Course Information:
instructor: Kevin McGuirk
meeting time & place: MW 1-2:20, HH 336
instructor contact: office HH 263; phone x32419
office hours: M 2:30-3:30, T 3:30-4:30, and by appointment
preferred method of contact: office hours and appointments

Course Description:
What is the point of Art? What is literature and what is, or should be, its purpose? Art in some form has been an important part of every culture, but its purpose is less self-evident than, for example, the purpose of science, technology, or business. For millenia it has been the object of intense debate that touches on not only aesthetics, but morality, politics, gender, economics, religion, history, and science and technology. This debate is the subject of English 251B. The course will have two central concerns: the history of thinking about literature, especially in the 20th century; and inquiry into the shifting structures and values that enable texts to “make meaning.” It is divided into three Parts: Literature and Art; Language and Structure; and Culture and Politics. We will proceed roughly chronologically while attempting to relate theories topically across history. We will begin, in Part 1, with some ideas about literature from the 19th and early 20th centuries that established Literary Study as a discipline, then move on to writings on language and culture that develop the ideas most closely associated with Literary Theory today. A central concept will be representation, the complex business of rendering experience and ideas in words, images, and sounds.

What I want you to get from the course:
Comprehension of the basic topics of Literary Theory.
The ability to respond with increased understanding to the formal and rhetorical dimensions of literature.
Increased comfort with difficulty and opacity—that is, with not-knowing—along with the ability to ask clarifying questions.
An enhanced sense of the social value of literature and of art, and a corresponding growth in both authority and pleasure in your response to intellectual and artistic work.
The ability to theorize language and literature; in other words, to articulate a complex, interesting answer to the question “what is literature?”
The ability to write more effectively and imaginatively about literature in general.

What I want you to do in the course:
Write about and discuss ideas frequently; formally, in tests, an essay, and a brief presentation.
Come to class prepared with the assigned readings in front of you.
Ask questions in class: participate; listen to your peers.
Take notes and make sure you grasp the major concerns of the course as well as the distinctive work of each theorist; write tests and an exam demonstrating this grasp.
Write an extended essay based on careful reflection, analysis, and revision.

Texts:
Selden, Raman, ed. The Theory of Criticism: Plato to the Present, Longman
Gerald Graff, “Disliking Books at an Early Age” (google the title to find it online)
Dick Hebdige, “From Culture to Hegemony” <http://ebookbrowse.com/hebdige-from-culture-to-hegemony-doc-d96750380>
Andrew Ross, “The Day Lady Died” <http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/m_r/ohara/ladydied.htm> (scroll down to Ross’s discussion)
TBA (online and handouts)
**Note 1:** The Theory of Criticism is available at the bookstore. Used copies are likely in circulation. One copy is on 3-hour reserve at Porter Library.

**Note 2:** Print out online readings and have them in front of you in class.

**Supplementary:**
The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory, available online at the Library (go to the Online Reference Shelf/Humanities, English)

**Recommended:**
Abrams, M.H., A Glossary of Literary Terms

**Approximate Schedule of Readings:**

**ALWAYS BRING YOUR TEXT TO CLASS!**

*Not every theorist will be given equal attention; all those bolded and underlined are essential.*

**Jan 7, 9**
Introductions; Graff, “Disliking Books at an Early Age” (online)

1 Literature & Art

**Jan 14, 16**
Arnold (494-501), James (501-505), Lawrence (505-509); Wordsworth (86-88, 175-178); Mill (178-82); Keats (306-307)

**Jan 21, 23**
Plato (12-18), Yeats (31-35); Zola (51-56), Auerbach (56-59)

**Jan 28, 30**
Brecht (66-73); Pater (249-251), Wilde (252-254)

**Feb 4, 6**
Pound (307-310), Eliot (310-314); Shklovsky (275-277), Jameson (265-267)

2 Language & Structure

**Feb 11, 13**
De Saussure (113-115; 351-353); Barthes (76-77, 318-320); Jakobson (367-371), Lodge (371-375)

**Feb 18, 20**
READING WEEK

**Feb 25, 27**
Genette (364-366), Lodge “The Stream of Consciousness” (online); Freud (225-227), Lacan (236-238), Kristeva (238-241)

**Mar 4, 6**
Nietzsche (383-385), Derrida (385-390); Culler, “Performative Language” 1

3 Culture & Politics

**Mar 11, 13**
Althusser (459-463), Benjamin (449-452)

**Mar 18, 20**
Hebdige, “From Culture to Hegemony” (online); De Beauvoir (533-537), Showalter (537-541), Cixous (541-543)

**ESSAY DUE FRIDAY MARCH 22**

**Mar 25, 27**
Culler, “Performative Language” 2; Ross, “The Day Lady Died” (online); TBA

**April 1, 3**
TBA; essays returned; exam prep
Assignments and Values:

Two tests: 30%. An essay (1500-2000 words), due Friday, March 22: 30%. Final exam: 30%. In-class work, including participation and a brief presentation: 10%.

1. You will write two tests, each worth 15%. The first test will be on Part 1 of the course the second on Part 2. Tests will consist of a series of short essays on ideas and essays from the relevant section of the course. You will be tested on Part 3 in the final exam. The date of the tests will be announced ahead of time in class, by email, and on Learn. The target dates are February 6 and March 11.

2. You will write an essay (30%) applying the work of three theorists on the course to a literary or other text. Texts will be assigned. The essay is not particularly long but I expect it to be well-written, thoughtful, and based on a thorough reading of both theory and text. My marking will take into account organization of your discussion, rhetorical skill, written style, use of evidence, insight in analysis, and the validity and interest of your argument. I will distribute an assignment sheet after Reading Week.

3. The final 2.5 hour exam (30%) will take place during the exam period. The first half of the exam will test you on Part 3 of the course in exactly the same way that earlier tests tested you on Parts 1 and 2. The second half will require you to write a longer essay (prepared ahead of the exam) on a topic relevant to the course as a whole. A prep sheet will be distributed at the last class.

4. In-class work (10%). Participation means attendance, asking considered questions, sharing impressions and ideas, and responding to other students. You must attend classes to keep up with material, grasp the tenor of the course, and understand the contextual dimensions of the brief passages you read at home. Theory is hard; but I expect you to give it your best shot, first of all by attending class with assigned readings prepared. Every student will make a 10-minute presentation with a partner. The presentation is meant to be quite simple. You should do three things: briefly describe a literary or other text you have chosen for consideration (which you must provide to the class in some material form) drawing our attention to its salient features; briefly review a reading or theory already discussed in class; bring the theory and text together showing how the theory makes new insights available. The presentation should be brisk, concise, and pointed. Do not use overheads or powerpoints. Sign up in week two on the sheet I pass around in class.

From time to time I may have you write in class or work on activities in pairs.

Policies:

Attendance: If you want to make the most of the course, regular attendance will be important for a number of reasons. 1. “Learn” will be used in a limited way. All information about the course, with a couple of exceptions, will be disseminated in class. 2. Literary knowledge is rhetorical, that is, it emerges from and is sustained in ongoing debate by scholars, teachers, critics, students, and readers generally. You have to participate in it to know it. 3. You will have to know what goes on in class to prepare for the tests and exam since they are keyed to class lecture and discussion.

Submitting papers: Hand essays to me in my office on the due date. Alternatively, leave your essay in the English department drop box on the second floor of Hagey Hall before 4 p.m. on the due date. Keep an electronic copy of your essay. Print essays on white paper, double-spaced in Times New Roman 12-point or similar font. Print on both sides of the paper, if possible. Do not submit your paper in a duo-tang or plastic cover. A cover sheet is not necessary either. Your name and course information along with the date should appear in the top left corner of the first page of your essay. Prospective English majors should get to know MLA style.

Late papers: A paper may be submitted one or two days late when you make a request for an extension before the due date. Longer extensions will be given only in the case of documented incapacitation.

Plagiarism: Outside of the university, plagiarism may be “actionable.” That is, legal action may be taken against you for using the words or ideas of other people without attribution. Plagiarism is not just a legal matter: it is also an ethical matter. It is your responsibility to understand and avoid plagiarism. See “Notes from the Faculty of Arts” below.

Office hours: My office hours are for you. Please do not hesitate to drop by and see me to discuss any aspect of the course. I am often in my office outside of posted hours, and I would be happy to discuss the course matters with you whenever you find me in and not too busy.
Laptops, etc.: **I strongly discourage you from using a laptop in class.** It is simply too easy to click to email, facebook, or other sites during class. Anyone would be tempted. And when you do things other than notetaking with your laptop, you’re not the only student mentally checking out: everyone around you will be distracted. Finally, the screen itself is a barrier between you and the class and therefore a barrier to participation. If you choose to use a laptop, I may require you to sit immediately in front of me or, if you appear to be surfing the internet, to close the laptop for the remainder of the course.

Do not text in class.

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**Notes from the Faculty of Arts**

**Academic Integrity:**

*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://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-71](http://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-71).

*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://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-70](http://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-70). In addition, consult [http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/student-grievances-faculty-arts-processes](http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/student-grievances-faculty-arts-processes) for the Faculty of Arts’ grievance processes.

*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://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-72](http://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-72).

**Academic Integrity website (Arts):** [http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academic_responsibility.html](http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academic_responsibility.html)

**Academic Integrity Office (uWaterloo):** [http://uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/](http://uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/)

**Accommodation for Students with Disabilities:**

*Note for students with disabilities:* The AccessAbility Services (AS) Office, 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 [AS Office](http://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-71) at the beginning of each academic term.