

ENGL 3600-090
FALL 2022

INSTRUCTOR: Aaron Beasley
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INTRODUCTION TO CRITICAL THEORY

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Introduction to the longstanding debate about literature's status and value and about the nature of reading and interpretation, with a survey of some of the most seminal approaches to these questions. Strongly recommended as preparation of advanced theory courses.

REQUIRED TEXTS & MATERIALS:

- Zoom access
- *The Norton Anthology of Theory & Criticism: Third Edition* (ed. Leitch)
- other readings available in PDF on Canvas

ASSIGNMENTS:

Brief (asynchronous) video lectures will accompany each week's readings. These lectures offer a supplement to (*not* a replacement for) completing the assigned reading. **Note:** *The readings for this course are primary theory texts. They will often stretch the limits of your comprehensibility. Make sure that you read every assigned page of each week's reading, even if you do not fully understand or retain it all. The attempt is what's important.*

Grading: Weekly Responses (40%), one Brief Presentation (15%), one Critical Paper (25%), and a Final Exam (20%).

Each week, a Weekly Response is due at midnight every Friday, no exceptions. After your initial Weekly Response, you will also respond to a Response by one of your classmates no later than midnight on Sunday. A general follow-up response by the instructor will follow each week's reading and responses.

Students will sign up to one 10-15 minute verbal Presentation recorded via Zoom and uploaded to the Canvas page. The presentation will elaborate on their thoughts from the readings of a given week (in addition to the Weekly Response for that week).

A Critical Paper of 8-10 pages in length may be submitted at any time, but it is due *at the latest* by midnight on Thursday 12/8.

An open-book Final exam will each be given a period of 24 hours for completion, from noon on 12/12 until noon on 12/13.

All work must be submitted through the appropriate Canvas link. Any issues with meeting assignment deadlines need to be discussed with the instructor *before* the deadline. No late work will be accepted without previously made arrangements.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Course accommodations will be considered on an individual basis and may require documentation. Please contact the instructor as soon as possible (via email) to request accommodations of any kind.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

The University's plagiarism policy is strictly enforced. According to the Student Code, plagiarism is defined as "the unacknowledged use or incorporation of any other person's work in, or as the basis for one's own work offered for academic consideration or credit..." Examples of plagiarism include "representing as one's own, without attribution, any other person's words, phrasing, ideas, sequence of ideas, information or any other mode or content of expression." Disciplinary action for plagiarizing papers or exams ranges from a failing grade on the assignment or in the course, to suspension or expulsion from the University.

WEEK READINGS

- 8/22 PLATO – from *Ion*; from *The Republic*; from *Phaedrus* pp. 43-95
AQUINAS – from *Summa Theologica* pp. 188-194
- 8/29 HEGEL – from *Phenomenology of Mind* and *Lectures on Fine Art* pp. 545-563
MARX – from *Grundrisse*, from "Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*" pp. 652-55; 665-667
- 9/5 NIETZSCHE – "On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense" pp. 737-40; 752-62
MALLARMÉ – "Crisis in Poetry" (pdf on Canvas)
- 9/12 FREUD – from *The Interpretation of Dreams*, from "The Uncanny" pp. 783-816
- 9/19 SAUSSURE – from *Course in General Linguistics* pp. 820-40
JAKOBSON – from *Linguistics and Poetics*, from "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances" pp. 1064-78
- 9/26 LACAN – "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I"; from "The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious" pp. 1105-29

10/3 SARTRE – from *What is Literature?* (pdf on Canvas)
FANON – from *Black Skin, White Masks*, from *The Wretched of the Earth* pp. 1351-67

10/10 FALL BREAK (read something fun, or that alters your perspective!)

10/17 BLANCHOT – “From Dread to Language” (pdf on Canvas)
BATAILLE – from *Literature & Evil*; “Evil in Platonism & Sadism” (pdfs on Canvas)

10/24 BEAUVOIR – from *The Second Sex* pp. 1211-21
CIXOUS – “The Laugh of the Medusa” pp. 1865-86

10/31 DERRIDA – from *Dissemination*, from *The Animal That Therefore I am*, pp. 1602-36;
1645-54

11/7 SPIVAK – from *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* pp. 1997-2012
BHABHA – “The Commitment to Theory” pp. 2150-71

11/14 KRISTEVA – from *Revolution in Poetic Language* pp. 1939-52
BARTHES – “The Death of the Author” pp. 1262-66; 1268-72

11/21 SONTAG – “Against Interpretation” pp. 1717-30

11/28 BUTLER – from *Gender Trouble* pp. 2372-2388
AGAMBEN – from *Homo Sacer* pp. 1966-68; 1972-83

12/5 HAYLES – “How We Read: Close, Hyper, Machine” pp. 2071-92

CRITICAL PAPER due by midnight 12/8

12/12 FINAL EXAM due by noon 12/13