English 251B, Section 01
Course Syllabus, Winter 2011
Mon/Wed, 2:30-3:50, HH138

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(I check email daily except weekends and holidays)
Office Hours: By appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS
"An introduction to the theorizing of literary and non-literary texts. Emphasizing contemporary theories, the course will focus on the text, the reader, and culture.” (Undergraduate Calendar)

To theorize a text is to address fundamental questions that need to be answered in order to understand it. In other words, theory attempts to understand how we understand texts. All arguments about texts are based on a theory of some kind. When you write an essay about a novel or short story, you will base your essay on a certain understanding of the relationship between the text, the reader, and the world. This is called a theory. For example, can a text have a meaning that is universal, or does meaning change as cultures change? Whether you are aware of it or not, your position on this question will determine how you proceed with your essay: If you assume that meaning depends on the context, then your understanding of the text will depend upon learning about the context in which the text was written. If you assume that the best literature has a universal meaning, then you will attempt to assess whether or not the text carries a universal message. Thus, the theoretical framework you bring to the text has a profound influence on the method you use to understand it. In this course, you will, through the study of a range of key theoretical texts and examples of applied theory, be introduced to the fundamental questions that critical theory addresses.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

• Explain the main tenets, foci, and terminology of the theoretical schools covered in the course;
• Identify and compare theoretical texts;
• Recognize the theoretical foundation of critical works;
• Apply theoretical concepts and terms to texts.

TEXTS

Required (Available at the Bookstore)
Mary Klages, Literary Theory: A Guide for the Perplexed. (Continuum)
Additional readings will be available for downloading on ACE.
Highly Recommended
Jane E. Aaron and Murray McArthur. *The Little, Brown Compact Handbook*. (Note: all royalties earned from the sale of *The Little, Brown Compact Handbook* will go to the Department of English Scholarship Fund.)

Macey, David. *The Penguin Dictionary of Critical Theory*. (This text has not been ordered for the university bookstore but should not be difficult to obtain from a bookstore of your choice.)
T. Eagleton, *Literary Theory*, University of Minnesota Press (in library)

UW-ACE (access via UW Home Page: www.uwaterloo.ca)

The course UW-ACE page will be used for the following:

- Announcements about exams, assignments, and other activities related to the course.
- Posting copies of the syllabus, handouts, and other learning materials.
- Communication with your peers or with me via email.

I will be using the email list set up by the University for all correspondence related to this course. Please check your UW email account regularly for course-related communications.

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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mid-term Exam</td>
<td>Feb. 16</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay</td>
<td>Mar. 28</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>exam week</td>
<td>30%</td>
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1. Exams

The mid-term exam will consist of questions on material covered in class before the exam date. You will be given a choice of quotations from the primary theoretical readings. You will be asked to identify the author and title of the work, and situate the quotation in the broader context of theoretical debate.
The Final Exam will cover the entire course. It will consist of short-answer questions (similar to the mid-term) and an essay.

2. Essay (2000-2500 words)
Due Date: Mar. 28 (by midnight). Submit to Turnitin.com drop box via ACE.

All essays should be presented according to the following specifications: double-spaced, numbered pages, no funky fonts, your name, date, course title, in top left corner of first page, essay title centered on first page, 1-1.5 inch margins. All sources must be cited using MLA style for in-text citations; and all essays must include a Works Cited, also using MLA format.

Choose one of the following topics:

1. Apply one or more of the following theories to a short text: structuralism, post-structuralism, deconstruction, feminism, queer theory, race theory, postcolonial theory, psychoanalysis, Marxism, historicism.

Here are ideas for the kinds of texts you can use: a newspaper article, a poem, an advertisement (print, tv, or web), a comic, a videogame, a tv episode, etc. Your target text must be a text for which no scholarship already exists. It should be short (about 2000 words or less if written, a ½ hour video, a movie I have seen, etc.). Your target text must be approved by me in advance.

Your essay thesis should be an argument about the text that is extrapolated from the theory. In other words, avoid a thesis that makes a statement about the theory; instead, think of the theory as the method you use to arrive at an argument about the text.

2. Choose a well-known or canonical literary or rhetorical text, and find two scholarly articles about the text that are based on two different theories. Analyze the difference that theories make in the interpretation of your target text. Explain your conclusions in the form of an essay that compares and contrasts the two articles’ interpretations.

You must use scholarly criticism: i.e. articles (or book chapters) published in peer-reviewed journals or by scholarly university presses, located on Trellis or the MLA database (available in the research database section of the library website).

Many articles use theory implicitly; that is, they don’t advertise anywhere that they are following one theoretical school or another. You will have to assess the theoretical influence of the article through its use of key terms identified with the theory, and/or its approach to the text. You can also expect to encounter articles that combine theories. All of the above are fine to use for this assignment.

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

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:** Exams will not be rescheduled except in the case of documented emergencies. If a student misses a mid-term or final exam, that student will receive a grade of zero for that assignment, except in the case of documented emergencies.

**Essays:** Essay 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. I do not accept essays once the semester has ended unless prior arrangements have been made to do so.

*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.*

**Schedule of Classes & Readings**

Please bring your texts to class.
Schedule is subject to change (e.g. in case of instructor illness, snow days, etc.). You are responsible for keeping up-to-date on any changes.

In addition to the readings indicated below, I may bring in additional readings to be used as examples and for practice in class. I will circulate these either as email attachments to the class, or downloads via ACE.

**Week 1**  
Jan 5.

Wed: Introduction to Course

**Week 2**  
Jan 10/12

Mon: What is Theory?  
*Klages* Ch. 1; *Selden*: 271-73 (Aristotle)

Wed: Humanism  
*Klages* Ch. 2; *Selden*: 175-78 (Wordsworth); 494-501 (Arnold)

**Week 3**  
Jan 17/19

Mon: Formalism  
*Selden*: 268-71; 274-76 (Shklovsky); 279-85 (Ransom, Tate)
Wed: Idealism, Structuralism
Klages: Ch. 3; Selden: 343-347; 12-18 (Plato); 351-353 (de Saussure)

Week 4 Jan 24/26

Mon: From Structuralism to Post-Structuralism
Selden: 293-5 (Bahktin); 318-320 (Barthes)

Wed: Post-Structuralism (cont’d)
Selden: 417-18 (Kristeva)

Week 5 Jan 31/Feb 2

Mon: Deconstruction
Klages Ch. 4; Selden: 383-85 (Nietzsche); 385-90 (Derrida)

Wed: Deconstruction (cont’d)

Week 6 Feb 7/9

Mon: Psychoanalysis
Klages Ch. 5; Selden: 222-5; 225-27 (Freud)

Wed: Psychoanalysis
Selden: 236-238 (Lacan)

Week 7 Feb 14/16

Mon: TBA

Wed: Mid-Term Exam

READING WEEK

Week 8 Feb 28/Mar 2

Mon: Feminism
Klages Ch. 6; Selden: 532-37 (Woolf, De Beauvoir)

Wed: Feminism cont’d
Seldon: 537-43 (Showalter, Cixous)

Week 9 Mar 9/11
Mon: Queer Theory
    Klages Ch. 7; Butler (on ACE)

Wed: Marxism
    Klages Ch. 8; Selden: 455-57; 459-63 (Althusser); 449-52 (Benjamin)

Week 10 Mar 16/18

Mon: Historicism
    Selden: 419-23; 431-34 (Williams); 437-38 (Foucault)

Wed: Race & Post-Colonialism
    Klages Ch. 9; Gates, Parker (On ACE)

Week 11 Mar 23/25

Mon: Race and Post-Colonialism cont'd.
    Lawson, Bhabha (on ACE)

Wed: Postmodernism
    Klages Ch. 10; Lyotard (on ACE)

Week 12 Mar 28/30/Apr 4

Mon: Postmodernism (cont’d)
    Baudrillard (on ACE)

Wed/Mon: TBA

April 7-21: Exam Period. Do not book vacation travel or other optional activities until the exam for this course has been scheduled. Exams will be rescheduled only in the case of documented emergencies.

IMPORTANT NOTICES

Cross-listed courses: Please note that a cross-listed course will count in all respective averages no matter under which rubric it has been taken. For example, a PHIL/PSCI cross-list will count in a Philosophy major average, even if the course was taken under the Political Science rubric.

Academic Integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 – Student
Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71 - Student Discipline, [http://wwwadm.uwaterloocainfosecPolicies/policy71.htm](http://wwwadm.uwaterloocainfosecPolicies/policy71.htm)

**Grievance:** A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4, [http://wwwadm.uwaterloocainfosecPolicies/policy70.htm](http://wwwadm.uwaterloocainfosecPolicies/policy70.htm)

**Appeals:** A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than regarding a petition) or Policy 71 - Student Discipline if a ground for an appeal can be established. Read Policy 72 - Student Appeals, [http://wwwadm.uwaterloocainfosecPolicies/policy72.htm](http://wwwadm.uwaterloocainfosecPolicies/policy72.htm)

**Academic Integrity website (Arts):** [http://arts.uwaterloocaartsugradacademicresponsibility.html](http://arts.uwaterloocaartsugradacademicresponsibility.html)

**Academic Integrity Office (University):** [http://uwaterloocaaacademicintegrity/](http://uwaterloocaaacademicintegrity/)

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities:

**Note for students with disabilities:** The Office for Persons with Disabilities (OPD), located in Needles Hall, Room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the OPD at the beginning of each academic term.

**Turnitin.com:** Plagiarism detection software (Turnitin) will be used to screen assignments in this course. This is being done to verify that use of all material and sources in assignments is documented. In the first week of the term, details will be provided about the arrangements for the use of Turnitin in this course.

You do not have to submit your paper through Turnitin if you don’t want to. If you choose not to submit your paper via Turnitin, you must advise me well in advance of the essay due date. Together, we will make alternative arrangements for verifying that all secondary sources used in your essay are documented.