

Fall 2015

ENGL 6231

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University of New Orleans

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Recommended Citation

Steeby, Elizabeth, "ENGL 6231" (2015). *University of New Orleans Syllabi*. Paper 492.
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ENGL 6231: Introduction to Literary Theory

Professor: **Dr. Elizabeth Steeby**

Office: Liberal Arts Building, Rm 269

Office Hours: MWF 1-3 pm and by appointment

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Course Description:

This course will introduce graduate students to the history of theory and literary studies, with special attention to contemporary theoretical trends, research methods, and pedagogical concerns. We will learn to evaluate different forms of academic writing, and students will experiment with and implement critical approaches to literature in their own writing. In particular, we will discuss the adaptation of the theory for increasingly diversified and digitized studies of culture. Students will be expected to do oral presentations, an annotated bibliography, take essay exams, and submit several shorter assignments.

Texts:

Required: Selden and Widdowson, *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*, 5th Edition (ISBN-10: 0582894107)

Recommended: *MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing*, 3rd Edition (ISBN-10: 0873522974)

Student Learning Outcomes:

After successfully completing the requirements for this course, students will be able to:

Trace the development of contemporary fields theory and criticism and distinguish them from their predecessors

Define major movements, tenets, and elements of a broad spectrum of literary theories and fields of criticism in the 20th and 21st centuries

Analyze modes and genres of writing in relation to various modes of criticism and theoretical frameworks

Produce complex written arguments in essay form that address the prominent themes and topics represented in the texts that follow

Assignments:

- Weekly 350- 500 word writing assignments, due at the beginning of class on Wednesdays (unless specified otherwise)
- Annotated Bibliography Project (12-15 pages)
- 30 min. presentation on article representative of literary theory/ field of criticism
- Midterm and Final Exam

Grades: Presentation: 10%; Midterm Exam: 30%; Bibliography Project: 20%; Final Exam 30%; Class Participation and Short Writing Assignments: 10%

Come to class. Be on time. Students are also required to come to class on time. Do not walk into class 5, 10, or 15 minutes late. It is disruptive to the class. You are also expected to bring the assigned text to each class. Please turn off or silence all electronic equipment, including cell

phones. NO TEXTING IN CLASS. Assigned readings are to be completed before class. You are allowed 1 excused absence during the semester. Please inform me via email (esteeby@uno.edu) if there is some emergency or extenuating circumstance and you are unable to attend class. See me before the next class to catch up on material you have missed.

Please come with questions about readings to each class, and be prepared to discuss the material in a thoughtful manner. I expect you to participate in section discussion actively, to conduct yourself in a professional manner, and to take notes during class that you can refer to later. Please treat your fellow classmates with respect, and be courteous when others are speaking. Any comments or actions that instigate or contribute to a hostile environment in the classroom will not be tolerated. Any individuals who, as a result of their words or behavior, harass or silence their classmates will be held accountable. Policies on sexual harassment and discriminatory speech/ behavior are outlined on the UNO website. See:

http://www.studentaffairs.uno.edu/studentpolicies/policymanual/sexual_harrasment_policy.cfm
and http://www.studentaffairs.uno.edu/studentpolicies/policymanual/harassment_policy.cfm.

E-mail Account/Moodle Access:

If you do not already have one, please sign up for a free UNO e-mail account for class use as soon as possible. The Help Desk is located in Room 101T of the Computer Center (CC) and is managed by Derek Rodriguez. I may make announcements by e-mail, so check your inbox daily. Students must have Internet access to www.uno.edu and the Moodle portion of ENGL 6231. All communications, including the posting of grades will be done through Moodle. Students are responsible for all e-mail communications from the instructor to their UNO email drop box. Help with Moodle can be accessed at: <http://www.uno.edu/moodle>

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: Students who qualify for services will receive the academic modifications for which they are legally entitled. It is the responsibility of the student to register with the Office of Disability Services (<http://ods.uno.edu/>) each semester and follow their procedures for obtaining assistance.

Academic Integrity:

Students are expected to do their own work as outlined in the UNO Policy on Academic Integrity published by the Division of Student Affairs: <http://www.studentaffairs.uno.edu/Judicial/>. Acts of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated, and any student who engages in suspicious conduct will be confronted and subjected to the disciplinary process. See:
<http://studentaffairs.uno.edu/pdfs/AcademicDishonestyPolicy.pdf>

Schedule of Readings:

Week 1 (8/19) **What are we doing here? Why do we need theory?**

Cornel West on education: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VFddhyHcKFo>

Week 2 (8/26) **COURSE OVERVIEW, MORAL FORMALISM, & THE NEW CRITICISM**

RG, Introduction & Ch. 1. 1 (*Reader's Guide*)

John Crowe Ransom, "Criticism, Inc." (M)

Cleanth Brooks, "The Heresy of Paraphrase" (M)

W.K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy" (M)

Week 3 (9/2) **RUSSIAN FORMALISM/ READER-RESPONSE THEORY**

RG, Ch. 2

Mikhail Bakhtin, From *Discourse and the Novel* (M)

Viktor Shklovsky, “Art as Technique” (M)

RG, Ch. 3

Wolfgang Iser, “Interaction between Text and Reader” (M);

Week 4 (9/9) **STRUCTURALISM**

RG, Chap. 4

Ferdinand de Saussure, From *Course in General Linguistics* (M)

Roland Barthes, “Photography and Electoral Appeal,” “The Death of the Author,”

“From Work to Text” (M)

Northrop Frye, “The Function of Criticism at the Present Time” (M)

Week 5 (9/16) **PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY**

RG, Ch. 7

Sigmund Freud, From *The Interpretation of Dreams* (M); “Fetishism” (M);

Jacques Lacan, “The Mirror Stage as Formative . . .” (M)

Week 6 (9/23) **POSTSTRUCTURALISM**

RG, Chap. 7

Jacques Derrida, “Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences” (M)

Michel Foucault, “What Is an Author?” From *Discipline and Punish* (M)

J.L. Austin, “Performative Utterances” (M)

Week 7 (9/30) **POSTMODERNISM**

Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility” (M)

Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*—Introduction (M)

Jean Baudrillard, *From The Precession of Simulacra* (M)

Week 8 (10/7) **MARXISM AND NEW HISTORICISM**

RG, Ch. 5 & 8

Raymond Williams, “Base and Superstructure in Marxist Critical Theory” (M)

Louis Althusser, From *Ideology and the Ideological State Apparatuses* (M)

Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, “Dialectic of Enlightenment” (M)

Stuart Hall, “Cultural Studies and Its Theoretical Legacies” (M)

PRESENTATION 1: Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, From Chapter 1. The Rise of English

Week 9 (10/14) **FEMINIST/GENDER THEORIES**

****Annotated Bibliography project due in class****

RG, Ch. 6

Simone de Beauvoir, From *The Second Sex* (M)

Gilbert & Gubar, From *The Madwoman in the Attic* (M)
Hélène Cixous, “The Laugh of the Medusa” (M)

PRESENTATION 2: Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*—Preface and Ch.3 Subversive Bodily Acts

Week 10 (10/21) **In-Class Midterm Exam**

Week 11 (10/28) **GLBT AND QUEER THEORIES**

RG, Ch. 10
Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Volume 1, An Introduction and Part Two: The Repressive Hypothesis (M)
Eve Kosofsky Sedwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, From Introduction (M)
Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle, *The Transgender Studies Reader*—Introduction (M)

PRESENTATION 3: Adrienne Rich, *From Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence* (M)

Week 12 (11/4) **POSTCOLONIALIST THEORIES / TRANSNATIONALISM**

Edward Said, *Orientalism*--Introduction, Culture and Imperialism, Chapter 2, Section 2, Jane Austen and Empire (M)
Homi K. Bhaba, The Commitment to Theory (M)
Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*: Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, Chapter 3. The Origins of National Consciousness (M)

PRESENTATION 4: Chinua Achebe, “An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*”

Week 13 (11/11) **CRITICAL RACE THEORY/ AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES**

Barbara Christian, The Race for Theory (M)
Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*--From Chapter 1. The Black Atlantic as a Counterculture of Modernity, Cultural Studies in Black and White (M)
Jackie Sumell, *The House That Herman Built*

PRESENTATION 5: Henry Louis Gates, Jr., “Talking Black: Critical Signs of the Times”

Week 14 (11/18) **ECOCRITICISM/ BIOPOLITICS**

Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended* (M)
William Howarth, “Some Principles of Ecocriticism” (M)
Joni Adamson and Kimberly Ruffin, *American Studies, Ecocriticism and Citizenship: Thinking and Acting in Local and Global Commons*—Introduction (M)

PRESENTATION 6: Joni Adamson, “Cosmovision: Environmental Justice, Transnational American Studies, and Indigenous Literature”

Week 15 (11/25) **POSTHUMANISM**

N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics*,

Literature, and Informatics--Chapter 2. Virtual Bodies and Flickering Signifiers (M)
Donna Haraway, *A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist
Feminism in the 1980s* (M)

PRESENTATION 7: Monique Allewaert, *Ariel's Ecology*: Ch. 4, "On Parahumanity: Creole
Stories and the Suspension of the Human"

Week 16 (12/2) **INTERSPECIES/ ANIMAL STUDIES**

Colleen Boggs, *Animalia Americana*—Introduction and (M)

Mel Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect*: Part 2, Ch. 3,
Queer Animality (M)

FINAL EXAM: WEDNESDAY, December 9 8:00 P.M. - 10:00 P.M

Syllabus may change during the semester. Please check your email and Moodle regularly for updates.