

English 372, Contemporary Literary Theory, Fall 2002

Pat Day, Rice 114 Office Hrs: TW 3-4:30 & by Arrangement

ext. 8574; E-mail: William.Patrick.Day@oberlin.edu

Week	Readings	Supplementary Readings
Week 1 9/2	"The Dehumanization of Art" by Ortega Y Gasset "Tradition and the Individual Talent" T. S. Eliot "The Heresy of Paraphrase" by Cleanth Brooks	Samuel Taylor Coleridge selections from <u>The Biographia Literaria</u> William Wordsworth Preface to <u>Lyrical Ballads</u> Matthew Arnold "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" I. A. Richards "Communication and the Artist" W.K. Wimsatt, Jr. & Monroe C. Beardsley "The Intentional Fallacy"
Week 2 9/9	"The Object of Study" & "The Nature of the Linguistic Sign" by Saussure "Polemical Introduction" by Northrop Frye "Literary Genres" by Tzvetan Todorov ("Structuralism & Literature by Gerard Genette "Against Interpretation " by Susan Sontag	Sigmund Freud "The Uncanny and The Dreamwork" Jean Piaget "Introduction and Location of Problems from <u>Structuralism</u> " Joseph Campbell "Myth and Dream" from <u>The Hero with a Thousand Faces</u> Claude Levi-Strauss "The Structural Study of Myth"
Week 3 9/16	Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" & from Of Grammatology by Jacques Derrida, "The Insistence of the Letter in the Unconscious" by Jacques Lacan "What is an Author?" by Michel Foucault "The New Sentence" by Ron Silliman	
Week 4 9/23	<u>Housekeeping</u> by Marilyn Robinson	
Week 5 9/30	"The Death of the Author" & "The Pleasures of the Text" by Roland Barthes, "Sorties" & "The Laugh of the Medusa" by Helene Cixous	V. N. Voloshinov : "Social Interaction and the Bridge of Words"
Week 6 10/7	"Interpreting the Variorum" by Stanley Fish, "Race, Gender & The Politics of Reading" by Michael Awkward	
Week 7 10/14		

10/21	Fall break	
Week 8 10/28	<u>The Handmaid's Tale</u> by Margaret Atwood	
Week 9 11/4	"Genealogy, Nietzsche, History" by Michel Foucault, "Against Tradition: Towards a Particularized Theory of Literary History" by Marilyn Butler "Orientalism" by Edward Said, "Literature, History, and Politics," by Catherine Belsey,	Georg Lukacs "The Ideology of Modernism" Hans Robert Jauss from <u>Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory</u>
Week 10 11/11	"Salem's Lot by Stephen King	
Week 11 11/18	"The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," by Frederic Jameson "Manifesto for Cyborgs" by Donna Haraway, "Simulation and Simulacrum" by Jean Baudrillard	Gregory Ulmer "The Miranda Warnings: An Experiment in Hyper rhetoric"
Week 12 11/25	<u>Without You, I'm Nothing</u> , produced by Jonathan Crane, dir. John Boskovich, written by Sandra Bernhardt & John Boskovich (OR)	
Week 13 12/2	<u>The Man in The High Castle</u> by Philip K. Dick	
12/9		

All these readings are available in Eres. A hard copy of each should also be available in the reserve room. For secondary readings available only in hard copy, see the end of the syllabus

Mechanics of the Course.

1) I assume valuable things happen in class sessions. I take attendance; I expect you to keep track of your attendance too, because "I didn't realize I'd missed that many classes" is not an excuse. You get two unexcused absences, absences other than illness or family emergency. "I had a paper due for another course, my fish was depressed, I don't do Tuesdays, I'm in a production of **The Sunshine Boys** and we had rehearsal" are not excusable absences.

We only have 39 classes, less than 39 hours over the semester. More than 2 unexcused absences and your grade goes down; after 6 unexcused absences, you've no-entry-ed the course.

This also means showing up on time. I'm aware that things happen, but regularly strolling in 5 minutes after class starts is a very bad idea.

2) You have to participate in the class. Participation doesn't mean talking a lot, it means being engaged in the interchange among the members of the class: asking good questions, responding to other people's questions, thinking before you talk. Talking in groups such as a class is a skill, every bit as much as writing is. It's a skill worth having, because in fact a lot of work in all institutions gets done in that way. Being able to talk effectively in a group is, as they say, an important "self-empowerment." I know that a number of people have trouble speaking up in class. You should feel as free to consult me on strategies and methods for doing that as you'd to consult me about your writing.

3) You have to form, with other members of the course, a discussion group that meets outside of class once a week. Some groups prefer to meet before discussions and/or lectures, other prefer to meet after. That's up to each group to decide. Groups should be 4 or 5 people maximum. Each week I want each group to hand in a question/comment you've come up with together. This should come via email and hard copy and the hard copy should be signed by each member of the group. If somebody doesn't show up or participate, then it has to be turned in without their signature.

Incomplete Policy

Academic or emergency incompletes are yours to take if you want, as long as you are in good standing in the course. You don't need to tell me the story, unless you want to; I trust that you wouldn't take an incomplete without a good reason. "Good Standing" means that you have completed all the work assigned for the first module and at least some of the work for the second

The Honor Code

It should go without saying that I expect you to hand in your own work, not somebody else's. But in this course I expect you to read each other's writing and talk to each other about your ideas. Having a real intellectual life does not mean hiding from other people's thoughts in hopes of staying "original" but instead responding imaginatively and creatively to the influence of other people's ideas. Thus obvious cheating--buying papers off the net, using somebody else's essay from another course, lifting unacknowledged sections from other people's writing--is plagiarism. You simply can't learn anything from this sort of thing,

Writing Assignments

- * Written work must be handed in on time.
- * Late essays will be accepted at the discretion of the instructor
- * All work must be handed in in order to get credit for the course.
- * Essays must be typed, double spaced, stapled together, pages numbered.
- * Backs of previously used paper is fine for drafts; final version should be printed on both sides of the sheet.
- * Essays must have a title, though they don't have to have a cover sheet.
- * References should be in the following form: (Wordsworth, "Preface" p. 2) with full citation in end notes

Short Assignments

The class will be divided into 5 groups. Each week one group will write a short essay due by 3 pm on Tuesday, another will write a sort essay due by 3 pm on Thurssday Essays should be about 600 words..

The Final Essay

A 3000+ word essay on a topic of your choice. The essay will be developed over the course of the semester in five stages. I am open to proposals for different kinds of final projects, though they will require a proposal, a progress report, and a final report/reflection on the project. The assignment are on line on this course's web pages.

#1. A 750--900 word essay explaining why you're taking the course and what specifically you want to get out of it.

#2. Midterm essay, 1000 words. This essay will take the form of a reflection on what we have done in the first half of the semester. You may revise or reflect back upon your first essay, or you can write something totally new. Due the week before Spring Break

#3 Proposal. A brief 500 word explanation of what you think you want to write about and why you think this is important. due week 11

#4 First Draft. Due week 13. I'll read and comment on this draft. It should be as complete as possible, but I don't expect a "finished" product.

#5 Final Draft. Due at the end of Reading Period.

How I comment on your written work.

The comments on your writing will be, as one former student put it, "ambiguous." I don't do much "this is good, that's bad" commenting. The comments I make will be directed to making you think about what you're writing about, raising issues you may want to consider in revising, or writing about in the next prep essay. I won't always comment on your prep essay. I do this not because they aren't important, but because you need to develop the ability to judge your own work, rather than to always expect to be told whether it is good or bad by someone else. For specific advice on how to revise, what to do with a particular argument, etc., we should set up a conference.

Grading

You won't receive any grades over the course of the semester. This isn't because the grade is unimportant (if it was unimportant we wouldn't give it, would we?) but because the work in the course is part of a process, rather than a sequence of discrete units. If I am trying to encourage you to use your writing to be experimental and speculative, leading to your final essay, it makes little sense to grade it along the way. But if you want a sense of how you're doing, you should feel free to come and speak to me about your work. I will be able to tell you if you are making what I see as reasonable progress, what things you may want to work on, what things you seem to be doing best. I won't be able to be extremely precise about a grade equivalent, however. On a rough scale, though, I would say that if you are doing intelligent analysis of the works we consider and are able to state your own views clearly, that is C- to C+ work. If you are able to interpret the material we are working with, discuss not only what is "said" but what its significance might be, you would be in the B- to B range. If in addition you can demonstrate a capacity for self-reflective critical work (thinking about your own way of thinking and what it means to think as you do) you would be in the B+ to A range. So these are the kinds of mental activity you will be doing in the course: analysis & response, interpretation, and self-reflection.

Secondary Readings on Reserve

Structuralism and Since, edit by John Sturrock. Bio-critical essays on the “Big Five” Structuralism & Post-Structuralism—Levi-Strauss, Barthes, Lacan, Derrida, and Foucault.

Three Short (@100 pages) on major influences on contemporary theory

Heidegger by **Michael Inwood**
 Freud by **Anthony Storr**
 Nietzsche by **Michael Tanner**

Primary Works by these writers.

Heidegger **Basic Writings**
 Freud Civilization and its Discontents
 Nietzsche The Genealogy of Morals

Critical essays applying “theory” to a particular work

Frederick Karl, "Introduction to *Danse Macabre*: Conrad's **Heart of Darkness**"
 (biographical/historical)

Adena Rosmarin, "Darkening the Reader: Reader-Response Criticism and **Heart of Darkness**"

Johanna Smith, "Too Beautiful Altogether: Patriarchal Ideology in **Heart of Darkness**"
 (feminism)

J. Hillis Miller, "**Heart of Darkness** Revisited" (deconstruction)

Brook Thomas, "Preserving and Keeping Order by Killing Time in **Heart of Darkness**"

Warren Montag, "The Workshop of Filthy Creation: A Marxist Reading of **Frankenstein**"

Lee Heller, "**Frankenstein** and the Uses of Cultural Criticism"

Writing Assignment #1 Due via email on Thursday, Sept. 4 by 5 pm

It's useful for people in the course to get an idea of why other folks are here. It's also useful for you to clarify for yourself why your taking a particular course and what you expectations are. It's also important for this course to get used to the idea of writing as public communication rather than either private reflection or an address exclusively to the instructor.

In this essay of about 750-900 words (around 3 pages in hard copy) try to explain what you think "theory" is about and why you want to spend a semester studying it. You may want to think about how you imagine this course fitting into the other courses you've taken here. This account will by necessity be intimate but need not be personal; that is, rather than an autobiographical narrative, you're communciating the ideas you've arrived at on this subject more than the route by which you got there.