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 key terminology of the theoretical schools covered in the course;
• Identify and compare theoretical texts;
• Recognize the theoretical influences of critical works;
• Apply theoretical concepts and terms to texts.

TEXTS

Required

Rivkin and Ryan, *Literary Theory: An Anthology* (Blackwell, 2nd Ed, available at UW bookstore and on reserve in the Porter library)
Ryan, *Literary Theory: A Practical Introduction* (Blackwell, available at UW bookstore and on reserve at the Porter library)
Klages, *Key Terms in Literary Theory* (Continuum, available at UW bookstore and on electronic reserve)
Any good edition (i.e. not condensed or altered) of Shakespeare’s *King Lear* (also available online via LION, which you can find on the UW library list of research databases)
Select poems by Elizabeth Bishop available at poemhunter.com

**Highly Recommended**
*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.)


**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>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-class Workshops</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-term Exam</td>
<td>Feb. 14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essay</td>
<td>Apr. 8</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>exam week</td>
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1. **In-class workshops**

These exercises are meant to give you practice in applying theory to texts. Working in small groups, you will participate in workshops or assignments based on the exercise assigned from Ryan’s *Literary Theory, A Practical Introduction.* You should prepare for the workshop ahead of time by doing the assigned readings and some individual brainstorming. At the beginning of each workshop, I will provide further guidance on the assignment. You will spend most of the class working on the assignment; I will of course be available to answer questions and provide guidance. I may set aside a few minutes at the end of class for select groups to report back to the class on their findings.

At the end of the class, each group will hand in the written portion of the assignment to me for grading. Each exercise will receive a mark out of 10 and everyone in the group will receive the same mark. You can miss one in-class assignment without penalty. After that, missed exercises will be assessed a mark of 0/10.
I will divide the class into small workshop groups during the first week of class. The groups will remain the same for the remainder of the course; however, if you experience problems with group dynamics, please bring them to my attention in a diplomatic and tactful way, and I will do my best to help you resolve the problem. I also reserve the right to penalize students who shirk their responsibilities to the group.

2. Exams

The mid-term exam will consist of questions on material covered in class before the exam date. You will receive details about the exam two weeks in advance.

The Final Exam will cover the entire course. You will receive details about the exam during the last week of classes.

3. Essay (2000-2500 words)
Due Date: April 8 (by midnight). Submit electronically (as Word docx file) to drop box via LEARN.

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.

Assignment:

Apply one or more of the following theoretical methods to a contemporary text of your choosing:

- semiotics (e.g. myth criticism)
- speech-act theory
- deconstruction
- psychoanalysis
- marxist/ideological analysis
- analysis of the construction of gender in a text
- discourse analysis
- historicist analysis
- analysis of the construction of race in a text
- postcolonial analysis

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 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.
You must meet with me in advance, in person, to discuss your choice of target text and your general plans for your essay.

**Essay Evaluation:**
40%: application of *specific* theoretical terms and methods covered in classes and workshops. This segment of the mark will be low if you just do a general, thematic or formal analysis with little or no application of specific theoretical concepts.
30%: argumentation: logic, coherence, citation and presentation of relevant evidence using correct MLA format as explained in *Little Brown Handbook*.
30%: mechanics: spelling, punctuation, grammar, presentation.
A 5% bonus will be awarded to essays with fewer than three spelling or grammatical errors and correct MLA format.

**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 at least one week 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.*

**Class Etiquette**
Please use laptops for taking notes only – other uses can be distracting for those around you. Please put cell phones away, set on silent. Anyone whose cell phone rings in class must bring donuts for everyone to the next class.

**Schedule of Classes & Readings**
Please bring your texts to class. Please bring copies of target texts (poems, etc.) to workshops.
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.

Note: RR=Rivkin and Ryan’s *Literary Theory, An Anthology*; Ryan = *Literary Theory, A Practical Introduction*; quick definitions of key terms can be found in Klages, but they will also be discussed in class.

**Week 1  Jan 8/10**
Tues: Introduction to Course

Thurs: Watch King Lear (DVD) (I recommend that you prepare readings for week 2 before viewing King Lear)

**Week 2  Jan 15/17: Formalism**
**Key Terms:** formalism

Tues: Finish watching King Lear
Meet your group.

Thurs: RR 1.1: Formalisms
RR 1.3: Shklovsky, Art as Technique
In-class workshop: Ryan Exercise 1.1

**Week 3  Jan 22/24: Structuralism**
**Key Terms:** essentialism, sign, signification, meaning/value, langue/parole, semiotics

Tues: Structuralism
RR 2.1: The Implied Order: Structuralism
RR 2.3: Ferdinand de Saussure, Course in General Linguistics

Thursday RR 2.6: Roland Barthes, Mythologies
In-class workshop: Ryan Exercise 2.1

**Week 4  Jan 29/31: Rhetoric**
**Key Terms:** Speech-Act

Tues: RR 3.1: Language and Action
RR 3.5: How to Do Things With Words
RR 3.8: Interpretive Communities

Thurs: In-class workshop, Ryan Exercise 3.1

**Week 5  Feb 5/7: Post-Structuralism, Deconstruction**
**Key Terms:** absence/presence, binary opposition, center, deconstruction, différance, essentialism, play, poststructuralism
Tues: RR 4.1: Introductory Deconstruction
    RR 4.6: Différance (to end of page 286).

Thurs: In-class workshop, Ryan Exercise 4.1

Week 6

Tues: TBA/Review

Thurs: Mid-Term Exam

READING WEEK

Week 7

Feb 26/28: Psychoanalysis & Psychology
Key Terms: condensation, displacement, id, subject, unconscious

Tues: RR 5.1: Strangers to Ourselves--Psychoanalysis
    RR 5.2: The Interpretation of Dreams

Thurs: Ryan Chapter 5
    Elizabeth Bishop, “In the Village” (Ryan Appendix B)
    In-class workshop, Ryan Exercise 5.2

Week 8

March 5/7: Political Criticism
Keywords: base/superstructure, ideology, interpellation, isa/rsa, hegemony, marxism
Note: no workshop this week.

Tues: No Class

Thurs: RR 7.1: Starting With Zero
    RR 7.4: Marx, The German Ideology
    RR 12.6: Fiske: Culture, Ideology, Interpellation
    Elizabeth Bishop, “A Miracle for Breakfast” (online at poemhunter.com)

Week 9

Mar 12/14: Feminism & Gender Studies
Key Terms: feminist theory, gay, gender, other, queer, sexuality,

Tues: RR 8.1: Feminist Paradigms
    RR 8.5: Gilbert & Gubar, Madwoman in the Attic

Thurs: In-class workshop, Ryan Exercise 7.2 (choose one of the Bishop poems to focus on; all are online at poemhunter.com)

Week 10

Mar 19/21: History
Key Terms: discourse, new historicism, panopticon,

Tues: RR 6.1: Writing the Past
RR 6.4: Foucault, Discipline and Punish

Thurs: In-class workshop, Ryan Exercise 8.3
       Elizabeth Bishop, “Twelve O’Clock News” (available on LEARN)

Week 11 Mar 26/28: Ethnic Studies
       Key Terms: other, ethnicity, race

Tues: RR 10.1: Situating Race
       RR 10.1: Lopez, The Social Construction of Race

Thurs: In-class workshop, Ryan 9.3 (Lyrics to Ice Cube’s “The Nigga Ya Love to Hate” readily available via Google)

Week 12 April 2/4: Postcolonial/Global English Studies
       Key Terms: colonialism, English, hybrid, orientalism, postcolonial, transnational

Tues: RR 11.1: English Without Shadows
       RR 11.12: Kincaid, A Small Place

Thurs: In-class workshop, Ryan Exercise 10.2 (“The Burglar of Babylon” available online at poemhunter.com)

April 11-25: 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 course:

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:

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.
**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 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, submit your essay directly to me at vlamont@uwaterloo.ca, together with at least two prior drafts of the essay representing substantially different stages of the drafting process, as well as any notes taken during the preparation of the essay. These can be in electronic or paper form. If in paper, submit to the English department drop box, located near the main office (HH 252).