brief reports, to having two of you act out the scene while the other two comment on it from the perspective of the critical model.

Seminar assignments and schedule:

Group 1: Language and Representation, I.4, July 10
Group 2: Unconscious Processes, II.5, July 10
Group 3: Aesthetics, III.1, July 10
Group 4: Ambiguity, III.3, July 15
Group 5: Structure and System, III.6, July 15
Group 6: Structure and Indeterminacy, III.7, July 15
Group 7: Ideology, IV.3, July 17
Group 8: History, IV.2, July 17
Group 9: Class and Gender, V.3, July 17

Essay 3: 2000 words/30%: Due Tuesday, July 22. For this essay, you will develop an approach from one of the sections of Selden, including material we have not covered in class (i.e., all the excerpts in II.5,“Unconscious Processes”), and offer an interpretation of *Hamlet* in terms of the model. You may choose to develop your seminar topic, and you may also read ahead and incorporate or address the essays in the Wofford text. The essay will be marked as follows:

Thesis statement, quality and organization: 20%
Quality and structure of argument in the body of the essay: 20%
Use of Selden excerpt, including quality of evidence and propriety of documentation: 10%
Use of essay in Wofford, including quality of evidence and propriety of documentation: 10%
Use of play, including quality of evidence and propriety of documentation: 20%
Sentence structure, paragraphing, precision of language: 10%
Spelling and grammar: 10%

Final Test: 10%/July 29. For this test you will write an essay comparing two of the methods of analysis used by the critics in the Wofford text by applying them to a particular issue, problem or interesting bit of the play and assessing the results. As you have the text at hand, you will be expected to include quotations from the play and from the critics. You can prepare yourself for this by thinking about a critical problem in the play (for instance, why does Hamlet delay? or what are his feelings about his mother? etc.) as you read the essays in the Wofford text, and by coming to the lectures from July 22-29. Brief marginal notations in your text are permitted in the test, but longer notes are not. You will have an hour to write the essay.

Class Schedule

May 6: Introduction
May 8: Imaginative Representation, I.1.a,e,f,h
May 13: Mimesis and Realism, I.2.a,c,f,g
May 15: Nature and Truth, I.3.a,c,d
May 20: Language and Representation, I.4.d,e,f,g
**May 22, Essay 1 due**
May 22: Genius and Emotive Theories, II.2.a,d; II.3.a,d; II.4.a
May 27: Unconscious Processes, II.5.a,b,e,f
May 29: Literature and Life, V.2.a,b,c,d;
June 3: Class cancelled
**June 5, Test**
June 5: Aesthetics, III.1.a,d,f,i
June 10: Ambiguity, III.3.a,b,c,e
June 12: Structure and System, III.6.c,e,g,h
June 17: Structure and Indeterminacy, III.7.a,b,c
June 19: Ideology, IV.3.b,c; IV.4.c,d
**June 19, Essay 2 due**
June 24: History, IV.2.d,e,f,g
June 26: Class and Gender: V.3.b,d,g
July 3: Introduction, *Hamlet*
July 8: KOA on *Hamlet*
**July 10, 15, 17: Seminars on Hamlet**
**July 22, Essay 3 due**
July 22: *Hamlet*, essays by Showalter and Bristol.
July 24: *Hamlet*, essays by Adelman and Garber
July 29: *Hamlet*, essay by Coddon
**July 29: Test**
July 31: essays and tests handed back (higher powers willing), course evaluations, lingering questions