LIT 300 01 Literary Criticism

Fall 2015

"In our era, criticism is not merely a library of secondary aids to the understanding and appreciation of literary texts, but also a rapidly expanding body of knowledge in its own right."
-David Lodge

“The unexamined life is not worth living”-Socrates

ENLit #300: 01
T/R: 11:10-12:30
Instructor: Katie Kane
Assistant Instructor: Jared Smith
LA 233
Email: katie.kane@mso.umt.edu

Fall 2015
Office: LA 111
Phone #: NONE
O. Hours: T: 12:45-2:00
R 12:45-2:00
& By appointment
Mr. Smith’s Hours:
TBE

Course Description

In this introductory course in literary and cultural theory, we will explore representative schools of and issues in contemporary criticism (formalism, postmodernism, eco-criticism, postcolonial/colonial criticism/psychoanalytic criticism). We will be working, therefore, to build an analytic and critical vocabulary for the activity of reading select number of texts from the canons of literary criticism and from the canons of Anglophone culture.

In addition to this “first-principles” objective, however, we will also attempt to engage with such complexities of the current theoretical debate as “the question of the author,” the reconciliation of form and content, the agon of canon formation and canon busting, and, finally, with the crucial issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality.

Throughout the course we will be moving toward our current early twenty-first century moment in which the range and scope of the labor of the literary critic seems—in light of the rise of a host of non-traditional representational and narrative forms—to be both expanding and contracting. Film, video games, the world of the digital, social media, all require the decoding and demystifying work of the engaged critic.
Policy Statement

Required Texts:
- Richter, David. Falling Into Theory: Conflicting Views on Reading Literature. (a.k.a. FiT)
- Ryan, Michael. An Introduction to Criticism: Literature, Film, Culture. (a.k.a. IC)
- Wells, Orson. Citizen Kane. View before February 10
- From Black Mirror (Season one, episode two) “Fifteen Million Merits,” Charlie Booker and Konnie Huq, streaming on Netflix: https://www.netflix.com/

N.B. Your texts are will soon be available in the Bookstore. You MUST bring the requisite text with you to class. The responsibility for seeing the film rests with you. Also, a limited number of articles will be available to you either through Moodle.

★★★NOTA BENE★★★:

This is a rigorous course; much will be expected of you in the way of reading, preparation, writing, and participation. Do not take this course if you are unprepared for a good deal of reading, underlining, writing and vigorous questioning. If you are not enthusiastic about doing this kind work, this is not the course for you. “I’m sorry, but I did not finish my reading for today,” and/or “there is too much reading to do,” are two expression that do not, despite my generally congenial attitude, make me happy. The class is, after years of experience, carefully and with thought balanced in terms of workload. Look at the whole syllabus and its various components before making a final commitment to enrollment. If you think that there is too much reading or too much work, please feel free to drop.

Coursework:
Final grades will be determined by your performance in three separate categories of coursework:
1. Participation/Quizzes 10%
2. Daily Writing 50%
3. Final Essay 40%
   100%

I will be happy to discuss grades with you during my office hours. However, please give yourself twenty-four hours after receiving your grade before coming to see me.

Participation:
The success of the course will depend largely on the participation of all of the members of the class in dialogue over issues and texts. To facilitate and ensure the passionate and engaged participation of all the members of our course community, each individual will be asked to participate in the discussion of daily readings. Participation means that you must
come to class with a reading of the texts/films assigned for that day. These readings can take many forms—assertions of interpretation or taste, close readings of specific passages, contextual explication, even questions and confusions, etc.

Quizzes:
In the midst of the hurricane that is modern American student life, it can often be hard to find time to read and thoughtfully engage with all of the materials scheduled for the days our class meets. Nevertheless, it is signally important that each and every student come to class having fully read all of the material (understanding it fully is another thing). I will, if I feel it necessary, administer number of reading quizzes designed to ensure that you have read and thought about the readings for the day. I will administer these short quizzes at the beginning of the class. There will be no chance for make up quizzes.

Written Responses:
Students will respond in writing to the course readings on both Tuesday and Thursday each week. Response Essays will be turned in on Tuesdays of alternating weeks (Section 01 begins to submit Response Essays on Tuesday, September 8th; Section 02 begins to submit work on Tuesday, September 15)

Response Essays:
Students will turn in a two-page response to the reading/s on Tuesday. The two page essays will involve engaging thoughtfully with the assigned text. The essays must be typed and will likely be submitted electronically later in the semester. The essays have two important components: content and form. All essays must be free of grammatical and stylistic errors.

Content of the Essays:
Aspects of student writing that will be assessed in writing assignments:
- quality, originality and/or intellectual rigor/engagement of analysis;
- sound judgments unified by a clear message;
- logical linkage of judgments and evidence;

In the case of responses to the Ryan readings, you should choose one of the literary, filmic, or cultural texts to respond to and to analyze using as a guide, Ryan’s handy “Things to Look for in Literary and Cultural Texts,” which close out each of the chapters and which contain guiding questions that you may answer in creating a response paper. In the case of those responses that involve other kinds of essays (“Handouts” or essays from FIT) you may determine the nature of your response (close reading, historical response, rebuttal, comparison, etc.), but you may also use the model outlined below if you prefer to follow a delineated structure:

1) Summarize either one important or interesting issue or problem that the text explores or a purpose that it serves in a way that explains what precisely what it is that you find important or interesting about the issue, problem, or purpose.
2) Define one significant comparison, contrast, or relationship between the text you are analyzing and an earlier work on our syllabus.
3) Identify a specific passage of the text (from a phrase to a paragraph in length) that especially piqued, delighted, irritated, challenged, or troubled you and explain in an engaged fashion what it is about the paragraph that effected you in this way.

Formal Aspects of the Essay
Aspects of student writing that will be assessed in writing assignments:
• voice that is consistent & appropriate to the audience & purpose;
• correct diction & sentence structure;
• evidence or reasons supporting all judgments: INCLUDING CITATION FROM THE TEXT;
• transitions that connect a series of ideas and evidence;
• strong paragraph structure;
• correct spelling and punctuation;
• proper MLA style documentation (This will become an important criteria later in the semester).

DO NOT GO UNDER TWO PAGES. THESE DAILY ESSAYS WILL BE GRADED ON A 1-5 SCALE WITH COMMENTS ATTACHED. EXAMPLE ESSAYS WILL BE HANDED OUT TO GUIDE YOU AND COURSE TIME WILL BE DEVOTED TO WRITING ISSUES, BUT YOU MUST BE READY TO WRITE ARGUMENTATIVELY CLEAR, TEXTUALLY SUPPORTED, GRAMMATICALLY CLEAN, AND MLA DOCUMENTED ESSAYS (WORKS CITED LIST).

Reading Notes:
On Thursdays each week and on Tuesday on alternating weeks students will turn in a two page handwritten/typed set of questions, observations, research work, close readings in response to the readings.

THESE READING NOTES WILL BE GRADED ON A 4+/4/4- SCALE WITH NO ATTACHED COMMENTS. EXAMPLE NOTES WILL BE HANDED OUT TO HELP GUIDE YOU. THE NOTES WILL DOCUMENT YOUR RIGOROUS AND THOUGHTFUL ENGAGEMENT WITH THE TEXTS. THE NOTES WILL PROVIDE MATERIAL FOR CLASSROOM DISCUSSION. TAKE THIS ASSIGNMENT SERIOUSLY.

Class Structure:
Class structure is subject to alteration if the material dictates it, but in general classes will proceed the following way:

12:40-12:50: Roll Call, Quizzes (if any) and Discussion of Class Business.
12:50-1:15 Group Discussion of Readings.
1:15-2:00: Lecture and/or General Discussion

There may be days that are more lecture heavy and hence time for discussion may be limited to group conversations and questions. Please feel free to ask questions during my “lectures” about anything: concepts, history, the word I just used that you think is probably
made up, and etc. Simply raise your hand and ask.

One note about General Discussion:
it is hard, even in a smaller class, to accommodate all ideas, questions, comments, etc.
Often participants will get stacked up in a discussion line like airplanes. I do my best to fulfill the role of dialogic air-traffic controller, but you should feel free to break in if, in the excitement of discussion, you get passed over.

If you do not enjoy lively, engaged, playful, and every-so-often chaotic discussion, this is not the class for you.

Final Research Essay with Abstracts and Drafts:
You will turn in an abstract and draft of your essay before submitting the final version. This 8-10 page analytic and scholarly essay with attached bibliography represents the principal writing exercise of the semester. The essay will argue for the relevance of a distinctive, personal analysis of a text/set of texts and/or issues surrounding a textual constellation of issues and ideas germane to the class. In addition, you will be responsible for accessing and harnessing the larger debates surrounding the literary artifact, historical phenomenon, and/or interpretive issue. To that end you will use library resources to familiarize yourself with the reading histories of the text(s) you have chosen and you will incorporate those materials in the argument of your essay. AT THE VERY MINIMUM you must use four outside SCHOLARLY sources—sources we have not read in class, but I do encourage you to incorporate more. (If you do not have the MLA Handbook, current edition, now is the time to consider making the investment.)

Production Schedule:
1. On Tuesday the 27th of October you will spend time in the library with Professor Sue Samson (or perhaps a member of her staff) who will help you to begin the process of researching for your paper in a multitude of library archives. We will meet at Buckhous Classroom, MLIB 284. At this time you should begin to explore things about the novel/films/etc that interest you. The topic selection procedure solidifies here.

2. STUDENTS WHO MISS THIS IMPORTANT DAY WILL BE DOCKED ONE LETTER GRADE ON THEIR FINAL PAPER.

3. On Friday, November 13, you will submit a TWO PAGE, DOUBLE SPACED, FINELY WRITTEN, AND CLOSELY ARGUED ABSTRACT OF YOUR FINAL PAPER. You will need to include a working annotated bibliography of the sources and texts you will be working with. Abstracts without an annotated bibliography will be docked at five (out of ten) points. Please submit copies to class via email.

4. On Tuesday November 17th, Thursday November 19th, and on Tuesday November 24th we will workshop this abstract (precis, plan, blueprint, conceptual map) of your final paper during class.
   A. PRESENTERS: Bring me a copy of your abstract and sources on the day of your workshop.
   B. RESPONDENTS: Please bring two copies of your responses to the
papers you respond to. For each day there will be about 7-8. Please provide your writer with strong and sustained feedback, including line editing, questions and/or suggestions about claim, course of development, and sources. The feedback will take the form of a one page, single-spaced response that you will turn into myself or to the Teaching Assistant at the end of the hour.

STUDENTS WHO MISS ANY OF THESE IMPORTANT DAYS WILL BE DOCKED ONE LETTER GRADE ON THEIR FINAL PAPER.

1. Monday November 30th, Tuesday the 1st, and Wednesday the 3rd of December, (depending upon when you schedule your conference) your Rough Draft will be due. You will meet with me in consultation over the rough draft in LA 111 in conference. The Rough Draft must be a minimum of four pages long.
2. The Final Draft of the essay is due on Tuesday December 15th, by 5:00 in my office or in my mailbox.

Attendance:
Attendance is required and will be recorded: three or more unexcused absences are grounds for failure of the course itself. Late arrivals and early departures will, if they occur frequently, count as absences. If you do arrive late you will be responsible for letting me know after class that you were present for the day. Absences due to medical and family emergencies will be excused, provided you come and discuss the situation (ASAP) with me. Lengthy crises that require multiple absences may require your reconsideration of enrollment in school this semester.

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).

Scholastic Dishonesty:
Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty—in as much as they keep the individual student as well as the collective community from learning—will result in an automatic F and may entail a variety of other sanctions up to and including expulsion from the University. FOR A DEFINITION OF PLAGIARISM SEE http://www.lib.umt.edu/services/plagiarism/index.htm. The Provost’s Office has asked all faculty at the University of Montana to attach the following statement on plagiarism to their syllabi: “All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student.conduct.php
THE PURCHASED PAPER

“The Internet and email are now the tools of choice for plagiarism. Advertisements in college papers and in the regular press as well as on the Internet announce the availability of student and professional services, sometimes couched in such euphemistic terms as ‘editorial assistance,’ but often blatantly offering commercially prepared essays, academic papers, and even theses for sale. The easy availability of such assistance from various web sites has increased student ‘cut and paste’ activity to the degree that it is now expected and regarded as a common practice (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2000 a)” (31, Source).

“Lack of integrity and unethical behavior within the educational sector is inconsistent with one of the main purposes of education; that is to produce ‘good [critical] citizens, respectful of the law [and willing to challenge it when necessary], of human rights and fairness (it is also incompatible with any strategy that considers education as one of the principle means of fighting corruption)” (10, “Combating Academic Fraud: Towards a Culture of Integrity” http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001330/133038e.pdf)

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

- familiarity with the vocabulary of contemporary literary interpretation;
- working knowledge of schools of literary interpretation;
- overview of recent debates;
development of skills of logical argument and interpretation;

**Goals for Student Writing:**
We will work to develop and hone the following skills in all of our writing exercises this semester.

- voice that is consistent & appropriate to the audience & purpose;
- correct diction & sentence structure;
- sound judgments unified by a clear message;
- evidence or reasons supporting all judgments;
- logical linkage of judgments and evidence;
- transitions that connect a series of ideas and evidence;
- correct spelling and punctuation and proper MLA style documentation

**Course Calendar**

**September**

**Week One: Beginnings and the Nature of Literature**

T 1: Introduction to the Course.

R 3: Eagleton: “What is Literature?” And Oprah and Franzen Debate. PDFs on Moodle.

**Week Two: The History of English and Formalism**


**Week Three: Formalism and Structuralism**

T 15: Read “A Little Man” by Michael Cunningham,” (URL [http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/08/10/little-man](http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/08/10/little-man) and PDF)

**Week Four:** The Banking Model of Education, and Authors.

**T 22:** Friere, “The Banking Concept of Education,” FiT, 68-78.

**R 24:** Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” FiT, 253-257.

**Week Five:** Psychoanalysis and Psychology and Marxism and Political Criticism.

**T 29:** Ryan, “Psychoanalysis and Psychology,” 44-58, IC.

**October**

**R 1:** Ryan, “Marxism and Political Criticism,” 59-74, IC.  
In-class viewing of advertisements  
Podcast, 543, “Wake Up Now!” December 26, 2014, Brian Reed and Bianca Giaever. *This American Life*

**Week Six:** Meet the President. Post Structuralism and Deconstruction.

**T 6:** Smith, Zadie, “Meet the President,” PDF.

**R 8:** Ryan, “Post-Structuralism and Deconstruction,” 75-86, IC.

**Week Seven:** Gender/Feminist Criticism.

**T 13:** Borges, Jorge Luis Borges, “The Garden of Forking Paths.”


**Week Eight:** Feminist Film Analysis. Queer Studies

**T 20:** Mulvey, “Visual Cinema and Narrative Pleasure,” PDF.  
In-class viewing of film clips.


**Week Nine:** Essay Research. Ethnic, Critical Race Theory, and Postcolonial Studies

**T 27:** **Essay Production: Step One.** Library Orientation Day. Mlib 283 [aka The Student Learning Center].

November

Week Ten:

T  3:       NO CLASS: Election Day.


Week Eleven: Critical Race Theory


Week Twelve: In Class Workshops on Essays.


Week Thirteen: In Class Workshops on Essays.


R  26:      NO CLASS: Holiday.

December


T  1:       Class Cancelled: Rough Drafts Due in Conferences.

**Week Fifteen: Eco Criticism. Historical Criticism.**

**T 8:** Thacker, Eugene, “After Life: Swarms, Demons, and the Antinomies of Immanence,” from *Theory After Theory*. PDF


**Week Sixteen: Finals Week**

**T 15:** Essay Production: Step Four. Final Draft of Essay Due by 5:00 my office.

**R 17:** No Final Exam: Although one is scheduled for 10:10-12:10 in the same room.