

**St Jerome's University**  
**ENGL 251: Literary Theory and Criticism**  
**Asynchronous Remote Winter 2021**

**Contact Info:**

Dr Norm Klassen

n3klassen@uwaterloo.ca

Office hrs: Wednesdays 6–7 pm

**Course description (from the calendar):**

What exactly are we doing when we study literature? By examining a selection of critical methods and theoretical approaches, this course will enhance understanding of the many different emphases, values, and priorities critics bring to literature, and the many available perspectives on what constitutes literature's significance.

**Course overview and objectives:**

This course aims to provide an introduction to contemporary approaches to the study of literature and non-literary texts. It focuses first on literature's sensitivity to limitations associated with rationality in describing human experience, and on the role of literary theory in exposing those limits. The middle section defends a revised understanding of rationality as related to the nature and practice of interpretation. Finally, the course explores the effects upon literary criticism of a dominant theory of language associated with postmodernism.

Throughout we will read theoretical excerpts and literary and non-literary texts. Emphasis will be placed on the development of critical skills, including the acquisition of critical vocabulary, and the practical engagement of contemporary theories through journal exercises, “in-class” examinations, and an essay.

**Required texts:**

*All required readings are available on LEARN or elsewhere online.*

**Course requirements:**

Ongoing:	Journals (4x5%)	(20%)
8–12 Feb. (ie 12 Feb.):	Early “In-class” Mid-term	(20%)
12 Mar.:	Short Essay 1	(25%)
16 Apr.:	Short Essay 2	(25%)
	CERB:	(10%)
13 Jan.; 10 Feb.; 10 Mar.; 7 Apr.	Get-togethers	

**Late policy and return of work:**

Assignments are due at 11:59 p.m. on the stated day. Late journals are not acceptable. Late papers may be docked 2%/day and may not receive comments.

**Email correspondence:**

By all means feel free to contact me regarding any aspect of the course.

*This is essentially a guided reading course. I will post videos at the start and end of most weeks, but you have everything you need in the course textbook itself and the readings to which it directs you. Those readings are almost all on Learn as well. You are free to work ahead, if that helps you with your schedule; there are deadlines in place to discourage one from falling behind. I highly recommend following the rhythm of the course, which mostly introduces a new topic each week (with some exceptions).*

*I hope you will want to hang out. I propose Wednesday evenings from 6–7 for doing so. I would like you to consider four get-togethers socially obligatory, though I am not attaching any marks to them. The first one, **the first Wednesday of term**, will be a meet-and-greet. The second will happen just before your mid-term is due, in case you have any questions. The third and fourth will follow in March and April. I will keep an office hour every Wednesday at the same time.*

### **Schedule of Topics**

(see also the Table of Contents in the course textbook)

#### **Wk 1: 11–15 Jan. Introduction**

Video: Introduction (Monday 11 Jan.)

*Rationality Is...The Essence of Literary Theory (RI): ix–xii; 1–28*

The short readings assigned in RI

First get-together: Wednesday 13 Jan. 6–7 pm EST

Video: Summary of Wk 1 (Friday 15 Jan.)

#### **Wk 2: 18–22 Jan. Rationality is Male**

Video: Introduction (Monday 18 Jan.)

RI 29–43

The short readings assigned in RI

Video: Summary of Wk 2 (Friday 22 Jan)

#### **Wk 3: 25–29 Jan. Rationality is White**

Video: Introduction (Monday 25 Jan.)

RI 44–60

The short readings assigned in RI

Video: Summary of Wk 3 (Friday 29 Jan)

#### **Wk 4: 1–5 Feb. Rationality is Repression**

Video: Introduction (Monday 1 Feb.)

RI 61–81

The short readings assigned in RI

Video: Summary of Wk 4 (Friday 5 Feb.)

**Wk 5: 8–12 Feb. Review and “In-class” Test; Introduction to Part 2**

Video: Review (Monday 8 Feb.)

RI 82–86

Second get-together: Wednesday 10 Feb. 6–7 pm

“In-class” Mid-term: due Thursday 11 Feb.

Video: Introduction to Part 2 (Friday 12 Feb.)

RI 87–91

**Reading Week!**

**Wk 6: 22–26 Feb. Rationality is Judgement**

Video: Introduction (Monday 22 Feb.)

RI 92–110

The short readings assigned in RI

Video: Summary of Wk 6 (Friday 26 Feb.)

**Wk 7: 1–5 Mar. Rationality is Verification**

Video: Introduction (Monday 1 Mar.)

RI 111–22

The short readings assigned in RI

Video: Summary of Wk 7 (Friday 5 Mar.)

**Wk 8: 8–12 Mar. Poetic Participation**

Video: Introduction (Monday 8 Mar.)

RI 122–32

The short readings assigned in RI

Third get-together: Wednesday 10 Mar. 6–7

Short essay due: Friday 12 Mar.

**Wk 9a: 17–19 Mar. Introduction to Part 3**

Video: Introduction to Part 3 (Wednesday 17 Mar.)

RI 133–40

The short readings assigned in RI

**Wk 9b–10a: 22–26 Mar. Rationality is Logocentrism**

Video: Introduction (Monday 22 Mar.)

RI 141–164

The short readings assigned in RI

Video: Summary of Wk 9b–10a

**Wk 10b–11a: 29 Mar. – 2 Apr. Rationality is Real**

Video: Introduction (Monday 29 Mar.)

RI 165–79

The short readings assigned in RI

Video: Summary of Wk 10b–11a (Friday 2 Apr.)

### **Wk 11b–12a: 5–9 Apr. Rationality is Unities**

Video: Introduction (Monday 5 Apr.)

RI 180–97

The short readings assigned in RI

Fourth get-together: Wednesday 7 April

Video: Summary of Wk 11b–12a (Friday 9 Apr.)

### **Wk 12b: 12–14 Apr. Review**

Video: Course in Review (Monday 12 Apr.)

Short essay 2 due: Friday 16 Apr.

#### **The Journal Entries:**

These are meant to be done after you do a theory reading – whether Irigaray, Lowe, or Freud (Part 1), Macmurray, Eagleton, Gadamer, Ricoeur, or Williams (Part 2), or Nietzsche, Saussure, Derrida, Lacan, or Foucault (Part 3) – and before reading my textbook analysis. Try not to enter into a debate with the theorist; try instead to imagine one or two implications of what they are proposing and to write the way they do, with their concerns and terminology. (By all means consult the relevant introduction in Rivkin and Ryan, *but you may not write on their introductions.*) Keep the entry *short* (generally no longer than a page). The journal entries are meant to provide you with an opportunity to mimic or ventriloquize a critical approach by using key vocabulary and concepts. Have fun with them. Journal entries will be marked on a modified pass/fail basis (i.e. A/B/NMR). There are thirteen readings to choose from. I'll record your best four. *At least one must come from the middle section of the course, "False Problems."*

#### **The Mid-term:**

The mid-term will test your understanding of the material covered to date: the introductory material, the three critical approaches discussed thus far, including relevant critical vocabulary, and the various texts considered. The mid-term itself will be released on Monday 8 Mar. and be due on Thursday 11 Mar. I suggest that you write it as if it were an "in-class" mid-term, ie at a single sitting of no more than 75 min. duration. How you choose to write it is, though, up to you.

#### **The Short Essays (approx. 1200 wds):**

(1) Write an essay on one of the poems analyzed in Part 2 of the course, deploying select critical vocabulary developed in this section of the course. Emphasis should be on the application of the theory to engage in critical analysis of the poem *rather than a critique of the theory itself*. Pay close attention to the poetry itself and how it achieves its effects, including rhyme and rhythm, enjambment, alliteration, personification, syntax, visual effects, tone (especially how that tone is achieved), etc. Be observant; be specific. Show how the form (eg the features just listed) and the content (what the poem seems to be about) depend on one another. All the while, keep in mind notions like participation, resonance, and inexhaustible meaning.

(2) Write an essay on anything at all, from a movie to an advertisement to an article of clothing to a scene in a play or novel to a poem or a painting. Here's a suggestion: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=duV2G5XTgQM>. Marks will be given for

consistency and depth of engagement of the chosen theoretical approach, for the level of believability or demonstrated commitment to the approach taken (limited to the confines of the essay itself, of course), as well as clarity and strength of thesis and, within the parameters of the theory, argumentation. One restriction: you may not apply the same theory you deployed in Part 1 of this course (ie the “in-class” test).

The essay must include a research component. Find at least one article that actively applies a contemporary literary theory to the work on which you are writing. Engage the argument of the article in your essay. Cite the article in appropriate MLA or Chicago format. (See the Purdue Owl website for guidelines.)

### **UW Policy Regarding Illness and Missed Tests:**

The University of Waterloo Examination Regulations ([www.registrar.uwaterloo.ca/exams/ExamRegs.pdf](http://www.registrar.uwaterloo.ca/exams/ExamRegs.pdf)) state that:

- A medical certificate presented in support of an official petition for relief from normal academic requirements must provide all of the information requested on the “University of Waterloo Verification of Illness” form or it will not be accepted. This form can be obtained from Health Services or at [www.healthservices.uwaterloo.ca/Health\\_Services/verification.html](http://www.healthservices.uwaterloo.ca/Health_Services/verification.html).
- If a student has a test/examination deferred due to acceptable medical evidence, he/she normally will write the test/examination at a mutually convenient time, to be determined by the course instructor.
- The University acknowledges that, due to the pluralistic nature of the University community, some students may on religious grounds require alternative times to write tests and examinations.
- Elective arrangements (such as travel plans) are not considered acceptable grounds for granting an alternative examination time.

### **Official statements on other relevant University of Waterloo policies:**

**Academic Integrity:** In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. [Check [www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/](http://www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/) for more information.]

**Grievance:** A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of their university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. [Read the St. Jerome’s University Policy on Student Petitions and Grievances, www.sju.ca/sites/default/files/upload\\_file/PLCY\\_AOM\\_Student-Petitions-and-Grievances\\_20151211-SJUSCapproved.pdf](http://www.sju.ca/sites/default/files/upload_file/PLCY_AOM_Student-Petitions-and-Grievances_20151211-SJUSCapproved.pdf). When in doubt, please be certain to contact the St. Jerome’s Advising Specialist, Student Affairs Office, who will provide further assistance.

**Discipline:** A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing an academic offence, and to take responsibility for their actions. [Check

[www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/](http://www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/) for more information.] A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course instructor, academic advisor, or the Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under the [St. Jerome’s University Policy on Student Discipline](#), [www.sju.ca/sites/default/files/PLCY\\_AOM\\_Student-Discipline\\_20131122-SJUSCapproved.pdf](http://www.sju.ca/sites/default/files/PLCY_AOM_Student-Discipline_20131122-SJUSCapproved.pdf). For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students should refer to University of Waterloo Policy 71, Student Discipline, [www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm](http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm). For typical penalties, check the Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties, [www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/guidelines/penaltyguidelines.htm](http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/guidelines/penaltyguidelines.htm).

**Appeals:** A decision made or penalty imposed under the [St. Jerome’s University Policy on Student Petitions and Grievances](#) (other than a petition) or the [St. Jerome’s University Policy on Student Discipline](#) may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes they have a ground for an appeal should refer to the [St. Jerome’s University Policy on Student Appeals](#), [www.sju.ca/sites/default/files/PLCY\\_AOM\\_Student-Appeals\\_20131122-SJUSCapproved.pdf](http://www.sju.ca/sites/default/files/PLCY_AOM_Student-Appeals_20131122-SJUSCapproved.pdf).

**Note for students with disabilities:** [AccessAbility Services](#), located in Needles Hall (Room 1401) at the University of Waterloo, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with AccessAbility Services at the beginning of each academic term, [www.uwaterloo.ca/accessability-services/](http://www.uwaterloo.ca/accessability-services/).