ENGLISH 251B

The Practice and Theory of Criticism

(emphasis on fiction, drama, and satire)

Section 03
SYLLABUS for WINTER, 1986

Following on English 251A, this term course completes the introduction to close reading of literary texts, focussing on examples of fiction, drama, and satire. The theoretic part of the course is integrated with the applied, being concerned with theories of the genres examined.

The texts for the theoretic part are three prescribed for English 251A: Kaplan’s Criticism: The Major Statements, The Harper Handbook to Literature, and Thomas’s The Fizz Inside. These will be supplemented with a number of handouts. The take-home test at the end of the course will allow for the testing of theories against the practice, and vice versa. As for marks, the test will count as much as one of the critiques.

Examples of the various genres will be approached in this order (and in the texts indicated):

- short stories, in a handout and in Mark Schorer’s The Story, 2nd ed. (Prentice-Hall)
- tragedy, viz., The Plough and the Stars in Sean O’Casey’s Three Plays (Macmillan)
- comedy, viz., Arms and the Man in Eight Great Comedies (Mentor)
- satire, in handouts and in Waugh’s Scoop.

As in English 251A, the writing of critiques will be preceded by classroom discussion of analogous works, with an indication of how critiques on similar topics could be written. The critiques themselves will be read and marked as expeditiously as possible, and discussion of the works on which
the critiques have been written will be pursued in the light of the comments made in the critiques.

Four critiques will be written, on four themes: the use of narrative perspective, the use of characters or incidents in fiction, the use of characters or scenes in drama, and the combining of various methods in satire. With the third of these themes, the class will split into two groups, one writing on the use of characters or scenes in tragedy, and the other writing on the use of characters or scenes in comedy. With the other three themes, all members of the class will write on the specific topics listed below.

Topics and Schedule for Critiques

Critiques are to be submitted to HH 263 by 4:30 on the Thursdays indicated.

1 (Jan. 23): Critique (of 1000 words) on the use of narrative perspective in either "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place" or "Sausage and Beer."

2 (Feb. 6): Critique (of 1500 words) on one of the following aspects of Heart of Darkness:
   (a) The use of various characters to illustrate the presence or absence of restraint.
   (b) The use to which is put the account of the journey up the river from the central station to Kurtz's station.

3(a) (Feb. 27): Critique (of 1500 words) for the TRAGEDY GROUP, on one of the following aspects of The Plough and the Stars:
   (a) The use made of the character Bessie Burgess.
   (b) The use made of Act III in the creation of tragedy.

3(b) (Mar. 13): Critique (of 1500 words) for the COMEDY GROUP, on one of the following aspects of Arms and the Man:
   (a) The contribution of Louka and Nicola to the communication of the theme.
   (b) The contribution to the communication of the theme by the scenes in Act II from the entry of Sergius to the re-entry of Raina dressed for an excursion (pp. 412-20).
4 (Mar. 27) Critique (of 1500 words) on one of the following aspects of *Scoop*:

(a) The ways in which newspapers are satirized.

(b) The ways in which big powers are satirized for interfering in the internal affairs of smaller powers.

**N.B.**: In addition, students will submit the following by 4:30 p.m. on the Monday indicated:

5 (Apr. 14): A take-home test (of about 1200 words) in which generic theories will be tested against practice, and vice versa.