Course Description:

“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)

This course introduces students to the tenets of Literary Theory, focusing primarily on essay writing from the twentieth century. It surveys some of its most influential schools and movements, including New Criticism, Post-Structuralism, Post-Colonialism, Gender Studies and Psychoanalysis. By the end of term, students will become familiar with a wide variety of different analytical approaches and be able to contextualize the emergence of different critical theories. We will ask such crucial questions as: how do different critics define literary scholarship? Where do they focus their attention? How do they derive “meaning” from the text?

Course Objectives:

1. Students will discuss texts of Literary Theory, using advanced close-reading skills
2. Students will learn to apply appropriate theoretical concepts and critical approaches
3. Students will articulate and support positions, through reasoned argument and the effective use of evidence
4. Students will construct formal literary essays. They should edit for content, organization (e.g. effective introductions and conclusions; unified, coherent paragraphs; transitions between and within paragraphs), style (e.g. sentence rhythm; sentence variety; vocabulary; figurative language), and grammar

Course Texts:
(available at UW Bookstore – try to use the correct editions)
Rivkin and Ryan. Literary Theory: An Anthology (2nd edition)
Select readings will be made available through the course website

Optional (but recommended):
Katherine Acheson. Writing Essays about Literature
Peter Barry. Beginning Theory
Terry Eagleton. Literary Theory
The Little Brown Handbook
John Hopkins Encyclopedia of Critical Theory – online, with access through the library website

Working Class Schedule:
Introduction and Formalism
Read: introduction to “Formalisms”
Jan 8: Intro
Jan 10: Arnold “The Function of Criticism at the Present Time” (LEARN)
        Ransom “Criticism, Inc.” (LEARN)
Jan 15: Shklovsky “Art as Technique”
        Brooks “The Formalist Critics”
        Optional: Wimsatt “The Structure of the Concrete Universal”

Structuralism, Linguistics, Narratology
Read: introduction to “Structuralism”
Jan 17: de Saussure “Course in General Linguistics”
        Culler “The Linguistic Foundation”
        Propp “Morphology of the Folktale”
        Optional: Barthes “Mythologies”

Psychoanalysis and Psychology
Read: introduction to “Psychoanalysis”
Jan 22: Freud “Interpretation of Dreams” and “The Uncanny”
Jan 24: Bessel and McFarlane “The Black Hole of Trauma”

Political Criticism: From Marxism to Cultural Materialism
Read: introduction to “Political Criticism”
Jan 29: Eagleton “Introduction: What is Literature?” (LEARN)
        Optional: Marx “The German Ideology” and “Capital”
        Optional: Bourdieu “Distinction”
Jan 31: Althusser “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses”
        Fiske “Culture, Ideology, Interpellation” (in Cultural Studies)
        Optional: Zizek “The Sublime Object of Ideology”

Post-structuralism, Deconstruction, Post-modernism
Read: introduction to “Post-structuralism, Deconstruction, Post-modernism”
Feb 5: Derrida “Differance”
Feb 7: Lyotard “The Postmodern Condition”
        Optional: Deleuze and Guattari “A Thousand Plateaus”
Feb 12: Baudrillard “Simulacra and Simulations”

Historicisms
Read: introduction to “Historicisms”
Feb 14: Foucault “Discipline and Punish”
        Optional: “Professing the Renaissance: The Poetics and Politics of Culture”
Feb 18-22: Holiday

Feminism
Read: introduction to “Feminism”
Feb 26: Woolf “A Room of One’s Own” (LEARN)
        Optional: Rubin “The Traffic in Women”
Gender Studies
Read: introduction to “Gender Studies”
March 5: Essay Writing
March 7: Butler “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution”
Optional: Foucault “The History of Sexuality”
March 12: Halberstam “Female Masculinity”
Optional: Sedgwick “Epistemology of the Closet”

Ethnic Literary and Cultural Studies, Critical Race Theory
Read: Introduction to “Ethnic Literary and Cultural Studies”
March 14: Lopez “The Social Construction of Race”
Optional: Gates “The Blackness of Blackness”
Optional: Fishkin: “Interrogating Whiteness”

Colonial, Post-Colonial, and Transnational Studies
Read: Introduction to “Colonial, Post-Colonial, and Transnational Studies”
March 19: Walder “History”
Optional: Loomba “Situating Colonial and Postcolonial Studies”
Optional: Lawson “The Anxious Proximities of Settler (Post)colonial Relations”

Cultural Studies
Read: Introduction to “Cultural Studies”
March 21: Movie Screening
March 26: Movie Screening
March 28: Horkheimer and Adorno “The Culture Industry as Mass Deception”
Optional: Benjamin “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”
April 2: Hebdige “Subculture: The Meaning of Style”
Fiske “Television Culture”
Optional: de Certeau “The Practice of Everyday Life”
April 4: Review

Assignments:
Attendance and Participation (10%);
Primary Text Assignment: (30%);
Term Essay (30 %);
Final Exam (30%)

1. Attendance and Participation: Students will be evaluated based on their attendance and their participation in class discussions.
2. Primary Text Assignment: Each student will select one short “primary text” for the purposes of grounding our discussion of Literary Theory. There are two parts to this assignment:

1) Primary Text Selection: Due Jan 24th (but the earlier the better)

First, select an essay from the course readings. The selection is due immediately (a sign-up
sheet will be distributed during the first week of class). Second, select a “primary text.” I recommend selecting a poem, an image, or a video clip. Choose a “primary text” that either helps support the main argument being discussed in the essay you’ve chosen, or a “primary text” that could be used for the purposes of applying one of the main theoretical concepts being discussed in the essay you’ve chosen. I will accept a wide variety of different “primary texts,” so long as a justification can be made for it. Without sufficient explanation, I may ask for a different selection.

The “primary texts” will be made available to the rest of the class through the LEARN website. Please review them all. We may discuss them during the lecture period.

2) Explanation of Primary Text: Due Feb 26th

Write a short essay (3-4 pages) that analyzes your “primary text.” Students should explain the essay they have selected from the course readings, and then use that explanation to interpret their “primary text.” Students will be evaluated in terms of their ability to apply appropriate theoretical concepts and critical approaches. Treat the assignment like a mini-essay and remember to follow proper paragraph structure (MLA format). How do the tenets of Literary Theory help us understand your “primary text”?

3. Term Essay: A long comparison essay (6-8 pages) due March 21st. Essay topics will be distributed in class prior to the deadline. Students should consult at least two secondary sources to help formulate their argument.

4. Final Exam: A final exam based on all of the assigned texts from the term, including short-answer and essay questions.

Late Policy:
If you miss the mid-term you must provide medical documentation to substantiate your incapacity to write the test on the scheduled day. The essay is due in class on the due date. Late papers will be penalized at a rate of 2% a day, including weekends, and will not be accepted more than 2 weeks after the due date. No extensions will be given unless there is a clear and verified medical reason for the delay. Please note that I do not grant extensions except in emergency circumstances (being busy with other courses does not count as an emergency).

Student Responsibilities
Students should be prepared to discuss all of the assigned texts. Attendance is mandatory and I encourage classroom discussion. In my experience, English courses are the most successful when students are actively engaged. Try to read short works multiple times in preparation for class.

Electronic Devices:
Electronic devices can be a nuisance in the classroom and disrupt the ability of students to concentrate during lectures and discussion. Please be respectful of your peers. Mobile devices, specifically laptops and tablets, may be used in this course for educational purposes only (i.e., learning directed related to the course). Use of all other mobile devices is not permitted in class. Students who fail to comply with this policy will receive a verbal and written warning first before being asked to leave the classroom for part of the course.

Contacting the Instructor
I encourage students to contact me about the course. If you want to receive thorough feedback for your question, you should come to my office and speak with me in person. I will answer short e-mails, but my ability to respond is limited. I check my messages regularly, but always assume it will take at least 48 hours for me to respond and plan accordingly.

Final Examinations
Students are strongly urged not to make any commitments (i.e., vacation) during the examination period. Students are required to be available for examinations during the examination periods of all terms in which they register.

Essay Formatting
When formatting your essays, conform to MLA style. This includes the following:
- In the top left-hand corner of the first page, list on four separate lines, flush with the left margin: your first and last name and student number, my name, the course name and number, and the date on which you submit the essay. Do not include a separate title page.
- Following the identifying information, provide a title for your essay and centre it.
- Use one-inch margins (except for page numbers), and indent each paragraph.
- Use 12-point Times New Roman font or equivalent.
- Double-space all text, including your identifying information, the title, and any quotations.
- Number all pages of your essay (numbering the first page is optional) in the top right-hand corner, one-half inch from the top of the page and flush with the right margin. Your last name should precede the page number.
- Include a Works Cited on which you list all the sources you’ve used, including the primary text. Guidelines for Works Cited format will be discussed in class.

Academic Integrity
The Faculty of Arts requires that I make you aware of the following: “Students are expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for their actions. Students who are unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who need 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 Assistant Dean. For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy #71, Student Academic Discipline,
http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm

The Internet has made plagiarism and other forms of cheating much more tempting; it has also made it easier to detect. I will investigate and report to the Associate Dean all cases of suspected plagiarism. Proven cases will result in academic penalty, proportional to the extent of the infraction, and could include an official written reprimand from the Associate Dean that will be placed in your file. Please consult the following web site, “Avoiding Academic Offences” for a comprehensive explanation of plagiarism and how to avoid it
http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academic_responsibility.html

Students who believe that they have been wrongfully or unjustly penalized have the right to grieve: refer to Policy #70, Student Grievance,

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 OPD at the beginning of each academic term.