TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY-CORPUS CHRISTI

English 5310.001-Fall 2014
TR 5:30-6:45
Location: OCNR 222

LITERARY CRITICISM & THEORY

Instructor: Dr. Sharon Talley
Office: CE 214C
Office Hours: TR 3:30-5:30, W 9:00-10:00 (and by appointment)
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Course Description:
The goal of this course is to expand students’ knowledge of current debates in literary theory and to provide the vocabulary and analytical tools for critical reading, writing, and theorizing. The course will cover traditional methods such as New Criticism and Marxism, as well as more recent theories such as Poststructuralism, Feminism, New Historicism, and Postcolonialism. It will also explore how traditional methods can be incorporated into the more recent approaches. Our analysis of the various readings will emphasize the historical conditions of their production and the philosophical and ideological underpinnings of their perspectives. Students will pick at least one critical school to study in depth on their own.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs):
Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:
1. articulate informed personal responses to theory, criticism, and literature
2. explain the premises and assumptions underlying their responses
3. apply theory to literary and cultural texts
4. draw relevant insights and critical conclusions from their applications
5. demonstrate competency in literary research
6. incorporate research with their own critical insights

Required Texts:
Herman Melville. *Billy Budd, Sailor*
Naomi Shihab Nye. *Words under the Words*
Edith Wharton. *The House of Mirth* (must be Bedford/St. Martin’s Case Studies Edition; editor is Shari Benstock)

Other texts listed on the schedule are available on Blackboard. (You will be expected to print and bring a hard copy of these readings to class on the day[s] they will be discussed.)
**Evaluation and Grading:**

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<td>Critiques</td>
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90-100 = A, 80-89=B, 70-79=C, 60-69=D, below 60=F

**Course Requirements:**

**Reading Journal (SLOs 1, 2, 3, and 4):** Throughout the semester, you will keep a reading journal that will serve as your on-going academic conversation with the different critical approaches. I will collect the journal on October 16 and November 25. By the midpoint of the semester (October 16), you must have responded critically to one of the theoretical readings from each of the week’s assignments for 9/2, 9/16, 9/23, 10/7, and 10/14. The journal that you turn in on November 25 must include a critical response to your choice of one of the theoretical readings from each of the week’s assignments for 10/21, 10/28, 11/11, 11/18, and 11/25 (Pratt only). Each of these weekly responses should be approximately one single-spaced, typed page. The purpose of this assignment is not to summarize the readings or reiterate class discussion. Instead, use the journal as a learning tool to prepare for class discussion and/or to expand upon issues raised in class, to raise additional questions, to make connections with other readings, and to demonstrate your own critical engagement with the texts that we read. For possible issues to address in responding to theory, see “Questions to Consider when Reading Theory” (attached).

**Discussion and Attendance (SLOs 1, 2, 3, and 4):** The course format will consist of both teacher- and student-facilitated discussion. In addition, students will work in small groups throughout the semester to discuss the readings. Not only is attendance required, but consistent and informed participation in class discussion is essential for full credit. You can miss one class without penalty; for every subsequent class you miss, two points will be subtracted from your final course grade.

**Discussion Facilitation (SLOs 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5):** To prepare you for writing your final essay and to make sure that your concerns and questions are voiced, you will lead a 30-minute discussion facilitation related to your research and reading of the theory assigned for one of our class periods. Your task is not to present the material that we read but instead to illustrate and examine theoretical concepts raised in the assigned reading. Please do not read to the class or lecture extensively. Instead, teach the class by bringing in outside materials to illustrate the text and/or suggest interesting comparisons with it or reactions to it. Feel free to use small group activities and/or full-class discussion to create an effective learning experience. On the class session immediately following, you will also provide a one- to two-page self-assessment that describes and critiques the facilitation and related preparation (including a bibliography [note: outside research is required for this assignment]). I will use this reflection, as well as my own observation of your work, to assess your ability to engage the class in a meaningful learning
activity, as well as your originality, effort, and preparation (including research, other resources, handouts, visual aids, etc.). Note: You will need to meet with me or contact me by e-mail one week before your facilitation to let me know what you plan to do.

**Literature Review (SLOs 1, 2, and 5):** For this assignment, you will select a literary or cultural text and prepare an overview and synthesis of the significant scholarship published on it, paying particular attention to the effects of theoretical developments in relation to the text’s reception through time and the most recent trends in the published criticism. For canonical texts with extensive bodies of criticism, you may, with my consensus, narrow your consideration by topic, time period, or school of criticism. The final essay (approximately 6 pages typed and double spaced) should be organized chronologically and/or methodologically, and it should use an interpretive thesis to argue for a particular perspective on the material surveyed, identifying areas of controversy and gaps within the scholarship. The essay should adhere to MLA documentation style, including a bibliography of the sources (at least 20) that are discussed within the essay. Students will peer review a full draft of the literature review one week before it is due. The criteria that we will use for this process (and which will also be the basis of my own evaluation) are posted on Blackboard, as well as further information on writing a literature review. If you wish, you may use this assignment as a way to develop ideas for your independent research project.

**Independent Research Project (SLOs 3, 4, 5, and 6):** This assignment provides the opportunity to demonstrate your ability to apply a critical theory (or a combination of theories) to a text (in any sense you want) and to integrate research into the resulting argument. For this purpose, you will choose a theory or a combination of theories that we have discussed after New Criticism and Structuralism and a literary or cultural text that makes sense to analyze through this method. It will be important to select a text that is manageable in length/complexity or to focus clearly on one issue in a longer/more complex text. To prepare yourself for developing the paper, you will research both the method(s)/approach(es) you have selected and the existing scholarship on the text itself. In the paper, which should be written for a scholarly audience, you will use the critical vocabulary of the method(s) you have chosen and demonstrate clearly what an analysis of the text gains from such scrutiny by proving a specifically focused and original thesis about the text. The final essay should be 12-15 pages (typed and double-spaced) plus appropriate endnotes and a list of works cited. To help you succeed in developing this project, you will:

- Prepare a one-page (typed and single-spaced) analysis and critique of each of two secondary sources of your choice that expand your understanding of this school of criticism.
- Prepare an annotated bibliography of all of the sources that you plan to include in your paper, including a two- to three-sentence explanation of the relevance of each source. This bibliography should be in MLA form and include a minimum of 20 scholarly sources not assigned for class.
- Prepare a one- to two-page (typed and double-spaced) abstract of what you plan to argue in your paper. Such an abstract, which should include your thesis, can often be revised slightly to form the introduction of the paper.
- Prepare a complete draft of your paper for review by your peers and by me.
The final paper, which will be due at the date and time scheduled for the final examination, should adhere to MLA documentation requirements. In evaluating this project, I will consider the complexity, sophistication, and originality of your thesis; your demonstrated understanding and application of the theory that underlies your approach; the selection and strength of the evidence that you use to support your claims; your choice and integration of secondary research with your own ideas; the clarity and coherence of your interpretive argument; your personal engagement with the text; and your command of literary/critical terms, documentation style, writing conventions, and surface features.

**Student Communications:**
You are responsible for the material covered and assignments and announcements made in every class whether or not you are present. In addition, from time to time, it may be necessary for me to contact you individually or to contact everyone in the class to communicate important course-related information. To do so, I will use the email function in Blackboard unless I am responding to an email you have sent to me. I will expect you to act responsibly to ensure that you receive and, if appropriate, respond to all such communications in a timely manner.

**Late Assignments:**
Please contact me by email or telephone if an emergency arises and you cannot attend class. I will not accept late assignments unless you have made previous arrangements, and the final paper will not be accepted late for any reason. An “Incomplete” will be given at my discretion only and must involve exceptional circumstances. To qualify for consideration, you must have satisfactorily completed two-thirds of the course requirements and met graduate standards for attendance and participation.

**Academic Advising:**
Upon entering the MA in English Program, each student is assigned a faculty mentor by the Graduate Coordinator. You should make an appointment to meet with your faculty mentor every semester to develop a degree plan and monitor your progress toward graduation. Your faculty mentor can also answer questions and provide valuable information about the comprehensive examination, other degree requirements, Ph.D. programs, and career opportunities. To finalize your degree plan and register for graduation, you must also meet with the Graduate Student Academic Advisor in the Academic Advising Center for the College of Liberal Arts. This office is located in Driftwood 203E and can be reached at (361) 825-3466.

**Graduate Student Academic Integrity Statement:**
English graduate students are expected to “conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty” (Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi Graduate Catalog). The Student Code of Conduct defines Academic Misconduct as cheating, plagiarism, multiple submissions, complicity, fabrication, falsification, and misrepresentation; in addition to “any behavior specifically prohibited by a faculty member in the course syllabus or class discussion” (Student Code of Conduct, Article III, 1. Academic Misconduct). Academic misconduct is a serious offence that will result in the professor assigning a serious penalty, possibly including failure for an assignment, failure in a course, or recommendation for dismissal from a program (TAMUCC Graduate Catalog, Academic Honesty). For each Academic Misconduct case, the faculty member must file a record, including a description of the disciplinary action taken, along with any materials involved, with his or her college dean, who will forward a copy to the Office
of Student Affairs. Further information regarding the judicial process is available on the website of the Office for Student Affairs.

**Classroom/Professional Behavior:**
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, as an academic community, requires that each individual respect the needs of others to study and learn in a peaceful atmosphere. Under Article III of the Student Code of Conduct, classroom behavior that interferes with either (a) the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or (b) the ability of other students to profit from the instructional program may be considered a breach of the peace and is subject to disciplinary sanction outlined in article VII of the Student Code of Conduct. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior may be instructed to leave the classroom. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including classrooms, electronic classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.

**Dropping a Class:**
I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary. Please consult with me before you decide to drop to be sure it is the best thing to do. Should dropping the course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class. **Friday, November 7** is the last day to drop a class with an automatic grade of “W” this term.

**Grade Appeals:**
Students who feel that they have not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in this class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, [cla.tamucc.edu/students/studentinfo.html](http://cla.tamucc.edu/students/studentinfo.html). For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean.

**Disabilities Accommodations:**
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall 116.

If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.

**Statement of Academic Continuity:**
In the event of an unforeseen adverse event, such as a major hurricane, as a result of which classes cannot be held on the campus of Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, this class will continue through the use of Blackboard and/or email. In addition, the syllabus and class activities may be modified to allow continuation of the course. Ideally, University facilities (i.e., emails,
web sites, and Blackboard) will be operational within two days of the closing of the physical campus. However, students need to make certain that the course instructor has a primary and a secondary means of contacting each student.

**Blackboard:**
To log into Blackboard, go to: [http://bb9.tamucc.edu](http://bb9.tamucc.edu). You must have a NET ID (also known as an Active Directory account or “Islander ID”) to log in. For instructions on how to get this account and more information about using Blackboard, go to: [http://distance-education.tamucc.edu/student_resources.html](http://distance-education.tamucc.edu/student_resources.html). If you need additional help at any time to access, download, or print course materials on Blackboard, please contact the Island Online (IOL) Help Desk by telephone at (361) 825-2825 or by email at iolsupport@tamucc.edu.

**Tentative Class Schedule (subject to change):**
Please note that all readings should be completed by the start of class on Tuesday of each week. You must bring a copy of all assigned readings to class. Blackboard readings = BB

R 8/28 Course Overview.

**New Criticism**

9/2-9/4 Richter, *CT*: Introduction (1-22, 749-60); Eliot (534-41); Brooks (797-806); Wimsatt and Beardsley (810-18). Ornstein, “Historical Criticism and the Interpretation of Shakespeare” (BB).

9/9-9/11 Glossary of Literary Terms (BB—or any glossary of your own choice). Nye, *Words under the Words*.

**Structuralism**

9/16-9/18 Richter, *CT*: Introduction (819-26); Saussure (841-51); Levi-Strauss (859-67); Propp (785-97); Eco (950-61).

**Structuralism to Poststructuralism and Deconstruction**

9/23-9/25 Richter, *CT*: Introduction (826-37); Barthes (874-77); Foucault (904-14); Derrida (914-26).

9/30-10/2 Melville, *Billy Budd*. Barbara Johnson, “Melville’s Fist: The Execution of Billy Budd” (BB); PEER REVIEW COMPLETE DRAFT OF LITERATURE REVIEW ON 10/2. I WILL ALSO REVIEW AND COMMENT ON THIS DRAFT.

**Psychoanalytical Theory & Criticism**

Feminist Criticism

10/14-10/16 Richter, *CT*: Introduction (1502-16); Gilbert and Gubar (1531-44); Cixous (1643-55); Smith (1600-10). Susan Stanford Friedman, “‘Beyond’ White and Other: Narratives of Race in Feminist Discourse” (BB). JOURNAL #1 DUE 10/16.

Gender Studies & Queer Theory

10/21-10/23 Richter, *CT*: Introduction (1611-25); Foucault (1627-36); Sedgwick (1683-91); Butler/Nussbaum (1707-20); Mulvey (1172-80). CRITIQUES DUE 10/23.

Marxist Criticism

10/28-10/30 Richter, *CT*: Introduction (1198-1214); Marx (397-411); Benjamin (1232-49); Althusser (1263-71); Jameson (1290-1306).


The New Historicism & Cultural Studies


Postcolonial Theory, Ethnic Studies, & the Borderlands


11/25 Mary Louise Pratt, “Arts of the Contact Zone” (BB); Nathan McCall, “Nigger” (BB). JOURNAL #2 DUE.

12/2 PEER REVIEW COMPLETE DRAFT OF FINAL PAPER. I WILL ALSO REVIEW AND COMMENT ON THIS DRAFT. THE DRAFT MUST BE POSTED ON BLACKBOARD BY 9:00 AM ON MONDAY, 12/1.

12/4 FINAL PAPER DUE AT 4:30 PM
Questions to Consider when Reading Theory:

These questions are provided to give you a framework for approaching our readings this semester. Please use them as a point of departure in preparing your journal entries.

1. What is the essence of this school of thought? What would an inventory of its characteristics look like?
2. How is it different from other theories? Is it fundamentally different or different in degree?
3. What is this theory’s relation to history (literary or political)? How does it position itself along the “binary” of politics and aesthetics?
4. Is this theory particularly applicable to a certain kind of literature (of a certain period, region, what have you) or genre? How can you tell? Does it exclude others (kinds/genres) from consideration?
5. What are the philosophical roots of this theory?
6. What use is this particular theory in the classroom? What skills that this theory emphasizes would you want your students to learn? How could you best teach these skills?
7. Is this theory difficult to apply? What theoretical groundwork does a student need to use it?
8. How is this particular theory useful for your own work or interests? Or is it?
9. Can aspects of this theory be combined with aspects of other theories? Which ones? Can you use it eclectically?

Supplemental Resources at Bell Library:

Anderson, Benedict, Imagined Communities
Anzaldúa, Gloria. Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza
Ashcraft, Bill, ed. The Post-Colonial Studies Reader
Belsey, Catherine. Critical Practice
Bhabha, Homi K. The Location of Culture
Butler, Judith. Undoing Gender
Cixous, Helene. White Ink: Interviews on Sex, Text, and Politics
Culler, Jonathan. On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism
---, Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics, and the Study of Literature
Derrida, Jacques. Of Grammatology
Dimock, Wai Chee, Rethinking Class: Literary Studies and Social Formations
Eagleton, Terry. Literary Theory: An Introduction
Gates, Henry Louis, Jr. The Signifying Monkey
Genette, Gerard. Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method
Gilbert, Sandra, and Susan Gubar. The Madwoman in the Attic
Gilroy, Paul. The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness
Halberstam, Judith. Female Masculinity
Hoffman, Michael J., and Patrick D. Murphy. Essentials of the Theory of Fiction
Jussaalla, Feroza, and Reed Dasenbrock, eds. Interviews with Writers of the Postcolonial World
Keesey, Donald. Contexts for Criticism
Landry, Lorraine. Marx and the Postmodern Debates: An Agenda for Critical Theory
Leitch, Vincent. Deconstructive Criticism: An Advanced Introduction
Marx, Karl. The Communist Manifesto (Textbook Reserve Collection #55)
McClintock, Anne, Aamir Mufti, and Ella Shohat, eds. *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives*

McQuillan, Martin, ed. *Deconstruction: A Reader*

Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. *Feminism without Borders*


Richards, I. A. *Practical Criticism*

---. *Principles of Literary Criticism*

Saldivar, Jose David. *Border Matters: Remapping American Cultural Studies*

Scholes, Robert. *Structuralism in Literature*

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*

---. *In Other Worlds*

Sturrock, John. *Structuralism and Since: From Levi-Strauss to Derrida*

Wall, Cheryl, ed. *Changing Our Own Words: Essays on Criticism, Theory, and Writing by Black Women*

Warhol, Robin, and Diane Price Herndl, eds. *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*

Wellek, Rene. *Concepts of Criticism*

Young, Thomas Daniel. *The New Criticism and After*

For background information, see also in the reference area:

Groeden, Michael, ed. *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism*

Makaryk, Irena R., ed. *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory: Approaches, Scholars, Terms*