

Department of English & Writing Studies
Contemporary Theory and Criticism
English 2201G (001)
Winter 2023

NOTE: THIS IS A DRAFT SYLLABUS AND IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Instructor: Professor Jan Plug
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Antirequisites: English 2236F/G, the former English 2210F/G.

Prerequisites: At least 60% in 1.0 of English 1020-1999 or permission of the Department.

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. *It is students' responsibility to ensure that they have the proper requisites.*

Course Description

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.

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.

Course Materials

Required Text:

The Norton Anthology of Theory & Criticism. 3rd ed. Vincent B. Leitch et al, eds. **Available through the bookstore. Contact them early: they will mail you the book or you can pick it up on campus.**

Methods of Evaluation

See the Assignments tab on the OWL site for more information about these assignments.

Response paper:	10%
Short essay:	20%
Final Essay:	30%
Participation:	10%
Final Exam:	30%

The grading scheme will not change because of changes to the mode of delivery of the course (i.e., if we switch to in-person classes or remain online).

Late Policy: Work submitted late—and without prior arrangement, including through self-reported absences—will be penalized 2%/day. Please speak with me if you are submitting any work a week or more late.

Intellectual Property/Copyright

All materials posted for the course are my intellectual property. Students are not to post any materials to any other websites or platforms and may not use the lecture recording or materials for any other purpose without my consent. Similarly, neither our discussion sections nor recorded lectures are to be recorded.

Accommodation

If you have a file with SAS and require accommodation, please contact me.

For Western University policy on Consideration for Student Absence, see [Policy on Academic Consideration for Student Absences - Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs](#)

and for the Student Medical Certificate (SMC), see:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf.

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the [Western Multicultural Calendar](#).

Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at 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.

Timetable

Most 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. Those readings not included in the Norton are indicated by the following mark: **. Links to the readings will be provided in OWL.

Week 1: Introduction; Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*.

Week 2: Barthes, “Death of the Author”; Barthes, “Photography and Electoral Appeal” (from *Mythologies*); Lévi-Strauss, from *Tristes Tropiques*.

Week 3: Derrida, “Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences”**;
Derrida, from *Of Grammatology***

Week 4: Freud, from *The Interpretation of Dreams*; Freud, “The Uncanny” (or “Mourning and Melancholia”)

Week 5: Freud, cont'd; Lacan, "The Mirror Stage"

Week 6: Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility"

Week 7: Reading Week (No Class)

Week 8: Foucault, from *Discipline and Punish*; Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses"

Week 9: Fanon, from *The Wretched of the Earth*; Said, from *Orientalism* and from *Culture and Imperialism*

Week 10: Foucault, from *The History of Sexuality*; Wittig, "One is Not Born a Woman"

Week 11: Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema"; Chow, from *Sentimental Fabulations*

Week 12: Butler, from *Gender Trouble*; Sedgwick, from *Between Men*

Week 13: Gates, "Talking Black"; from *Critical Race Theory*, ed. Delgado and Stefancic**
