

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND WRITING STUDIES  
UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO

ENGLISH 2200F  
FALL 2020

**TENTATIVE**

Professor Jan Plug

**Mode of Delivery**

The course will combine asynchronous and synchronous activities. English translation: there will be content that you can access yourself, at times you choose. This will include, eg., recorded lectures, additional written lecture material, perhaps some PowerPoint slides, and so forth. Then, once a week for one hour, I will meet with you over Zoom. Depending upon the size of the class, I might divide you into groups and meet with each group every other week, for example. These meetings will give us the chance to discuss the course content, for you to ask questions directly, etc.

And I'll offer lots and lots of opportunities for virtual office hours, probably including drop-in sessions where you can stop by and talk about the course.

**Course Description**

This course offers an introduction to some of the most influential ideas in and about literature and the arts from Plato to the turn of the twentieth century.

Wait, let me interrupt that: this sounds dry. And the readings might seem that at times. The course won't be, however, and you'll find your way into the readings, too. What the course does is allow us to take a step back and ask fundamental questions about literature and the arts, as well as about what we are doing when we study them. To quote the German Romantic poetic Friedrich Hölderlin, "Wozu Dichter in dürftiger Zeit?" ("What are poets for in wretched times"—a question for today!).

So, we'll ask what literature is for. Why does it matter? Why does studying it matter? What is the nature of truth in literature? What is beauty? How are such central concepts arrived at? What are their implications?

While the main focus of the course will be on figures, again, from Plato to about Nietzsche, we will also introduce some contemporary readings that take these up, extend them, and often put them into question. In particular, we'll read theory that challenges some of the assumptions of these earlier texts and their dismissal, exclusion, or reduction of class, race, and gender.

**Course Objectives**

- To learn to analyze arguments about literature and art.
- To develop the critical skills to unpack authors' biases, presuppositions, and the implications of their arguments, how claims are made, and what purchase they have.
- For you to discover something completely unexpected—for you and for me—about literature, how we approach it, what it means, how it means, etc. This is a lofty goal, but I think we should be open to it.

**Required Text**

*The Norton Anthology of Theory & Criticism*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Vincent B. Leitch et al, eds. **Available through the bookstore. Contact them early: they will mail the book.**

**PLAGIARISM**

(See 2014 Western Calendar, pp. 19-21) Plagiarism (the unacknowledged use of another person's work) is one of the most serious academic offences, since it involves fraud and misrepresentation. In plagiarizing, one is in effect claiming another person's words or ideas or data as one's own work, and thus misrepresenting material subject to academic evaluation. It is necessary, therefore, that plagiarism carry appropriate penalties. These are within the discretion of the Chair of Undergraduate Studies, but may include failure of a course or a grade of zero on an assignment, without the privilege of resubmitting it.

For more information on plagiarism, visit the Department's website:  
<http://www.uwo.ca/english/undergraduate/info%20for%20students.html#plagiarism>

All required papers are to be submitted 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>).

**VERY PROVISIONAL SCHEDULE OF CLASSES  
 THAT I WILL ABSOLUTELY BE REVISING**

Unless otherwise noted, the readings are from the *Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. I encourage you also to read the introductions to the texts and authors in the anthology.

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**Week 1: Introduction**

Plato, from the *Republic*, books III, VII

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**Week 2: Plato, cont'd**

Aristotle

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**Week 3: Sidney, from *Defence of Poesy***

Hume, *Of the Standard of Taste*

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**Week 4: Hume, cont'd; Kant, from *Critique of Judgment*;**

Meg Armstrong, “The Effects of Blackness”; Bourdieu, from *Distinction* (both readings to be provided)

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**Week 5:** Mary Wollstonecraft, from *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*

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**Week 6:** W.E.B. DuBois, from *The Souls of Black Folk* and “Criteria of Negro Art”

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**Week 7:** Wordsworth, Preface to the Lyrical Ballads; Coleridge, from *Biographia*

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**Week 8:** Arnold, “The Function of Criticism at the Present Time”; from *Culture and Anarchy*

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**Week 9:** Wilde, Preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*; from *The Decay of Lying*, from *The Artist as Critic*.

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**Week 10:** Nietzsche, *On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense*; from *The Birth of Tragedy*

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**Week 11:** Marx and Engels, all selections; Marxism and feminism;

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