

## Department of English &amp; Writing Studies

**Contemporary Theory and Criticism**  
**English 2201G (001)**  
Winter 2018

**Instructor:** David Huebert  
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**Office hours:** Thursday, 1:30-3:30 pm  
AHB 2G28F

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**Office Hours:** Tuesdays, 1:30-3:30 pm  
IGAB 0N20E

**Course Location:** FNB (FIMS and Nursing  
Building) 1270

**Course Date/Time:** Tuesdays, 12:30 pm-1:30 pm;  
Thursdays, 11:30 am-1:30 pm

**Prerequisites:** At least 60% in 1.0 of English 1020E or 1022E or 1024E or 1035E or 1036E or both of English 1027F/G and 1028F/G or permission of the Department. Recommended prerequisite: English 2200F/G: History of Theory and Criticism.

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

### Course Description

Throughout the twentieth century, theory became a crucial complement to the study of literature—so much so that today literature has begun to look naked without it. Building on the historical backdrop of English 2200F/G, this course gives students the tools to become successful and considerate navigators of contemporary literary theory. We will work through many major movements in modern theory, including feminism and gender theory, psychoanalysis, queer theory, critical race theory, animal studies, posthumanism, ecocriticism, postcolonialism, and Indigenous thought. Students are encouraged to get creative in their engagements with theory, and to learn that theory can be rewarding and pleasurable. If you get comfortable enough to apply theory to literary texts, you are likely to see rewards in your other English courses.

### **Learning Objectives:**

After successfully completing this course, students will be able to:

- Engage thoughtfully with the major schools of contemporary literary theory including feminism, gender studies, psychoanalysis, queer theory, animal studies, posthumanism, ecocriticism, postcolonialism, and Indigenous thought;
- Define a wide range of key terms from the theoretical schools studied;
- Apply these theories to literary and cultural texts;
- Collaborate with colleagues through composition workshops and in-class discussion;
- Orally present critical insights in front of an audience of peers;
- Propose, conceive, and produce a coherent and carefully argued research essay, incorporating feedback from instructor.

Course Materials

**Primary Texts** (available at campus bookstore):

*The Norton Anthology of Criticism and Theory*, second edition. Ed. Vincent B. Leitch.  
*The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, fifth edition.

**Digital Readings** (distributed by email):

Audre Lorde: “The Master’s Tools will Never Dismantle the Master’s House”  
 Andrea Smith and Audra Simpson: “Introduction”  
 Lee Maracle: “Oratory, Coming to Theory”  
 Ursula Heise: “The Hitchhiker’s Guide to Ecocriticism”  
 John Berger: “Why Look at Animals”  
 Bellamy, Szeman, and Lemenager: “When Energy is the Focus.”  
 Dipesh Chakrabarty: “The Climate of History: Four Theses”

Methods of Evaluation

Attendance and Participation:	10%
Reflection Paper:	15%
Midterm:	15%
Final Essay Proposal and Annotated Bibliography:	5%
Final Essay:	20%
Final Exam:	35%

A student must receive a passing grade for both term work and the final examination in order to receive a passing grade for the course. This applies to all courses in all programs offered by the department. 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%. **Please note:** The department of English & Writing Studies does not release final grades. All undergraduate grade reports will be available online from the Office of the Registrar.

Students are fully responsible for looking at and being familiar with the information posted on the department website at <http://www.uwo.ca/english/undergraduate/Student%20Information.html>.

**Schedule of Required Readings and Assignments:**

Readings marked with an asterisk (\*) will be distributed online; all other readings are from the *Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*.

Date	Text	Topic	Assignment
Jan 9		Introduction & syllabus review.	
Jan 11	Ferdinand de Saussure: “Course in General Linguistics”	Semiotics	
Jan 16	Roland Barthes: “Death of the Author”	New Criticism	
Jan 18	Michel Foucault: “What is an Author?”	Poststructuralism I	
Jan 23	Jacques Derrida, “Plato’s Pharmacy”	Poststructuralism II	
Jan 25	Derrida, “Plato’s Pharmacy,” Continued	Poststructuralism III	
Jan 30	Sigmund Freud: “The Uncanny”	Psychoanalysis	

<b>Feb 1</b>		Key terms review & composition workshop	
<b>Feb 6</b>	Hélène Cixous: "Laugh of the Medusa"	Feminism & Gender Theory	<b>Reflection Paper</b>
<b>Feb 8</b>	*Audre Lorde: "The Master's Tools"	Feminism & Gender Theory II	
<b>Feb 13</b>	Judith Butler: "Gender Trouble"	Feminism & Gender Theory III	
<b>Feb 15</b>			<b>Midterm</b>
<b>Feb 19-23</b>	<b>Reading Week</b>		
<b>Feb 27</b>	Langston Hughes: "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain"	Critical Race Theory	
<b>Mar 1</b>	Chinua Achebe: "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's <i>Heart of Darkness</i> ."	Critical Race Theory II	
<b>Mar 6</b>	Frantz Fanon: "The Wretched of the Earth"	Postcolonialism	
<b>Mar 8</b>	*Andrea Smith and Audra Simpson: "Introduction" *Lee Maracle: "Oratory, Coming to Theory"	Indigenous Studies	
<b>Mar 13</b>		Key terms review & composition workshop	
<b>Mar 15</b>	Film: Slavov Zizek, <i>The Pervert's Guide to Ideology</i> (in-class screening)	Ideology / Marxist Theory	
<b>Mar 20</b>	Jean Baudrillard: "The Precession of Simulacra"	Postmodernism	<b>Final essay proposal and annotated bibliography</b>
<b>Mar 22</b>	*Ursula Heise: "The Hitchhiker's Guide to Ecocriticism"	Ecocriticism	
<b>Mar 27</b>	*John Berger, "Why Look at Animals"	Animal Studies	
<b>Mar 29</b>	N. Katherine Hayles: "How We Became Posthuman"	Posthumanism	
<b>Apr 3</b>	*Bellamy, Szeman, and Lemenager: "When Energy is the Focus"	Petrocultures	
<b>Apr 5</b>	*Dipesh Chakrabarty: "The Climate of History: Four Theses"	The Anthropocene—What Remains?	
<b>Apr 10</b>		Exam Review	<b>Final Essay</b>

### Assignments

\*All written assignments must be submitted using MLA format. Please visit my office hours if you have questions about using MLA.

#### **Reflection Paper (1000 words):**

Take one of the theory texts we've looked at and use it as a frame to analyze a cultural production of your choice (a film, TV Show, song, museum exhibit, book, artwork, YouTube video, etc.). If you like, you can write this in the form of a review, but it is essential that you establish your knowledge of theoretical readings from this course as a sustained frame. Examples: a psychoanalytic reading of Donald Trump's campaign rhetoric, a new critical interpretation of Led Zeppelin lyrics, a postmodernist reading of *Westworld*.

**Final Essay Proposal and Annotated Bibliography (300 words):** Write a paragraph clearly articulating your thesis, stating why that thesis is significant, and outlining the major movements of your planned argument. The thesis should be a debatable claim—something someone else might take issue with, something that is not immediately obvious. The second half of the assignment is to list, in proper MLA format, 3-5 secondary sources you will be drawing on to support your essay's argument.

**Final Essay (2000 words):** The final essay should focus on two of the course's primary texts and advance a coherent and debatable thesis with support from secondary sources. A good approach would be to create an argument between two theorists on a specific subject of your choice. The essay should cite 3-5 secondary sources in proper MLA format. A good essay moves, with each paragraph, through a more detailed and nuanced iteration of its thesis.

**Midterm and Final Examinations:** Both examinations will follow a simple format. Your first task will be to define several of the key terms discussed in detail in class. Your second task will be to answer essay questions with creative responses and arguments, using textual evidence from course readings. The point of an examination in the arts and humanities is to show, in as little space as possible, the breadth of your knowledge. You are expected to write legibly and to use complete, coherent sentences. Do your best to not pad your answers—cut to the chase.

### Course Policies

#### **Attendance and Participation**

I hope to make this class a mutual conversation in which we learn together, but I need your help. Regular attendance, preparation, and participation is crucial for the success of this class. We will have regular in-depth conversations, which requires you to have attentively read the assigned material, ideally annotating and writing your own responses. That said, this will be a generous portion of your grade; if you come to class regularly and participate in discussion you will receive close to full marks. If you have a strong preference against oral contribution, please visit my office hours and we will arrange for an alternate form of participation.

#### **Technology and Classroom Etiquette**

On the first day, we will have a conversation about how to negotiate technology and other issues to create the most productive learning environment for all of us. Come to class ready to think critically about the infiltration of technology into our everyday lives.

#### **Email Policy**

On business days, I will answer emails within 24 hours of receipt. I may not respond on weekends and holidays, but can guarantee a prompt response when classes are back in session. Please remember that emails are a form of professional workplace communication.

### Accommodations

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. The UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and further information regarding this policy can be found at [http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/accommodation\\_medical.pdf](http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf).

### **Downloadable Student Medical Certificate (SMC):**

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf)

Where the missed component comprises less than 10% of their final grade, students must make arrangements to make up the assignment with the instructor at least two weeks before the final essay is due.

### Academic Offences

In this course, scholastic offences will be handled with seriousness. If you have any questions at any time as to whether what you are doing might risk academic dishonesty, please write me or come see me. All UWO students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following website:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf).

### **Plagiarism:**

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence.

### **Plagiarism Checking:**

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Chair of Undergraduate Studies. Proven cases of plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for the assignment. Subsequent offences will result in failure for the course.

### Support Services

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Centre <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

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.