

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND WRITING STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO**

**ENGLISH 2201G
WINTER 2021**

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Course Structure

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 is probably my favourite course to teach. And it's the one in which I most often see students say, "oh ...": a switch flips, a light goes on, and they see things differently. That might happen when we're talking about Ferdinand de Saussure and whether or not one can think without or before language. Or it might happen when we discuss "hailing," the knock at the door, the "hey, you," shouted in the street and how we react to it.

The course will examine a number of "schools" or trends in twentieth-century theory: eg., structuralism and deconstruction; psychoanalysis, feminism, and gender theory; cultural and materialist thinking about art and media; and postcolonial and critical race theory.

Most of all, the aim of the course is to challenge our assumptions: about the nature of language and its relationship to the world, as well as its use in literature; about the subject, the self, the I, and how identity is formed; about the relations between subjects, the impact upon them of social and political structures, power; about how literature and art help us think through all of these and the extent to which they engage in those structures of power or perhaps offer the hope of resistance to them

Course Objectives

- To acquire knowledge of some key schools of theory in the twentieth century.
- To develop the ability to read texts critically, unpacking their assumptions and presuppositions.
- To have the theory we read inform our understanding of literature, media, culture, politics, and history.

Required Text

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

Resources

Undergraduate Introduction to Critical Theory (Dino F. Felluga, Purdue University)

<http://www.purdue.edu/guidetotheory>

The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism. Ed. Michael Groden and Martin Kreiswirth. <http://www.lib.uwo.ca/> search in Weldon Library catalogue for title and click “connect to internet resource”

Literary Sources–Theory (Jack Lynch, Rutgers University)

<http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/Lit/theory.html>