

**History of Theory and Criticism**

Prof. Mary Helen McMurrin

mmcmurr2@uwo.ca

Office AHB 3B22

Off hrs: Tuesdays 4-6 pm and by appt.

**English 2200F 001**

Tues. 7-10 pm KB K203

**Course Description**

This course introduces you to the most influential ideas in the arts beginning with Plato and concluding with Matthew Arnold in the Victorian period. We aim to understand crucial and contentious issues such as the charge that literature is a "lie"; the question of beauty; the role of the poet; the importance of literary "tradition" and more. We will analyze the arguments made by the authors and put these authors and their works in their social and historical contexts.

**Course Objectives**

A course on theory and criticism requires a different kind of reading: instead of reading for character, theme, and style, and setting works in historical contexts, we will be analyzing philosophical arguments. This requires breaking down and teasing out the authors' suppositions and implications. You will be asked to look closely at how claims are made and what purchase they have. We will do a number of exercises to help build your critical thinking skills.

**Required Texts**

*The Norton Anthology of Theory & Criticism*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Vincent B. Leitch et al, eds. New York: Norton, 2010.

**Requirements, Policies & Grading****Your final grade, as a whole, will be adversely affected by more than two absences per term.**

In order to do well, you must do all the reading. Any student who, after due warning via email or in person has missed a significant number of classes, may be asked not to take the final examination. You must have a passing grade on the term work in order to take the final. You must pass the term work and the final exam to pass the course. The [Western Academic Calendar states](#): "Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course, will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course (after due warning has been given). On the recommendation of the department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course". *This policy on the syllabus counts as your fair warning.*

Late work is unacceptable except in extenuating circumstances. No work will be accepted after the end of classes.

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, or assignments worth (either alone or in combination) 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation soon as possible. Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

**No laptop, tablet or cell phone use allowed in class.**

**Work:** All tests will be essay format. You will be graded on the quality of your ideas and expression.

Midterm test 1 (take home)	30%
Midterm test 2 (in class, open book)	35%
Final examination (non-cumulative)	35%

Plagiarism is a serious breach of academic honesty and punishment will be as severe as possible. Papers will be submitted using WebCT OWL and will go through the plagiarism checking software turnitin.com. Students are required to pass both term work and the final examination in order to receive credit for any course in the Department of English.

Students whose term and final exam grades average 50% or above, even though one of the two is a failure, shall receive a default grade of 48%. In order to take the final exam, however, you must have passed the course work.

### Schedule

Sept. 15	Introduction
Sept. 22	Plato, <i>The Republic</i> (read selections from Book III and Book X)
Sept. 29	Aristotle, <i>Poetics</i>
Oct. 6	Horace, <i>Ars Poetica</i> ; Sir Philip Sidney, <i>The Defence of Poesy</i>
Oct. 13	Sir Philip Sidney, <i>The Defence of Poesy</i> (cont'd) Discuss take-home test
Oct. 20	Longinus, from <i>On Sublimity</i> ; Joseph Addison, <i>Spectator</i> 412 [On the Sublime] Small group session: Interpreting the Sappho fragment in Longinus

### Take-home test due Oct. 21. Submit to OWL by 11:55 pm

Oct. 27	David Hume, "Of the Standard of Taste"
Nov. 3	Immanuel Kant, <i>The Critique of the Power of Judgement</i> Read pp 411-418; 442-444
Nov. 10	Friedrich Von Schiller, <i>On the Aesthetic Education of Man</i> ; William Wordsworth, Preface to <i>Lyrical Ballads</i>
Nov. 17	<b>Midterm test 2 (in class); no make-up tests</b>
Nov. 24	Charles Baudelaire, read all selections
Dec. 1	Friedrich Nietzsche, from <i>The Birth of Tragedy</i>
Dec. 8	Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, read all selections

Final Examination (during Exam Period December 11-22)