Criticism 2

Course Description

This course is an introduction to the theorizing of literary and non-literary texts; that is, this is a course on literary theory and its extensions beyond literature. Literary theory is speculation about literature. Historically, literary theory has taken myriad forms, such as speculation about the nature of the beautiful; the social role and value of writing; the nature of a text, genre, or work; the role of the real and imagined readers; the motives and means of the writer; the relation between fiction and reality; the importance of media; and so on. It may be that many of you have encountered literary theory only indirectly, through training in how to read well. That’s OK; this course is an introduction and it is meant to help you become a successful reader of literary theory. Along the way, you may find that you make explicit some things about your own reading practice that you would otherwise experience only implicitly. After this course, then, you should have a new level of conceptual sophistication, on the one hand, and a new set of concepts, on the other, to fold into your ongoing studies.

This section of ENGL 251B will not systematically cover the entire range and history of literary theory, it will not attempt to survey all the various schools of literary theory, nor will it attempt to apply literary theory to literary or non-literary texts. Instead, this section will focus, though attention to a small number of issues and questions that are historically and currently resonant, on developing your ability to read literary theory with in-depth understanding. It will also introduce you to some key questions and concepts in literary theory, and give you an opportunity to explore their implications for your studies with the rest of the class.

Objectives

By the end of the course students will:

1. Have a sophisticated grasp of some key questions and concepts in literary theory.
2. Be familiar with a range of ways to read and understand works of literary theory.
3. Construct insightful, well-evidenced, and clearly written arguments about literary theory.
4. Communicate verbally ideas and insights about literary theory clearly and effectively.
5. Develop skills in critical analysis.

* * * * *
Logistics

Office: Hagey Hall 253, ext. 33359
Office hours: 2:30-3:30 pm Tuesday, or by appointment

Required Texts


Recommended Texts


*MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 7th ed. (MLA)

Assignments

Attendance and active preparation for and participation in class discussions and exercises (10%); two in-class assignments (5% each; 10% total); in-class midterm essay or 20-minute presentation (your choice = 20%); a seven-page (1,750-word) analytic paper (30%); and a final examination (30%).

Students who expect to do well in this course will prepare course readings ahead of the relevant classes and actively participate in class discussions and exercises; they will apply themselves to understanding the texts on the class syllabus as well as others in the anthology; and they will produce clear and coherent, well-argued essays and presentations. Class exercises will include short written responses to some of the texts we are studying. The in-class assignments will help you identify how well you comprehend the material we are studying. Presentations, for those who choose to deliver one, will be scheduled for dates starting in the third week of classes; they will take the form of an explication of one of the works of literary theory on our syllabus.

For those who choose to write it, the midterm will be held on February 13. The paper should be handed in to the instructor at the start of class on March 27. Papers handed after the March 27th class will be graded but not marked or commented upon. The last day papers will be accepted without penalty is April 3rd. After April 3rd, barring a serious documented medical reason, papers will be penalized 5% for the first day, and 2% for every day thereafter, including weekend days and holidays.

Papers must be typed, double-spaced, printed out on one side of the page, and fastened with a staple (DO NOT use plastic report folders or other fasteners or covers); please do not use right justification. A page is 250 words. Papers must follow the format for paper presentation, quotations, and references set out in the MLA Handbook, 7th ed. Except when there is a serious documented medical reason, uncompleted or missed assignments will be graded 0 (apart from the paper, for which see above).
Note: Please keep a copy of any paper you submit, and NEVER hand a paper or any other assignment in by sliding it under (or sticking it to) my office door.

Finally, students must follow at all times both university and departmental regulations on plagiarism (in particular, all work apart from group assignments must be your own, and the words and ideas of others must appear within your work inside quotation marks and with complete references in foot- or end-notes).

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.  

*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.  

*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.  

*Other sources of information for students:*  
Academic Integrity website (Arts)  
Academic Integrity Office (uWaterloo)

**Accommodation for Students with Disabilities**

*Note for students with disabilities:* The AccessAbility Services 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.