

**ENG 9003a Contemporary Theory in Literary and Cultural Studies**  
**Fall 2015**

**Allan Pero**

**AH 3G22**

**Email:** [apero@uwo.ca](mailto:apero@uwo.ca)

**Phone:** 519-661-2111 x 85816

**Class Times:** Thursdays 12:30-3:30 PM

**Office Hours:** Wednesdays 1:00-3:30; Thursdays 11:00-12:00 PM, or by appointment.

**Course Description**

This course will provide a survey of contemporary theory and its precursors in nineteenth and twentieth-century thought. It will focus on several distinct though often related critical schools or movements, including Structuralism, Marxism, Psychoanalysis, Post-Structuralism, Feminism, New Historicism, Queer Studies, Cultural Studies, Post-Colonial Theory, and Eco-Criticism. The readings for the course have been chosen to introduce some of the terms and concepts that have become critical touchstones for many scholars in literary and cultural studies, while the assignments will provide students with the opportunity to study theory as an object of analysis in its own right, and to apply its insights to a core group of literary texts and cultural texts. In so doing, we hope to question the assumed distinctions between "primary" and "secondary" literature: to what extent, we will ask, can theory be read as literature, and literature as theory?

The course assumes no specialized knowledge of the field. For some students, it will serve as an introduction to the significant influence that theory has had on the ways in which we read and interpret literature and culture, for others it will be a chance to renew and deepen their knowledge of particular critics and approaches. Throughout, our goal will be not only to provide students with some of the basic methodological tools that they will need in graduate studies, but to foster a spirit of self-reflexive inquiry into what we read and how we read it.

**Course Text:**

Rivkin, Julie and Ryan, Michael (eds.) *Literary Theory: An Anthology* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition)

Additional readings will be available in Leanne Trask's office (AH 2G02B)

**Method of Evaluation:**

**Seminar Presentation (30-40 minutes) - (40%)**

The seminar presentation will consist of a broader critique, assessment, or analysis of the issues that emerge from the readings that week. You should think of the seminar as a kind of lecture in which you are attempting to teach the rest of us something about the theory, as well as

exploring your own position on it. Further, you should be working toward developing useful or provocative questions that will help lead the subsequent class discussion.

### **Respondent to the Seminar - (10%)**

The seminar presenter is not alone in teasing out useful lines of discussion; the respondent's role is to take up some of the issues or problematics raised by the presenter and work them in turn into fruitful questions that will be addressed not only to the presenter, but to the class as a whole.

*The purpose of these exercises is to encourage class discussion; in larger terms, it is also meant to prompt you to start thinking like teachers - to take up issues and make them the basis of exciting and dynamic debate and conversation.*

### **Major Research Paper - (4000-5000 words) (40%)**

The research paper is to give you the opportunity to synthesize in more depth one or more aspects of the theory opened up by the course material. The topic is open, but should be determined in consultation with me. You may wish to expand upon an argument you offered in your seminar; that's fine, but you are expected to develop the argument in substantive ways. That is, the paper should demonstrate a serious level of engagement with the thought and scholarship which helps you push your insight in interesting, new directions. Feel free to come and consult me about anything you're puzzling over - let it be a case of "analysis terminable" rather than "interminable."

### **1 Response Paper - (500 words) (10%)**

The response paper is open: you may write a response to the any of the readings or concepts. They are meant to give you the chance to be playful and/or creative with the theory, work out a position on a text or point that haunts you like a "symptom," or work toward a thesis for your major paper. Have fun with it - or, at least, enjoy - your symptom!

### **Statement on 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 the following Web site:

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

### **Class Schedule:**

September 10

**Introduction:** (Nietzsche handout in class—"On Truth and Lies in a Non-Moral Sense")

September 17:

**Formalisms:** Shlovsky, "Art as Technique"; Brooks "The Language of Paradox"; Frye "Archetypes of Literature"

September 24:

**Structuralism/Linguistic Turn:** Saussure, "Course in General Linguistics," Jakobson, "Two Aspects of Language"; Roland Barthes, "Mythologies"; Foucault, "The Archaeology of Knowledge"

October 1:

**Deconstruction:** Derrida, "Différance"; Paul de Man, "Semiology and Rhetoric," Derrida, "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences"

October 8:

**Psychoanalysis:** Freud, "The Interpretation of Dreams," "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," "The Uncanny"; Lacan, "The Mirror Stage," "The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious"  
**(RESPONSE PAPER DUE)**

October 15:

**Feminisms:** Woolf, "A Room of One's Own"; Rubin, "The Traffic in Women"; Gilbert and Gubar, "The Madwoman in the Attic"; Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema"

October 22:

**Gender Studies:** Foucault, "The History of Sexuality"; Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution"; Sedgwick, "Epistemology of the Closet"; Halberstam, "Female Masculinity"

October 29: **FALL BREAK—NO CLASS!**

November 5:

**Marxism and Cultural Materialism/Theory:** Marx, "Grundrisse," "The German Ideology," "Wage Labour and Capital," "Capital"; Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses"; Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*; Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Adorno and Horkheimer, "The Culture Industry"

November 12:

**Historicisms:** Williams, "The Country and the City"; Foucault, "Discipline and Punish"; Armstrong, "Some Call it Fiction"; Greenblatt, "Shakespeare and the Exorcists"

November 19: **NO CLASS!**

November 26:

**Postmodernism and Culture:** Lyotard, "The Postmodern Condition"; Baudrillard, "Simulations and Simulacra"; Deleuze and Guattari, "A Thousand Plateaus"; de Certeau, "The Practice of Everyday Life"; Hebdige, "Subculture: The Meaning of Style"

December 3:

**Postcolonial and Transnational Studies:** Said, "Jane Austen and Empire," Bhabha, "Signs Taken for Wonders"; Loomba, "Situating Colonial and Postcolonial Studies"

December 10:

**Eco-Criticism:** Glotfelty, "Literary Studies in an Age of Environmental Crisis"; Plumwood, "Nature, Self, and Gender" (**MAJOR RESEARCH PAPER DUE ONE WEEK AFTER COURSE ENDS**)