

# Applied Literary Criticism

Lit 300 (section ) – (Fall 2016)

Class Times: Tues-Thurs. 11am-12:20 in LA 233

Prof. Louise Economides (louise.economides@mso.umt.edu) Office: LA 227

Office Hours: Tues/Thurs. 2:30-3:30pm., Wed. 11-12 noon and by appointment

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## Required Texts:

Rivkin, Julie and Michael Ryan. Literary Theory: An Anthology. Mass: Blackwell, 1998.

Murfin, Ross C. Heart of Darkness: Case Studies in Contemporary Criticism.

*Recommended:* Wolfreys, Julian. Critical Keywords in Literary and Cultural Theory. NY: Palgrave, 2004.

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## Course Objectives:

In this course, we'll be exploring a wide range of approaches to literary interpretation. Along the way, we'll consider the history of English as a distinct academic discipline and the evolution of critical theory in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and beyond. Some of the issues we'll explore include whether interpretation should focus on uniquely "literary" aspects of creative texts, the relationship between texts and the "outside" world (literature's social and/or historical contexts), what it means to be an author as well as a reader of texts, whether texts reflect human psychology and to what degree they can be regarded as "meaningful" in any stable sense. In sum, *just what are we doing when we claim to be interpreting a work of literature?* Another major focus in this course will be how to use ideas derived critical theory to interpret specific texts. Writing assignments are places to test both your understanding of critical theory and your ability to apply theoretical concepts creatively to interpret literary texts. Many of the concepts we encounter in critical theory may initially seem foreign, cryptic and/or difficult. Students are therefore encouraged to balance reading as a "believer" (in order to first understand a theoretical system) with reading as a "critic" (challenging and/or analyzing concepts once they have been grasped). Asking questions during class discussions will therefore be of paramount importance.

## Graded Work Please note:

*Papers must be hard copies – I do not accept e-mailed essays* (if you are unable to attend class, please put hard copy of essay in my departmental mailbox in LA 133 a.s.a.p). Late papers will be reduced by one grade point for each day after due date (B- becomes C+, for example). No paper will be accepted that is more than two class periods late.

- 1) **Microtheme:** This writing assignment (3-5 pages) will ask you to summarize New Criticism or Structuralism as a critical school, and to evaluate the application of this theory in an essay written by a professional critic.
- 2) **Application Paper:** In this 5 page paper, you will summarize a concept and/or term from either Deconstructionist or Psychoanalytical theory and apply this concept to analyze a work of fiction.
- 3) **Final Research Paper:** In this essay (8 pages), you will be asked to analyze a literary text using ideas derived from critical theory. That is, you will be applying what you have learned about theory to interpret a specific text. You will be asked to conduct research to find one critical essay (in addition to one essay from the syllabus) that you will bring into conversation with your own thesis regarding a literary text.
- 4) **Group Presentation:** Working with a group of peers, you will be leading our class discussion on a critical essay and writing an overview of the process (2-3 pages) that generated your presentation. Please see separate assignment sheet which details requirements for presentations.
- 5) **Class Participation and Attendance:** Regular attendance (no more than 3 absences) and active participation are vital to your success in this course. If you miss more than 3 classes this semester, you can expect a maximum grade of "C" for your participation grade (less if you failed to meet participation guidelines listed here). "Active Participation" includes 1) coming to class having carefully read and annotated assigned texts 2) sharing your thoughts about the readings during our class discussions 3) asking focused questions concerning the readings, indicating prior preparation 4) responding to questions posed by your peers and/or instructor 5) actively participating in group work 6) coming to office hours to discuss issues we don't have time to cover in class.

## Course Policies

- 1) **Class conduct:** In this course, you will be expected to behave respectfully towards your peers and your instructor and, in turn, can expect to be treated this way yourself. Disrespectful or disruptive behavior (such as chronic lateness, sleeping in class, holding conversations while others are attempting to contribute to class discussions, etc.) will not be tolerated, and you may be asked to leave class with an “absence” recorded for that day.
- 2) **Plagiarism:** The unacknowledged use of another person’s ideas, words or interpretations in lieu of your own constitutes plagiarism and is a serious violation of academic honesty. Failure to properly document your sources will result in an automatic “F” for that assignment and may result in your failure of the entire course. If you have doubts or questions about what constitutes plagiarism, see your instructor and/or consult the university’s policies regarding this.
- 3) **Departmental Assessment:** The English Department’s ongoing process of assessing its curriculum requires professors to read student papers to learn how students in general are progressing through the program. Your professor may request to use a copy of one of your papers for this purpose. All identifying information will be removed and participation in the evaluation process will not play any role in determining your grade. If you do not want your work used in this way, please inform your professor: non-participation will also not affect your grade for the course.

## Disabilities Accommodation

Students with disabilities will receive reasonable accommodations for coursework. To request accommodations, please contact me as soon as possible in the semester. I will work with you and with Disability Services in the accommodation process. For more information, visit the Disability Services website at <http://www.umt.edu/dss/>, or call 406.243.2243 (Voice/Text).

## English Department Goals for the Study and Use of Models of Literary Interpretation:

1. familiarity with the vocabulary of contemporary literary interpretation
2. working knowledge of schools of literary interpretation and ability to manage multiple perspectives
3. overview of recent debates
4. development of skills of logical argument and interpretation
5. familiarity with formal conventions of discipline specific writing, including proper citation

## Goals for Student Writing:

We will work to develop and hone the following skills in all of our writing exercises this semester.

1. ability to identify and pursue sophisticated questions for academic inquiry
2. ability to find, evaluate, analyze and synthesize information effectively and ethically
  - a. from diverse sources
3. voice that is consistent & appropriate to the audience & purpose
4. ability to make good use of drafting opportunities, including effective revision of papers
5. correct diction & sentence structure
6. sound judgments unified by a clear thesis
7. evidence or reasons supporting all judgments
8. logical linkage of judgments and evidence
9. transitions that connect a series of ideas and evidence
10. correct spelling and punctuation.
11. proper MLA style documentation

## 12. develop competence in information technology and digital literacy

### GRADED WORK POINT TOTALS

Microtheme.....	250
Application Essay .....	250
Final Paper .....	300
Group Presentation .....	100
Participation and Attendance .....	<u>100</u>
TOTAL:	1000

### Honors Increment:

Those of you taking this course for “honors” credit will be expected to write slightly longer papers for this course (5-6 pages for the Microtheme; 5-7 pages for the Application Essay; 8-10 pages for the Final Paper). Furthermore, you must use at least one additional secondary source for your Final Paper (minimum of 3 sources).

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### WEEKLY SCHEDULE

(Subject to changes); **M**= Readings on **Moodle**; all other readings from the Rivkin and Ryan reader, unless otherwise indicated.

#### WEEK ONE: FORMALISM AND NEW CRITICISM

Tues. 8/30	Course introduction
Thurs. 9/1	Introduction, “Formalisms” (Rivkin and Ryan) Brooks, “The Language of Paradox” Keats, “ <i>Ode on a Grecian Urn</i> ”

#### WEEK TWO: NEW CRITICISM AND STRUCTURALISM

Tues. 9/6	Poe, “ <i>The Fall of the House of Usher</i> ” ( <b>M</b> ) Brooks/Warren, “A New Critical Reading of the Fall of the House of Usher” ( <b>M</b> )
Thurs. 9/8	Introduction, “The Linguistic Foundation” Saussure, “Course in General Linguistics” Thompson, “Explained Gothic” – ( <b>M</b> )

#### WEEK THREE: DECONSTRUCTION (POST-STRUCTURALISM)

Tues. 9/13	Introduction, “Introductory Deconstruction” (Rivkin and Ryan) Derrida, “Structure, Sign and Play...” ( <b>M</b> )
Thurs. 9/15	Derrida, “Différance” <b>First Draft of Microtheme Due</b> (New Criticism or Structuralism)

#### WEEK FOUR: APPLIED DECONSTRUCTION AND FREUDIAN PSYCHOANALYSIS

Tues. 9/20	Kennedy, “On the ‘Fall of the House of Usher’” ( <b>M</b> )
Thurs. 9/22	Introduction, “Strangers to Ourselves: Psychoanalysis” (Rivkin and Ryan) Freud, “The Uncanny”

#### WEEK FIVE: APPLIED FREUDIAN PSYCHOANALYSIS AND LACAN

Tues. 9/27 Bonaparte, "The Fall of the House of Usher" (M)  
Thurs. 9/29 Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I ..."  
**Final Draft Microtheme Due**

#### WEEK SIX: APPLIED LACANIAN PSYCHOANALYSIS

Tues. 10/4 Coleridge, "Christabel" (M)  
Thurs. 10/6 Rzepka, "Christabel's 'Wandering Mother' ... (M)

#### WEEK SEVEN: FEMINISM(S)

Tues. 10/11 Introduction, "Feminist Paradigms" (Rivkin and Ryan)  
Gilbert/Gubar, from The Madwoman in the Attic  
Thurs. 10/13 Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper"; Gilbert/Gubar, "A feminist reading of Gilman's 'The Yellow Wallpaper'" (M)

#### WEEK EIGHT: MARXISM

Tues. 10/18 Introduction, "Starting With Zero: Basic Marxism" (Rivkin and Ryan)  
Marx, "The German Ideology," "Wage Labor and Capital"; "Capital"  
Thurs. 10/20 Kafka, *The Metamorphosis*

#### WEEK NINE: APPLIED MARXISM AND CRITICAL RACE THEORY

Tues. 10/25 Sokel, "From Marx to Myth" (M)  
Thurs. 10/27 Race theory: "Situating Race" (Rivkin and Ryan, 959-963); Morrison, "Playing in the Dark" (R & Ryan); **First Draft Application Paper Due**

#### WEEK TEN: CASE STUDY: HEART OF DARKNESS

Tues. 11/1 Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*  
Thurs. 11/3 Post-colonialism: "English Without Shadows" (Rivkin and Ryan); *H of D*, continued

#### WEEK ELEVEN: CASE STUDY – HEART OF DARKNESS

Tues. 11/8 ELECTION DAY: NO CLASS  
Thurs. 11/10 Achebe, "An Image of Africa" (M) – *Presentation #1*

#### WEEK TWELVE: CASE STUDIES, CONTINUED

Tues. 11/15 Brantlinger, "Heart of Darkness: Anti-Imperialism ..." (in Case Studies)  
*Presentation #2*  
Thurs. 11/17 Smith, "Too Beautiful Altogether..." (Case Studies) -- *Presentation #3*

#### WEEK THIRTEEN: CASE STUDIES, CONTINUED

Tues. 11/22 Miller, "Should We Read 'Heart of Darkness'?" (M) – *Presentation #4*; **Final Draft Application Paper**  
Thurs. 11/24 THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

#### WEEK FOURTEEN: CASE STUDIES, CONTINUED

Tues. 11/29 Stampfl, "Marlow's Rhetoric of (Self-)Deception ..." (M) – *Presentation #5*

Thurs. 12/1 Ecocriticism; Glotfelty, "Literary Studies in an Age of Environmental Crisis" (M)  
Huggan and Tiffin, "Ivory and Elephants" (M)

WEEK FIFTEEN: ECOCRITICISM AND *VIRUNGA* (film)

Tues. 12/6 *Virunga*

Thurs. 12/8 Discussion of *Virunga* and course evaluations

**Final Research Paper Due**