Intro to English Studies

or

Critical Literary Theory

Section 001 3-3:50pm MWF 117 HRCB

Becca Hay - 4113 JFSB

Office Hours: W 11am-1pm

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# Required Texts

Culler, Jonathan. *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction.* New York: Oxford UP, 2011. Print.

Trethewey, Natasha. *Native Guard*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2007. Print.

---. *Thrall*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2012. Print

Course Reserve Readings on Digital Dialog.

**\*\*Students must bring all texts (paper or electronic) to class on the day the readings will be discussed.** Haul your texts, print or copy course reserve readings, or bring them in electronic form you can quickly access during discussions. **Failure to do so will affect your grade.\*\***

* You will also need to buy a small, inexpensive writer’s notebook.

# Course Description

English 251 is an introduction to the discipline of English Studies, including the fundamental concepts and practices of literary theory and analysis.

English 251 focuses on how we **read** and **interpret**.

This course aims to equip students with the necessary skills, habits of thought, working vocabulary, and awareness to succeed in the English major. It is required for all English majors and minors and is a prerequisite for all upper-division English courses.

# Course Learning Objectives

Everything we do in this course is meant to enhance your success at reaching the following objectives. These are the foundational skills you should have honed at the end of the semester. Students will

* Demonstrate mastery of a basic literary-critical lexicon.
* Learn foundational approaches to reading literary, critical, and theoretical texts.
* Identify and explore fundamental questions and issues related to literary analysis.
* Produce readings of literature that employ this lexicon, demonstrate these reading approaches, and engage these fundamental questions and issues.

# Course Narrative

We’ll refer to Kenneth Burke’s parlor metaphor more than once this semester. Here’s what he had to say:

“Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about.” From *The Philosophy of Literary Form* (110).

That’s exactly how I felt (and still feel sometimes) when engaging the vast field of literary theory and criticism. I venture a guess that you will feel the same. Interpretation has been subject to debate in Western civilization since at least the time of Plato and the Hebrew patriarchs. That’s a long conversation.

My goal is to get you participating in this conversation despite the initial discomfort of not knowing thousands of years of backstory. To do so, we’ll work through a **series of questions about reading and interpretation**.

# Assignments

### Quick Critical Essay #1 (100 points)

We are all predisposed to read literature in different ways, even if we don’t know or think about it. One of our first assignments will require you to approach a pair of poems and write about them before we delve into the many different interpretive strategies that have evolved in the 20th and 21st centuries.

You will approach the pair of poems and write a 2- to 3-page, double-spaced critical essay in MLA format that describes, through exposition of the text, how you read or how you think we should read the poems.

### Critical Essay #2 (100 points)

For this essay, you will be revising your critical essay #1. You will elaborate on your initial essay and write a 3-4 page, double-spaced critical essay in MLA format that highlights key points of the theorists and how your chosen poem brings the two texts into conversation with each other.

### Midterm and Final Assessments (100 + 100 = 200 points)

Your exams will ask you to synthesize and apply what you have learned from class readings and discussion. The questions should not surprise. Some will request that you reproduce the main ideas from the readings and class discussions. Others will ask you to put critics and theorists into conversation with a literary text. Still others will ask you to put critics and theorists into conversation with each other about the overarching questions of “Why do we read,” “How do we read,” and “What do we read?” These tests will be administered IN CLASS and cannot be made up. Please, do not miss these. And do not ask for a make-up exam.

### Comprehension Sheet (5 x 10 pts each = 50 points)

All reading is required. For increased comprehension of some difficult ideas, I will pick 5 random dates and collect the comprehension sheet for that day. This means that for each theorist/class period you should bring a comprehension sheet. I will provide the sheets for the first couple weeks and then it will be your responsibility to print (off DD), fill out and bring to class the sheet. Note, each sheet is due at the beginning of class and will be in response to the theorist we discuss that day. You cannot make up these sheets. If you are not in class one day, I will not accept the sheet at a later date.

### Participation (50 points)

* Attendance: This is more than just being a warm body in the room. Engage. Elaborate. Ask. This is more than merely answering questions, but also asking questions, bringing up key passages, responding to your classmates.

Note: These points are earned for classroom etiquette.

### Team Critical Response Presentations (100 points)

Your team will have 10 minutes to present on a key theorist in conjunction with a text of your choice. Explicate, elaborate and recraft ideas here.

### Digital Dialog Critical Response Entries (5 x 20 pts. each = 100 points)

Write with no fear (but don’t leave respect at the door). See the assignment sheet for full details re: the assignment.

### Final Essay (300 points)

This will be a 4-5 page paper in which you will take a specific theorist and explicate their idea using multiple poems from *Domestic Work*, *Thrall* or *Native Guard*.

# Grades and Grading

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Assignment | Point Total |
| Critical Response Journals: Digital Dialog | 100 |
| Critical Response Essay #1 (2-3 pages) | 100 |
| Critical Response Essay #2 (3-4 pages) | 100 |
| Midterm Exam | 100 |
| Final Exam | 100 |
| Final Essay (4-5 pages) | 300 |
| Team Critical Response Presentation | 100 |
| Participation | 50 |
| Comprehension Sheets | 50 |
| Total | **1000** |

### Grade Breakdown

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 940 – 1000 = A | 800 – 839 = B- | 680 – 699 = D+ |
| 900 – 939 = A- | 780 – 799 = C+ | 640 – 679 = D |
| 880 – 899 = B+ | 740 – 779 = C | 600 – 639 = D- |
| 840 – 879 = B | 700 – 739 = C- | 0 – 599 = E |

### Grading Policies

I will always try my best to grade all assignments within one to two weeks. I don’t want them around, and you want them back. But, sometimes life happens to me, too, so I might ask for some understanding from time to time.

Nearly every graded assignment in this class will have an assignment sheet that describes my expectations and a rubric that I will use in evaluating your work. I put a lot of thought into creating these, so read them carefully before beginning (and again before completing) those assignments.

I’ll post grades electronically, but I’ll make comments on your individual copies. Between the Writing Center and your own careful revisions, I expect that style, spelling, and grammar mistakes will be nearly nonexistent. If I find one, I’ll usually mark the line where it occurs with a red X in the margin. I’ll comment on trends in my end comments if necessary. Sloppy writing wastes everyone’s time, so your grade will suffer from widespread errors, especially repeat offenders.

If you have a question or concern about a grade, **make an appointment to see me outside of class**.

# Course Policies

### Attendance and Participation

**Attendance:** In order to contribute and participate in class discussions, you need to be here!

Things to Remember:

1. You get 3 “freebies” (no questions asked).
2. Each absence after those initial three results in a 1/3 grade reduction off your **final grade** (a B+ 🡪 B).
3. If a student misses more than a third of any class period, they will be considered absent for the day. That means if you are more than 15 minutes late or leave class more than 15 minutes early, it is an **absence**.
4. If you must be absent on the day a paper is due, please arrange to get the paper to me on time or earlier or I will consider it late.
5. *A skipped out-of-class conference with me counts as an absence.*
6. **Tardy**: Being “tardy” is arriving after the bell.
7. 3 tardies equals one absence.

Why? This class is meant to prepare you for a productive and exciting path in the English major or minor. There are fundamental discussions we have during this semester that each subsequent English class you take will build upon.

Participation is the crux of this class, and good participation requires careful preparation, attention, and respect.

* **Preparation**: I reserve the right to call on you at any time in class. Reading each text carefully and reflecting on the reading using online discussion will help you prepare to participate fully in our classroom discussions. To be well prepared, you must bring your texts to class.
* **Attention**: You must be 100% present. That means listening to others’ comments and working productively in groups. While you are more than welcome to use electronic devices to access the readings or take notes, that should be the only thing you access. No email, Facebook, or other distractions during class. **Engaging in one of these activities during class will result in an absence**.
* **Respect**: Not only do you need to listen to others’ comments, you also must respect them. That doesn’t mean you have to agree, but demeaning or belittling comments about other people or their ideas will result in an absence, and you may be asked to leave for the day.

### Late Assignments

No late assignments. Please, do not ask. You have a schedule to know when everything is due. In extreme situations, talk to me during my office hours before the assignment is due to request an extension.

### Communication

Please come to my office hours or make an appointment to speak with me. I love to continue discussing ideas from class, or talk through their implications.

If you need to email me (ms.beccahay@gmail.com), feel free to do so. Please allow me at least one business day (24 hours) to respond. Note: I do not check/respond to my email from 5pm Friday-8am Monday.

### Honesty and Honor Code Issues

I penalize academic dishonesty, including cheating and plagiarism, as extensively as university policy allows. Nothing you could gain by cheating is worth the certain penalty which will involve, at minimum, failure of the course. You know better.

### Paper Format

As English majors or minors, you should probably purchase a copy of the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. If you choose not to, there are lots of resources online that you can use. All work, including citations, must follow MLA guidelines.

Some MLA heavy hitters:

* 1-inch margins
* double-spaced
* last name and page number in the top right
* your name, my name, course number, and date in top left
* reverse indent and double space cited works on a separate page

### Writing Center

This is primarily a reading class, but we better comprehend when we have to write. **You really should visit the writing center in the process of writing both of your response essays, especially if you tested out of Writing 150**. You are welcome to use the writing center for your other essays, but it is not required.

### Course Content

I teach this class because I believe in its value. One of my favorite quotes from Elder Neal A. Maxwell both focuses my study and puts it into perspective:

“Brilliance, by itself, is not wholeness, nor happiness. Knowledge, if possessed for its own sake and unapplied, leaves one’s life unadorned.” (“The Inexhaustible Gospel.” BYU Devotional, August 18, 1992).

Theory will not save you. But application of theory to literary interpretation can teach us much about ourselves and gospel truth.

There may be some course content you find troubling. I give you full warning in advance that a half dozen of our literary texts use some language I hope you never use in your own lives, and some of the stories deal with difficult themes, from depression and slavery to rape and abortion. Beyond that, the critical texts we read and discuss will call into question some fundamental ideas you have about truth and knowledge.

I encourage you to come and talk to me if you are troubled.

I have also set aside several class periods to talk about the implications of the ideas we study to your lives as both students and scholars at Brigham Young University. I believe that if we approach our subject with humility and faith, we will gain great blessings of insight and discernment.

# Legal Notices

### Plagiarism & Academic Honesty

It is a violation of the Honor Code for a student to represent someone else’s work as his/her own. Also, as a condition of attending BYU, you affirmed that you would help others obey the Honor Code. It is a departmental policy that those who cheat on examinations or plagiarize the work of another are given a failing grade for the course. I communicate all instances of plagiarism to the Honor Code Office.

Students with Disabilities

BYU is committed to providing a working and learning atmosphere which reasonably accommodates persons with documented disabilities. If you have any disability which may impair your ability to complete this course successfully, please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities Office (422-2767). Reasonable academic accommodations are reviewed for all students who have qualified documented disabilities. Services are coordinated with the student and instructor by the SSD Office. If you need assistance or if you feel you have been unlawfully discriminated against on the basis of disability, you may seek resolution through established grievance policy and procedures. You should contact the Equal Employment Office at 422-5895, D-282 ASB.

Preventing Sexual Harassment

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits sex discrimination against any participant in an educational program or activity that receives federal funds. The act is intended to eliminate sex discrimination in education. Title IX covers discrimination in programs, admissions, activities, and student-to-student sexual harassment. BYU’s policy against sexual harassment extends not only to employees of the university but to students as well. If you encounter unlawful sexual harassment or gender-based discrimination, please talk to your professor; contact the Equal Employment Office at 422-5895 or 422-5689 (24-hours); or contact the Honor Code Office at 422-2847.

Preventing Sexual Misconduct

As required by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the university prohibits sex discrimination against any participant in its education programs or activities. Title IX also prohibits sexual harassment—including sexual violence—committed by or against students, university employees, and visitors to campus. As outlined in university policy, sexual harassment, dating violence, domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking are considered forms of “Sexual Misconduct” prohibited by the university.

University policy requires any university employee in a teaching, managerial, or supervisory role to report incidents of Sexual Misconduct that come to their attention through various forms including face-to-face conversation, a written class assignment or paper, class discussion, email, text, or social media post. If you encounter Sexual Misconduct, please contact the Title IX Coordinator at t9coordinator@byu.edu or 801-422-2130 or Ethics Point at https://titleix.byu.edu/report-concern or 1-888-238-1062 (24-hours). Additional information about Title IX and resources available to you can be found at titleix.byu.edu.

**Schedule**

*LT: Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction*

DD: Digital Dialog

\*I retain the right to change the schedule based on individual class needs.

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| Date | Topic | Reading Due | Assignments Due |
| M Aug 29 | Course Intro  Syllabus Review |  |  |
| W Aug 31 | Rhetorical Situation |  |  |
| F Sept 2 | Audience Value Systems | LT: *ch*. 1 |  |
| M Sept 5 |  |  |  |
| W Sept 7 | Reading: For the Joy or Intellectual Pursuit | DD: Vendler  DD: Graff |  |
| F Sept 9 | Questioning and Defining What We Read | DD: Tompkins  DD: Radway  LT: *ch*. 2 | **DD Post #1 Due** |
| M Sept 12 | Authorial Intent | DD: Gilman  DD: “The Yellow Wallpaper”  LT: *ch*. 4 | Google: “Natasha Trethewey Interview *Native Guard*” and read one of her interviews |
| W Sept 14 | Formalist Criticism | DD: Brooks  LT: *ch*. 5  *Native Guard*: first half |  |
| F Sept 16 | The Death of the Author and the Life of Interpretative Communities | DD: Dasenbrock  DD: Barthes | **DD Post #2 Due** |
| M Sept 19 | Interpretative Communities | DD: Fish |  |
| W Sept 21 | Semiotics--The Science and Theory of Language and Sound or Structuralism--Why We Make Intentional Noise | DD: Saussure |  |
| F Sept 23 | WreckitRalph: Derrida on Structuralism | DD: Derrida (SSP) | **DD Post #3 Due** |
| M Sept 26 | Deconstruction in Practice | DD: Culler  *Native Guard*: second half | **Critical Essay #1 Due** |
| W Sept 28 | **No Formal Class: SJS** |  | Designate one member of your group to email me by 5pm telling me who arrived and shared in your group (ms.beccahay@gmail.com) |
| F Sept 30 | **Mid-term In-Class Assessment #1** |  |  |
| M Oct 3 | The "F" Word: Feminism | *Thrall*: First half  DD: Gilbert and Gubar  DD: Moi  DD: Friedan |  |
| W Oct 5 | Masculinities and Feminities | LT: *ch*. 8  DD: Connell |  |
| F Oct 7 | Sexualities | DD: Chodorow  *Thrall*: First half | **DD Post #4 Due** |
| M Oct 10 | Racial Identity | DD: Morrison  DD: Gates Jr.  DD: Anzaldua |  |
| W Oct 12 | Racial Identity cont. |  |  |
| F Oct 14 | Team Collaboration Day |  |  |
| M Oct 17 | Racial Studies Team Presentations |  |  |
| W Oct 19 | Racial Studies Team Presentations cont. |  |  |
| F Oct 21 | Racial Studies Team Presentations cont. |  | **DD Post #5 Due** |
| M Oct 24 | A Hyperreal Existence | DD: Baudrillard |  |
| W Oct 26 | Simulacra in Action | Making it Matter  Contextualizing Ideas in Modern Society | Bring to class your example of simulacra |
| F Oct 28 | Memory and Artifact | DD: White  DD: Derrida (AF) |  |
| M Oct 31 | The Art of Memory | DD: Benjamin |  |
| W Nov 2 | Nostalgia and Wishing for More | DD: Boym  DD: Grainge |  |
| F Nov 4 | Encountering the Other  Trauma Theory | DD: Kristeva  DD: Agamben |  |
| M Nov 7 | **Student-Instructor Meetings: No formal class** |  |  |
| W Nov 9 | **Student-Instructor Meetings: No formal class** |  |  |
| F Nov 11 | **Student-Instructor Meetings: No formal class** |  |  |
| M Nov 14 | **Final Essay Handout** |  | **Critical Essay #2 Due** |
| W Nov 16 | Writing Stages |  |  |
| F Nov 18 | Writing Day: No formal class |  |  |
| M Nov 21 | Online Discussion: No formal class | See DD for Instruction |  |
| W Nov 23 | **Thanksgiving Holiday: Gobble Until You Wobble** | | |
| F Nov 25 |
| M Nov 28 | **No Formal Class: SJS** |  | Designate one member of your group to email me by 5pm telling me who arrived and shared in your group (ms.beccahay@gmail.com) |
| W Nov 30 | **Final In-Class Assessment #2** |  |  |
| F Dec 2 | **“The Best of”** |  | Bring your favorite theorist and be prepared to talk us through why you find that particular theorist interesting and what you could do with their theory. |
| M Dec 5 | Finding Another Right Answer |  |  |
| W Dec 7 | **Last Day of Class** Summing It All Up: The End, So Now What? |  |  |
| F Dec 9 | **Exam Preparation Day** |  |  |
| Dec 10-15 | **Finals** |  |  |

Final Schedule:   
**Monday, December 12th turned into my office before noon (12pm). Do not be late.**