

The University of Western Ontario  
Department of Modern Languages and Literatures

Introduction to Literary Theory  
CLC/GERMAN/SPANISH 2205G

**Tentative Outline**

Wednesday 10:30-11:30am and Friday 9:30-10:30am, UC 224

**Course Objectives**

In this course you will be introduced to many of the critical perspectives and theories of contemporary literary and cultural studies including Structuralism, Post-structuralism, Postmodernism, Feminism, Queer theory, Critical Race Theory, Postcolonialism, Marxism, and Psychoanalytic criticism. We will ask how literature and criticism engage other aspects of culture such as gender, race, class, and nation. We will spend the first few weeks of the semester discussing influential debates in contemporary literary and cultural studies regarding the ethical, epistemological and social value of literary texts: What does it mean to say “language speaks, “ not an author? What is ideology? Inscription? Subjectivity? Students will demonstrate their understanding of literary theory by critically engaging film (The Matrix) and literature by Kafka, Borges, Baudelaire, Faulkner, Fitzgerald, Beckett, Melville, Poe and William Gibson. Theorists include Kenneth Burke, Benjamin, Bakhtin, Barthes, Rey Chow, Cixous, Derrida, Deleuze, Foucault, Jameson, Žižek and others.

**Learning Outcomes:**

Understanding, capacity for argument, judgment and analysis will be fostered by essays and other assignments, and by in-class small-group and whole-class discussion. Communication skills will be imparted through in-class discussion and credit will be given for frequency and quality of contributions. Awareness of the limits of knowledge will be enhanced by exploring the legitimate differences of opinion and methodology within the field, and by requiring students to negotiate the formulation of their own opinions in-class with the terms and knowledge brought to discussions by other students and the instructor. The ability to argue and decide on complex issues will be fostered by essays, exams and in-class discussion. Time management skills will be fostered by the need to prepare properly for class and to deliver assignments in a timely manner. Academic responsibility will be developed by the need to source assignments accurately.

**Required Texts (Available in the University Bookstore)**

Literary Theory: An Anthology, Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan (eds).  
Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory, Peter Barry  
Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide, Lois Tyson  
The Great Gatsby, F. Scott Fitzgerald  
Course Reader

**Grade Breakdown**

Attendance: 20%  
Exams (2): 30% (Take home midterm essay and final exam)  
Short essay (1): 20% (4-5 pages)  
Term Paper: 30% (10 pages)

**Attendance:**

If you have perfect attendance or one absence, you will receive ten points. For each additional absence, one point will be deducted from your attendance grade. (Thus, for example, if you have five absences, you will get 6 points). If you have six absences or more, you will fail the entire course.

**Exams:** The midterm and final exam will test your acquaintance with and understanding of the assigned readings, as well as the authors, theoretical approaches and concepts discussed in class.

**Prerequisite:** None

**Anterequisite:** The former French 132a/b, French 3700F/G.

**Please Note:** You are responsible for ensuring that you have successfully completed all course prerequisites (or have special permission from your Dean to waive the prerequisite) and that you have not taken an antirequisite course. If you are not eligible for the course, you may be removed from it at any time, and it will be deleted from your record. In addition, you will receive no adjustment to your fees. These decisions cannot be appealed.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is a major academic offense (see Scholastic Offense Policy in the Western Academic Calendar). Plagiarism is the inclusion of someone else's verbatim or paraphrased text in one's own written work without immediate reference. Verbatim text must be surrounded by quotation marks or indented if it is longer than four lines. A reference must follow right after borrowed material (usually the author's name and page number). Without immediate reference to borrowed material, a list of sources at the end of a written assignment does not protect a writer against the possible charge of plagiarism. The University of Western Ontario uses a plagiarism checking site called Turnitin.com.

**Absenteeism:** Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments must apply to the Academic Counseling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. UWO's Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness (<https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm>). Downloadable Student Medical Certificate (SMC): <https://studentservices.uwo.ca> under the Medical Documentation heading