English 5349.001: Theory and Practice I: Literary Studies

Instructor: Kevin Concannon
Office: FC 282
Office Hours: TTH 3-4:30, W 10-12
Telephone: 825-3874
E-mail: kevin.concannon@tamucc.edu
Class Times: TTH 5:30-6:45
Classroom: BH 202
Fall 2015

Required Texts:
Ana Menéndez, Adios, Happy Homeland!
Nicholasa Mohr. In Nueva York
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.)

Recommended Text:
Raymond Williams, Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society

Course Description:
This is the first of a two-semester course that will introduce students to literary and composition theories. Both parts of the course will also introduce students to the research skills necessary for success in graduate school. Over the course of a year, students will explore how to conduct research on different theoretical issues in order to develop the professional practice of analytical writing and interpretation.

In this first semester, we will focus on the current debates in literary theory by providing the vocabulary and research skills necessary for critical reading, writing and theorizing. The course is organized around specific theoretical keywords and will examine many traditional theoretical approaches, including New Criticism, Marxism, Poststructuralism, Feminism, and Postcolonialism

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs):
Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:
1. understand and evaluate current issues and research methods in English Studies
2. apply theory to literary and cultural texts
3. master documentation conventions appropriate to English Studies
Evaluation and Grading:

Reading journal: 10 points
Discussion: 10 points
Discussion facilitation: 15 points
Short paper #1: 10 points
Short paper #2: 10 points
Research project:
  Research Question: 5 points
  “Footnote trail” Exercise: 5 points
  Abstract: 5 points
  Final paper: 30 points

Total: 100 points

90-100 = A, 80-89=B, 70-79=C, 60-69=D, below 60=F

Course Requirements:

Reading Journal: Throughout the semester, you will keep an occasional reading journal that will serve as your on-going academic conversation with the different critical approaches and research interests. I will collect the journal on October 15 and on December 1. By the midpoint of the class (October 15) you must have responses to five of the readings and another five by the end of the semester. You may choose to respond to any of the theoretical readings on the syllabus. The purpose of this assignment is not to summarize the readings. Instead, use the journal as a learning tool to raise questions, to make connections, and to engage critically 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: 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: 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 or rely too heavily on a PowerPoint presentation. 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. 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.

**Short Papers:** There will be two short essay assignments of 2-3 pages. In the first essay, you want to choose one of the critical essays and explain how it represents a specific school of thought. For instance, why is “The Paradox of Thought” considered an example of New Criticism? In the second essay, you want to choose a keyword from *Keywords* by Raymond Williams (on reserve in the library) and explain how a specific essay develops or extends our understanding of this term. Your essay should adhere to MLA documentation/style requirements conventions. We will peer-review a complete draft of each of your essays in class a week before it is due. At any point in the planning and writing process, please feel free to discuss your paper with me during office hours or at a mutually agreed upon time.

**Independent Research Project:** This assignment provides the opportunity to demonstrate your ability to apply a critical theory (or a combination of theories) to a text in such a way that reflects your understanding of the keywords discussed in class. For instance, you may explore the novel, *George Washington Gómez*, in terms of its critique of nation or identity by looking at scholarship on postcolonial studies or race. It will be important to select a text that is manageable in length/complexity and 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. 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:

- Articulate a research question of interest to you and write a 1-2 page essay explaining your research process. You should include at least 20 sources.
- Choose one of your sources and find a footnote or reference you feel is worth pursuing. For instance, one might look at how Giorgio Agamben, in “State Of Exception,” draws on Carl Schmitt’s book *Dictatorship* to develop this theory of the “exception.” Looking at Schmitt’s book, you could examine how he discusses this notion of the “exception” and whether he cites anyone in support of his understanding. Write an essay exploring what is gained by making these connections: how do the authors you examine build on and alter each other’s argument?
- 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.

You should have a complete draft of your paper ready for review by your peers in class on December 1. The final paper, which will be due at the date and time scheduled for the final examination (December 3rd at 4:30), 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 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 e-mail or telephone if an emergency arises and you cannot attend class. I will not accept late assignments unless you have made previous arrangements, and neither journals nor the final paper will 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 offense 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.

**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 6** is the last day to drop a class with an automatic grade of “W” this term.

**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.

**Grade Appeal Process:**
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, visit the College of Liberal Arts website, cla.tamucc.edu/students/studentinfo.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean.

**Students with Disabilities and Veterans:**
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 CCH116. You can also visit their website at [http://disabilityservices.tamucc.edu/](http://disabilityservices.tamucc.edu/) and contact them by email at disability.services@tamucc.edu. 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, where classes could not be held on the campus of Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, this course would 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 and your related journal entry should be completed by the start of class on **Monday** of each week. You must bring a copy of all assigned readings to class. **Blackboard readings = BB**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W 8/27</td>
<td>Course Overview</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 9/1-9/3 | Writing/Otherness  
Roland Barthes, “From Work to Text,” and “The Death of the Author,” Michel Foucault, “What is an Author?” Barbara Johnson, “Writing” (BB), and Jacques Derrida “Différance” (BB)  
National Consciousness” and Booth, *The Craft of Research* (68-103) SHORT ESSAY# 2 DUE (10/20).


11/3-11/5 Ana Menéndez, *Adios, Happy Homeland!*

  Culture/Identity/Production


12/1 PEER REVIEW COMPLETE DRAFT OF FINAL PAPER

12/3 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
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*