

Department of English & Writing Studies

English 2200F (001)

History of Literary Theory and Criticism

Fall 2026

Instructor: Brian Diemert

Antirequisite(s): English 2235A/B.

Prerequisite(s): 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.

Course Description and Objectives

This course aims to provide students with a solid introduction to some of the key issues and debates surrounding thinking about the arts, particularly literature, from Plato up to the mid-twentieth century. Thus, while the course readings trace something of a historical trajectory, the course also aims to come to an understanding of some of the most crucial and contentious issues throughout and across the tradition: the charge that literature is a "lie"; the question of beauty; the role of the author; gender; and so forth.

Reading literary theory is a different experience from that of reading literature and can be challenging. Students in this course will enhance their abilities to read critically, think critically, and write proficiently.

Successful students will discover some of the reasons to study literature and its value. Ancient arguments about representation, cultural production, politics, civility, and morality have modern day applications that students will explore in discussion and assignments. Students will continue to develop and use the vocabulary of literary analysis in written work that uses clear and grammatically correct prose

Objectives:

By the end of the course, successful students will be able to:

- By the end of this course, students will recognize continuity in literary debate.
- Students will enhance their writing skills.
- Students will discover the value of literary study as it has been explained through history.
- Students will discover various methodologies that may be used in the discussion of literary texts.
- Students will expand their reading of literary material beyond the genres of fiction, poetry, and drama.

Course Materials (required)

Leitch, V., et. al., eds. The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism (Norton) (\$164.50 but newest edition is not required)

Culler, Jonathan. Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction (Oxford) (\$13.50 or so)

Methods of Evaluation

The grade for the course will be arrived at as follows:

Four Reflections 10% (Sept. 25, Oct. 23, Nov. 13, Dec. 4)

Test 20% (documentation is required for absences)

Essay 30%

Final 40%

100%

Essays should be submitted in class. I prefer hard-copies for all submitted assignments. Electronically submitted work on the due date is considered “on time”, but I will only read and mark hard copies. The penalty for late essays is 2 marks per working day.

Reflections are to be about 200-250 words (certainly not more than a page) and are to reflect your thinking about the course, issues, readings, etc. Reflections are worth 2.5% a piece. Unsubmitted reflections receive a mark of 0. If you have documentation that accounts for unsubmitted material, you will not submit a reflection. The remain reflections will be worth slightly more.

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

Statements

Academic Consideration

Students may request academic consideration in cases of extenuating circumstances – that is, personal circumstances beyond the student’s control that have a **substantial but temporary** impact on the student’s ability to meet essential academic requirements.

1. Requests for academic consideration are made to the Academic Advising office of the student’s Faculty of Registration.
2. Requests for academic consideration include the following components:
 - a. Self-attestation signed by the student;
 - b. Indication of the course(s) and assessment(s) relevant to the request;
 - c. Supporting documentation as relevant.

Requests without supporting documentation are **limited to one per term per course**.

Instructors may designate one assignment or assessment as exempt from this allowance. In this course, requests for academic consideration pertaining to the term test **must** be accompanied by supporting documentation.

Assignments with flexible deadlines and any term work that does not count towards the course grade are **not** eligible for additional consideration.

Documentation for medical illness, when required, includes the completion of a [Western Student Medical Certificate \(SMC\)](#) or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation, by a health care practitioner.

Requests linked to examinations scheduled by the Office of the Registrar during official examination periods as well as practice laboratory and performance tests typically scheduled in the last week of term **always** require formal supporting documentation.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory in all classes and tutorials. In cases of excessive absenteeism (e.g. more than 9 unexcused hours for a half course, 18 for a full course), which are not accounted for by either academic consideration or accommodation, students may be debarred from taking the final examination, and will receive an official warning to this effect by or before the course drop date (see Senate policy). In classes with or without final exams, students who do not attend class will receive 0% for course participation grades. Unless other policies dictate a different set of penalties in specific English and Writing Studies programs, this will apply to all department programs.

Gender-Based and Sexual Violence

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website: <https://www.uwo.ca/health/gbsv/index.html>.

To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Intellectual Property/Copyright

All instructor-written materials (e.g. PowerPoints, lecture notes, oral lectures) for this course are created solely for students' personal use within the course, and remain the instructor's intellectual property. Further reproduction, fixation, distribution, transmission, dissemination, communication, or any other uses, without securing the consent of the copyright owner (the course instructor) may be an infringement of copyright. You may not distribute, email, or otherwise communicate these materials to any other person. These limitations extend to recording, photographing, or sharing lectures (online or in-person) and lecture material without permission. Posting the instructor's content from this course to online course sharing sites like OneClass or Course Hero without permission is both an infringement of intellectual property law

and a violation of academic integrity guidelines. The instructor will pass these cases on to the Western University Ombudsperson or their Department Chair as appropriate.

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.

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/>

Academic Support & Engagement <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.

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence

-- Using generative AI, including ChatGPT or other AI writing assistants for graded course assessments is a scholastic offence which may be subject to the penalties outlined in the academic calendar. When you use AI to do your work, you are submitting work for academic credit that is not your own. **Consequently, the use of AI is not permitted in this course.**

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 https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholoff.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.

Schedule of Classes and Assignments

History of Literary Theory and Criticism

Readings and Assignments (N.B. --This schedule is **tentative** and will have small handouts incorporated into it-- * indicates a Reflection piece is due on the Thursday of that week)

Week of

Sept. 10 Introduction

15 Plato, Republic, Book 10, Ion

22 Culler, chapters 1 and 2; Aristotle, Poetics

29* Dante, "Letter"; Sidney, An Apology for Poetry; Oct. 1 Pope, "Essay on Criticism"

6 Johnson, The Rambler, No. 4; Wordsworth, "Preface to Lyrical Ballads"

Oct. 13 **fall reading week—no classes**

20 Arnold, "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time"; Culler chapter 3

27 **Term Test Oct 27**; Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent"

Nov. 3* Wimsatt and Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy"; Culler, chapters 5 and 6

10 Freud, "chapter VI: Dream-Work"; Frye "The Archetypes of Literature"; Culler, chapter 8

17* Marx, selections in anthology (tba); Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"

24 Culler, chapter 6; Woolf; de Beauvoir; **ESSAY DUE—Nov. 26**

Dec. 1 Du Bois, from Chapter 1 (p. 845) ; Gates or Morrison; Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lying..."

Dec. 8* Last class.