

English 3600-001 Introduction to Critical Theory

Professor Kathryn Bond Stockton

LNCO 3515

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Office hours: Tu 12:10-1:10pm

Th 3:45-4:45pm

Zoom or other office hours by appointment

TuTh 2:00-3:20pm

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BU C 305

This is a three-credit course.

You Shall Read (Required texts)

Virginia Woolf, Orlando

Wilkie Collins, The Moonstone (The Modern Library Classics edition)

Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison (trans. Alan Sheridan)

Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality, Volume I (trans. Robert Hurley)

Roland Barthes, Camera Lucida (trans. Richard Howard)

You can find these books via Bookshelf on our Canvas—arranged through the U's Campus Bookstore.

Many other essays and articles will surround these texts.

Lively Enigmas (Course Description)

“Why not simply say what one means and leave it? . . . ‘The sky is blue,’ he said, ‘the grass is green.’ Looking up, he saw that, on the contrary, the sky is like the veils which a thousand Madonnas have let fall from their hair; and the grass fleets and darkens like a flight of girls fleeing the embraces of hairy satyrs from enchanted woods. ‘Upon my word,’ he said (for he had fallen into the bad habit of speaking aloud), ‘I don’t see that one’s more true than another. Both are utterly false.’” —Virginia Woolf, Orlando

“not to devour, to gobble, but to graze, to browse scrupulously, to rediscover . . .”

—Roland Barthes, The Pleasure of the Text

“For me the noise of Time is not sad . . . I recall that at first photographic implements were related to techniques of cabinetmaking and the machinery of precision: cameras, in short, were clocks for seeing, and perhaps in me someone very old still hears in the photographic mechanism the living sound of the wood.” —Roland Barthes, Camera Lucida

You don’t read Dickens all day long. You read some Dickens, you watch TV; you return to Dickens, you read a blog; you watch Pulp Fiction or Babette’s Feast; then, circling back to Dickens, you read a menu, several magazines, and a note on the fridge.

You are immersed in a network of signs—“the defiles,” some would say, of signification. You’re embroiled in what it means to trap meaning in language; snared by what it means for the body’s richness to be tamed by signs; held by what it means to recognize trouble between the acoustic image that you hear and the concept you apply.

You already know these formulations; you likely do not know that you know them. You also (don’t) know that you may be knotted, already tied up, in the plot lines of pre-determined narratives. Before you speak, you are written, some would say. What, then, becomes of self-expression?

Fortunately, we’re more supple than our bind. The narratives we’ll describe—luckily, perhaps—may never cease to fail. For when we speak or write, we are bound to slipping tropes, which are like ropes or threads we can pull. Gwendolyn Brooks (an American poet) puts it this way: “Ply the slipping string with feathery sorcery. The music that they wrote bewitch, bewilder.”

In studying English literature, you will learn canniness in the face of language. You will learn why pleasure may feed on difficulty, why you want your texts to be denser, richer than Stephen King or this month’s *Vogue*. In fact, in studying literature, you may want what Roland Barthes has called “the language lined with flesh, a text where we can hear the grain of the throat, the patina of consonants, the voluptuousness of vowels, a whole carnal stereophony . . . [as] delicately granular and vibrant as an animal’s muzzle.”

Clear Objectives (Learning Outcomes—passionately pursued)

Semiotics, deconstruction, psychoanalysis, film theory, class critique, and various historicisms will serve this semester as our critical foci. We will interrogate and fight with these theories even as we seek to comprehend them. Nothing will be taken as obvious in this course. Students are expected to engage every theory but nothing is expected in terms of changed beliefs.

Specifically, we will have four aims:

- 1) to learn the fundamentals of critical theories deemed by our profession of literary criticism to influence our reading (of literary, cinematic, and everyday texts), answering the question: why must I suffer theory?
- 2) to grasp the interlocking (and historically specific) nature of these theories, explaining how these theorists suffered each other
- 3) to learn how to use these critical theories without clubbing texts over the head with them, showing that, yes, there are subtle, smart uses (question-asking uses) to be made of these materials
- 4) to see if better questions lead to more pleasure (hint: I think they do, but you are free to disagree with me : >)

How We’ll Engage (Course Policies)

Written work:

Written exercises on selected problems *for every class* (due by start of class, uploaded on Canvas; late short assignments receive half credit). These are preparatory for your speaking in class, designed to break down the thinking process so you can work on different aspects of analysis in greater depth and with greater interest than if a final product were expected. In-class practice exam and two take-home exams (a midterm and final). Each of these

requirements—short exercises, midterm, and final—will comprise roughly one third of your grade. I will allow you to keep working for a possible grade change beyond this course.

Feedback:

I'll choose a group of five or more short exercises to respond to—and I'll work with you (via your midterm) to prepare for your final.

Discussion:

To ensure communal learning, I will employ devious (make that delightful) methods for enabling discussion. It's my responsibility to invite all voices to the table each class. To this end, I'll use a judicious mix of calling on volunteers and calling on those who haven't yet spoken. You will never be called on to answer any question that you haven't been asked to write on as preparation for speaking. Class participation sometimes raises or lowers your final grade by one-half letter grade.

Names and pronouns:

I look forward to calling you by the name you go by—and the pronouns you use.

Attendance:

Since discussion is critical to this course, you are **required to attend nearly every class this semester**. I consider **more than three absences** over the course of this class **unacceptable**; going beyond this stated limit will likely negatively affect your grade.

Conferences:

I will meet with each of you at least once to discuss your progress in this course. If at any time you have any problems concerning your work, please see me. Don't suffer in silence.

Annoyances:

Speaking of silence and *my* suffering: no emailing or Internet surfing from laptops during class. (iPads, Kindles, or other e-readers most welcome.) No phones may be on. And texting? Don't even think about it. Also, no eating.

Recommended readings:

There is always *more* reading you can do! Readings that are not required but recommended are called "specters" on our syllabus. Think of them as friendly ghosts to the main texts we are reading.

Contact:

I will use email through the Canvas system to contact you during the semester. Please either check your Umail account on a regular basis or set it up to forward to the email system you regularly use.

Canvas:

Consult it. The syllabus is there. The readings and daily assignments are there. You will always know what you need to be writing by going there.

Ostentatious Generosity (My Teaching Philosophy)

Teaching is where our research takes a curve—toward live student bodies.

You, the students, are the real enticement of scholarly jobs. I want ideas, more than anything else, to form my warm engagements with you. Creating a trusted space for us all is a major goal—always with the aim of crafting ostentatious generosity toward each other. What might that look like, intellectually, interpersonally? What might happen if we seriously believed that someone else's heart-mind vitality broadens our own intellectual reach? I wish for you the most challenging, most open experience you can seek. I'm ready to begin this wild adventure.

Syllabus

Says Who? The (Mystical) Word

- T 1/7 Introduction: Why This Will Be Fun
- H 1/9 Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author" (7p)
Film: The Purple Rose of Cairo (1985)
- Specters: W.K. Wimsatt, "The Intentional Fallacy" (21p)
Michel Foucault, "What is An Author?" (18p)
- T 1/14 Ferdinand de Saussure, Course in General Linguistics, Part One (29p)
Wallace Stevens, "Life is Motion" (1p)
- Specter: Daniel Dennett, "How Words Do Things with Us"
- H 1/16 Roland Barthes, "Myth Today" from Mythologies
selected short essays from Mythologies:
"The 'Blue Blood' Cruise"
"Soap-Powders and Detergents"
"Iconography of the Abbé Pierre"
"Novels and Children"
"Toys"
- T 1/21 Roland Barthes, "Myth Today" (continued)
Stephane Mallarmé, "Sigh," "Saint"
William Carlos Williams, "This is Just to Say"
Rem Koolhaas, Delirious New York (selection)
- H 1/23 Virginia Woolf, Orlando (selections)
- T 1/28 In-Class Practice Exam
Ursule Molinaro, "Burial Rites"
Films: Dogtown and Z-Boys (2001)
Tango (1998)
- H 1/30 Discussion of In-Class Practice Exam

How Do I Look? Body, Image, Sign, Desire

- T 2/4 Sigmund Freud, "Femininity"
Jacqueline Rose, "Femininity and its Discontents"
- H 2/6 Sigmund Freud, "Femininity" (continued)
Brooke Hopkins, "A Question of Child Abuse"

- T 2/11 Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage"
Christian Metz, The Imaginary Signifier (selections)

Specter: James Monaco, How to Read a Film (selections)
- H 2/13 Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema"
Film: Vertigo (1958)
- T 2/18 Beatriz Colomina, "The Split Wall: Domestic Voyeurism"
Film: Guess Who's Coming to Dinner (1967)

Specter: The Great White Hope (1970)
- H 2/20 Mary Ann Doane, "The Desire to Desire"
Film: Heavenly Creatures (1994)

Why Punish Me? The Disciplines of Systems (and Do They Hold?)

- T 2/25 Michel Foucault, from Discipline and Punish:
"The Body of the Condemned"
"Docile Bodies"
"Illegalities and Delinquencies"
Newsweek, "Inside America's Toughest Prison"
John Cawelti, "The Formula of the Classical Detective Story"
John Cawelti, "The Hard-Boiled Detective Story"
- H 2/27 Michel Foucault, from The History of Sexuality:
"We Other Victorians"
"The Incitement to Discourse"
"The Perverse Implantation"
- T 3/4 Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses"
- H 3/6 No class
- T 3/11 SPRING BREAK
- H 3/13 SPRING BREAK
- T 3/18 No class
- H 3/20 Wilkie Collins, The Moonstone
Take-Home Midterm Exam Due
- T 3/25 Wilkie Collins, The Moonstone
- H 3/27 Wilkie Collins, The Moonstone

T	4/1	Roland Barthes, <u>Camera Lucida</u>
H	4/3	Film: <u>National Geographic: The Photographers</u> (1998)
T	4/8	Jacques Derrida, “ <i>Différance</i> ” Jacques Derrida and Christie V. McDonald, “Choreographies”
H	4/10	Jacques Derrida, “ <i>Différance</i> ” (continued) Jacques Derrida and Christie V. McDonald, “Choreographies” (continued)
T	4/15	William Blake, “The Little Black Boy”
H	4/17	Film: <u>Pulp Fiction</u> (1994)
T	4/22	Film: <u>Babette’s Feast</u> (1987)

Final Take-Home Exam: TBA

Note: *This syllabus is meant to serve as an outline and guide for our course. Please know that I may modify it with reasonable notice to you. I may also modify the Course Schedule to accommodate the needs of our class. Any changes will be announced in class and posted on Canvas under Announcements. For the student guide to Canvas, see: <https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Student-Guide/tkb-p/student>. If you encounter technical problems, please: click the Help button found on the left bar of the Canvas page; email Teaching and Learning Technologies at classhelp@utah.edu; phone Teaching and Learning Technologies at (801) 581-6112.*

English Department Statement

Literature allows us to imagine the lives of others and broaden our perspectives. How we talk about it together, in the physical and virtual classroom, is part of that process. Our diverse identities and experiences will inform and enhance those discussions. As we approach sometimes difficult topics, each member of the class is expected to foster a respectful, generous, and supportive classroom environment that makes room for productive difference and reasoned debate.

University Policies

Academic Honesty and Use of AI. It is expected that students adhere to University of Utah policies regarding academic honesty, including but not limited to refraining from cheating, plagiarizing, misrepresenting one’s work, and/or inappropriately collaborating. This includes the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools without citation, documentation, or authorization. Students are expected to adhere to the prescribed professional and ethical

standards of the profession/discipline for which they are preparing. Any student who engages in academic dishonesty or who violates the professional and ethical standards for their profession/discipline may be subject to academic sanctions as per the University of Utah's Student Code: <https://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-410.php>.

The Americans with Disabilities Act. The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in this class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability & Access, 162 Olpin Union Building, (801) 581-5020. CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in an alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability & Access.

Given the nature of this course, attendance is required and adjustments will only be permitted as required by Policy 6-100(III)(O). If you need to seek an ADA accommodation to request an exception to this attendance policy due to a disability, please contact the [Center for Disability and Access](#) (CDA). CDA will work with us to determine what, if any, ADA accommodations are reasonable and appropriate.

In compliance with ADA requirements, some students may need to record course content. Any recordings of course content are for personal use only, should not be shared, and should not be made publicly available. In addition, recordings should be destroyed at the conclusion of the course.

Accommodation Policy (see Section Q): <http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-100.php>.

University Safety Statement. The University of Utah values the safety of all campus community members. To report suspicious activity or to request a courtesy escort, call campus police at 801-585-COPS (801-585-2677). You will receive important emergency alerts and safety messages regarding campus safety via text message. For more information regarding safety and to view available training resources, including helpful videos, visit <https://safeu.utah.edu>.

Addressing Sexual Misconduct. Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a civil rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran's status or genetic information. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 383 South University Street, 801-581-8365, or the Office of the Dean of Students, 270 Union Building, 801-581-7066. For support and confidential consultation, contact the Center for Student Wellness, 426 SSB, 801-581-7776. To report to the police, contact the Department of Public Safety, 801-585-2677(COPS). If you do not feel comfortable reporting to authorities, the U's Victim-Survivor Advocates provide free, confidential, and trauma-informed support services to students, faculty, and staff who have experienced interpersonal violence. To privately explore options and resources available to you with an advocate, contact: Center for Student Wellness, 801-581-7776, wellness.utah.edu, 328 Student Services Building, 201 S. 1460 E.

Drop/Withdrawal Policies. Students may drop a course within the first two weeks of a given semester without any penalties. Students may officially withdraw (W) from a class or all classes after the drop deadline through the midpoint of a course. A “W” grade is recorded on the transcript and appropriate tuition/fees are assessed. The grade “W” is not used in calculating the student’s GPA. For deadlines to withdraw from full-term, first, and second session classes, see the U's Academic Calendar.

Supports for Students. If you feel like you need extra support in academics, overcoming personal difficulties, or finding community, please refer to the [Student Support Services page for the U](#) for updated information.

Basic Needs Student Support. The [Basic Needs Collective](#) (BNC) is a coordinated resource referral hub. They educate about and connect students to campus and community resources to help them meet their basic needs. As a central location for resource referrals related to food, housing, health insurance, managing finances, legal services, mental health, etc., any student experiencing difficulty with basic needs is encouraged to contact them. Drop into their office located in the Union basement or schedule with them online for an in-person or virtual visit through their webpage: <https://basicneeds.utah.edu/>.

Canvas Time Zone Notice. To ensure you are viewing due dates and times correctly, as well as events in the calendar, set your student Canvas time zone to your current location by following this [guide](#). If you do not change your time zone, all due dates and times listed in Canvas will default to Mountain Time (MT). All times written throughout the course (e.g. class meeting times) are in Mountain Time, unless stated otherwise.

Course Material Copyright Notice. The Content* available in this course is made available only for your personal, noncommercial educational, and scholarly use. You may not use the Content for any other purpose, or distribute, post or make the Content available to others unless you obtain any required permission from the copyright holder. Some Content may be provided via streaming or other means that restrict copying; you may not circumvent those restrictions. You may not alter or remove any copyright or other proprietary notices included in the Content. Please see the [Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#), Section III.A.5 regarding the use and distribution of class Content and materials. Section III.A.5 explicitly prohibits: *"Sale or distribution of information representing the work product of a faculty member to a commercial entity for financial gain without the express written permission of the faculty member responsible for the course."*

** Content means original works of authorship that have been fixed in a tangible medium and any works based upon and derived from the original work of authorship.*

Content Warning. Each student here at the U has unique lived experiences that impact their learning and perception of material. As part of this course, you will encounter a variety of topics, some of which may be considered offensive, disturbing, triggering, or emotionally challenging. Advance notice will be provided as needed. For trauma survivors who struggle with these topics, please take the necessary steps to ensure your safety and communicate with your instructor. Consider contacting the [Counseling Center](#) for support if necessary. You are still responsible for the material and any related assessments, as outlined in [Policy 6-100](#),

Section III.Q.1. If you would like to request a content accommodation to modify the reading, writing, viewing, listening, or performance requirements for this unit, please contact your instructor as soon as possible.

Content Accommodations. All content provided has been carefully selected to guide you toward achievement of the learning objectives established for this course. Class topics are discussed for the sole purpose of expanding your personal knowledge and engagement. With that, there may be some content some students find to be in conflict with their sincerely held core beliefs. If applicable, you may choose to request a content accommodation to modify the reading, writing, viewing, listening, or performance requirements in the course. Be aware that instructors are not required to grant content accommodations. As per Policy 6-100, Section III.Q.3: *"Students are expected to take courses that will challenge them intellectually and personally. Students must understand and be able to articulate the ideas and theories that are important to the discourse within and among academic disciplines. Personal disagreement with these ideas and theories or their implications is not sufficient grounds for requesting an accommodation. Accommodations requested on such grounds will not be granted. The University recognizes that students' sincerely held core beliefs may make it difficult for students to fulfill some requirements of some courses or majors. The University assumes no obligation to ensure that all students are able to complete any major."*

It is your responsibility to determine if the course content is in conflict with your sincerely-held core beliefs. If so, please consider dropping the course. If you choose to drop the course, please be aware of the drop/withdrawal deadlines listed on the Academic Calendar.

Critical Discourse. Our classroom community is an open space for free speech, critical discourse, and the civil exchange of ideas. Throughout this course, you may encounter some difficult discussions about contentious topics. Disagreement can be a valuable learning opportunity for all of us, and discussion of all views is a necessary part of the educational process. All members of our course are asked to do their part in creating an atmosphere of mutual respect and sensitivity toward others. Disruptive behavior (e.g. harassment, defamatory or obscene speech, threats of violence, etc.) is strictly prohibited. As outlined in Policy 1-007, Section III.E.1: *"...Students have no right to impinge on the freedom of instructors to teach or the right of other students to learn. If a student persists in behaving disruptively in class after the instructor has explained the unacceptability of such conduct, the instructor may dismiss the student from the class and may refer the matter to the Office of the Dean of Students as described in Policy 6-400."* Students dismissed from classes may choose to appeal the dismissal to the Office of the Dean of Students. Learn more about how your First Amendment rights apply to you as a student here at the U.

Indigenous Land Acknowledgment. The University of Utah has both historical and contemporary relationships with Indigenous peoples. Given that the Salt Lake Valley has always been a gathering place for Indigenous peoples, we acknowledge that this land, which is named for the Ute Tribe, is the traditional and ancestral homelands of the Shoshone, Paiute, Goshute, and Ute Tribes and is a crossroad for Indigenous peoples. The University of Utah recognizes the enduring relationships between many Indigenous peoples and their traditional homelands. We are grateful for the territory upon which we gather today; we respect Utah's Indigenous peoples, the original stewards of this land; and we value the sovereign relationships that exist between tribal governments, state governments, and the federal government. Today,

approximately 60,000 American Indian and Alaska Native peoples live in Utah. As a state institution, the University of Utah is committed to serving Native communities throughout Utah in partnership with Native Nations and our Urban Indian communities through research, education, and community outreach activities.