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, Goldsmith’s She Stoops to Conquer.

Among the critical ideas are the seminal works of ancient writers -- Plato, Aristotle 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 recent fiction to see how critical theory has affected it and how we can use critical theory to understand it better.

WORK REQUIRED

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

Plato, Republic X & Ion
Sophocles, Antigone
Aristotle, Poetics
Sidney, Apology for Poetry
Shakespeare, Antony and Cleopatra
Dryden, An Essay of Dramatic Poesy
Johnson, Preface to Shakespeare
Goldsmith, Laughing Comedy & She Stoops to Conquer
Longinus, On the Sublime
James, The Art of Fiction
Conrad, Heart of Darkness
Psychoanalytic Criticism and Heart of Darkness
Reader-Response Criticism and Heart of Darkness
Feminist Criticism and Heart of Darkness
Deconstruction Criticism and Heart of Darkness
New Historicism Criticism and Heart of Darkness
other selected readings as occasion demands
* some readings may not be discussed in class

Written Work

You will have opportunity to submit two critiques on drama (early in February and March) and one on fiction (early in April) of 1000 words each. You may also write three tests on theory and its practice (early in February, March and April. You may wish to participate significantly in class. Each written assignment is worth 20% of your mark.

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 (including participation, if you wish). 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.

THE PROFESSOR

I am available outside of class as well as in and enjoy talking with students, professionally and socially, so come by. I don’t bite and I’ve been known to serve a good cup of tea. Or just sit and talk business. 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. Instead, stop after class or call me for an appointment.

Office HH 270
Phone: 2419

Office Hours:
1-2:30 TR
9-12 MW
and by appointment