

St. Jerome's University in the University of Waterloo
Department of English
ENGL 251: Literary Theory and Criticism
M/W, 1:00-2:20, SJ1 3016, Winter 2022

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Calendar Description:

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:

In this course we will survey modern and contemporary approaches to literary studies by reading and discussing critical essays about language, culture, and expressions of literary criticism. In addition to exploring and understanding the central concerns, values, and intellectual underpinnings that characterize ideas from a wide range of theorists and their representative critical movements, a larger goal of this course will be to consider the usefulness of theory by bringing critical thought into conversation with selected works of literature. Throughout our time together, we will consider how insights on matters such as race, class, gender, sexuality, ethics, religion, health and well-being—as well as diverse perspectives on the value and meaning of the literary canon—can inform the making and interpretation of texts in both reductive and generative ways. This course will help you develop critical vocabulary and acquire new knowledge about the history of literary criticism, even as it provides opportunities for practical, imaginative, and theoretically informed engagements with literature.

Format of Course Delivery and COVID Contingency Plan:

Until at least January 27th, all announcements, postings, and lectures will be made available through Learn. Once this course returns to in-person delivery, lectures will no longer be recorded and posted, as we will be meeting at the following time and location (M/W, 1:00-2:20, SJ1 3016). Until we return to campus, I will post 60-70 minute lectures on the assigned readings and topics twice per week (normally on Mondays and Wednesdays). You will want to complete the assigned readings *before* viewing the course lectures. Until we return to campus, I will also hold 30 minute live discussion sessions on Fridays at 10:00 a.m. (starting January 14th). These sessions are optional, but will provide opportunities for you to ask questions about assignments and to discuss the week's readings and lectures.

If, during the course of the term, the University of Waterloo must face short term closure (e.g. one week), course readings and pending due dates for assignments will be reassessed and potentially adjusted. If a longer-term cancellation of in-person meetings is required, the course will continue in an asynchronous environment following our established pattern of recorded lectures (M/W) and optional live sessions (Fridays at 10:00 am). Upon returning to in-person delivery, students who cannot attend class due to self-isolation will be accommodated to the best of my ability (e.g. through access to PowerPoint slides, any materials posted on LEARN, and possibly through adjusted due dates for assignments).

Required Texts:

Materials on Course Reserve (access through Learn and/or UW library website)
Lucille Clifton, *Quilting: Poems 1987-1990* (BOA editions, 1991)
Margaret Edson, *Wit* (Faber and Faber, 1999)

Recommended:

A glossary of literary terms such as M.H. Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 11th ed. (**or earlier edition**), Boston: Wadsworth, 2015.

Marking Scheme and Due Dates:

Review Essay (5 pages)	30%	Due: Week 6 (by midnight, Feb. 11)
Application Essay #1 / Clifton (5 pages)	30%	Due: Week 9 (by midnight, March 11)
Application Essay #2 / Edson (5 pages)	30%	Due: Week 12 (by midnight, April 8)
Participation	10%	(Assessed based on time spent during in-person instruction, after January 27 th)

General Instructions for Assignments:

The **review essay** (5 pages) will ask you to review the benefits and/or problems of an argument from readings discussed during the first six weeks of the course. The review will consist of moments of “close reading” from a representative theoretical essay and a discussion of the intellectual assumptions (about readers, authors, texts, cultures, or transcendence) embedded within the argument.

In the **first application essay** (5 pages) you will develop a thesis driven essay that will be sustained by an explication of a poem from Lucille Clifton’s *Quilting*, as well as the application of a theoretical essay studied during the first eight weeks of the term. In the **second application essay** (5 pages) you will use critical vocabulary and theoretical concepts from the course to offer an analysis of some aspect of Margaret Edson’s *Wit*. In both essays, emphasis will be placed on the application of a theory (or theories) to engage in critical analysis of the language and form of the work in question, rather than a critique of the theory itself. Marks will be earned for depth of engagement with the chosen theoretical approach, for the level of believability or demonstrated commitment to the approach taken, as well as the overall clarity and strength of the thesis, interpretive close reading, and sense of argumentation.

The following **key terms and concepts** provide a concise reference list of ideas presented in this course. Most of the terms are built directly into the lectures and reading schedule (see below). However, consider yourself responsible for these terms *whether or not they are explicitly taken up in class*. These terms are included in M.H. Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham, eds., *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (a recommended text).

Key Terms and Concepts

Aestheticism	Deconstruction
Affective Fallacy	Defamiliarization
Ambiguity	Epistemology
Archetypal Criticism	Expressionistic Criticism
Author and Authorship	Feminist Criticism
Book History Study	Formalism
Canon of Literature	Gender Criticism
Criticism	Habituation
Critique	Impressionistic Criticism
Cultural Studies	Imitation (<i>mimesis</i>)

Intentional Fallacy
Interpretation and Hermeneutics
Literary Structuralism (second-order structuralism)
Marxist Criticism
Metaphor, Theories of
Modernism and Postmodernism
New Criticism
New Historicism

Objectivist Criticism
Ontology
Postcolonial Studies
Poststructuralism
Psychoanalytic Criticism
Reader Response Criticism
Repetition / Rhythm / Variation
Semiotics (first-order structuralism)
Telos / Teleology

SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Week One

W-1/5 Course Overview: syllabus, books, assignments, and reading schedule
Introduction: Defamiliarizing Language and Representation

Week Two

M-1/10 An Overview: Literary Theory and Criticism
Key Terms and Concepts: Epistemology, Ontology, Imitation (mimesis); broad traditions of literary criticism: impressionist, expressionist, objectivist, pragmatic, and hermeneutic
Reading: Richard Kearney, "Where do Stories Come From?" (LEARN/Course Reserve, 3-14)

The "Science" of Tracing Unity: Russian Formalism and New Criticism

W- 1/12 Russian Formalism
Key Terms and Concepts: Formalism, Defamiliarization, Habituation, and Ambiguity
Reading: Rivkin and Ryan, "Introduction: Formalisms" (LEARN/Course Reserve, 3-7); Viktor Shklovsky, "Art as Technique" (LEARN/Course Reserve, 8-14)

Week Three

M- 1/17 New Criticism
Key Terms and Concepts: New Criticism, Intentional Fallacy, Affective Fallacy
Reading: Cleanth Brooks, "The Formalist Critics" (LEARN/Course Reserve, 15-20)

Structural Order and Patterns: Semiotics, Literary Structuralism, and Archetypes

W- 1/19 Semiotics and Structuralism
Key Terms and Concepts: Semiotics
Reading: Rivkin and Ryan, "The Implied Order: Structuralism" (LEARN/Course Reserve, 131-133); from Ferdinand de Saussure, "Course in General Linguistics" (LEARN/Course Reserve, excerpts 137-141; 167-174)

Week Four

M- 1/24 Literary Structuralism and Narrative Patterns
Key Terms and Concepts: Structuralist Criticism, Archetypes, Typology
Reading: Peter Wayne Moe, "An Inheritance" (LEARN/Course Reserve, 58-74)

Poststructuralism: The High Art of Destabilization

W- 1/26 Questioning the Stability of Origins and Authorship
Key Terms and Concepts: Critique and Humanism
Reading: Friedrich Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lying in an Extra-Moral Sense" (LEARN/Course Reserve, 262-265)

Week Five

M- 1/31 Questioning the Stability of Language and Authorship
Key Terms and Concepts: Poststructuralism and Teleology
Reading: Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author" (LEARN/Course Reserve, 253-257)

What are We Doing Here?: Imagination, the Canon, and Education

W- 2/2 Key Terms and Concepts: Canon of Literature
Reading: Martha Nussbaum, "Cultivating Humanity: The Narrative Imagination" (LEARN/Course Reserve, 382-401)

Week Six

M- 2/7 Reading: Marilynne Robinson, "Freedom of Thought" (LEARN/Course Reserve, 3-18)
Due: Review Essay (Friday, February 11th by midnight)

**Working from the Margins:
Feminist Criticism, Class, Ethnicity, and Canon**

W- 2/9 Feminist Literary Criticism: Gender, Ethnicity, and the Canon
Key Terms and Concepts: Feminist Criticism and Gender Criticism
Reading: Rivkin and Ryan, "Feminist Paradigms/Gender Effects" (Learn/Course Reserve, 893-900); Luce Irigaray, "The Power of Discourse and the Subordination of the Feminine" (LEARN/Course Reserve, 795-798)

Week Seven

M-2/14 Reading: Adrienne Rich, "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision" (LEARN/Course Reserve, 511-524); excerpt from Toni Morrison, "Playing in the Dark" (LEARN/Course Reserve, excerpt 1163-1169)

W-2/16 Reading: Audre Lorde, "Poetry is Not a Luxury" (LEARN/Course Reserve, 36-39) and "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference" (LEARN/Course Reserve, 854-860)

Reading Break (2/21 - 2/25)

Week Eight

**Application of Theories:
Lucille Clifton's *Quilting: Poems 1987-1990***

M- 2/28 Clifton, 1-24

W- 3/2 Clifton, 25-68

Week Nine

M- 3/7 Clifton, 69-84
Due: Application Essay #1 / Clifton (Friday, March 11th by midnight)

**Texts, Minds, Bodies and Ethics:
Practices of Reading and Writing Texts-Bodies**

W-3/9 Psychoanalytic Criticism
Reading: Rivkin and Ryan, "Strangers to Ourselves: Psychoanalysis"
(LEARN/Course Reserve, 567-574); Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny"
(LEARN/Course Reserve, 592-614)

Week Ten

M- 3/14 Clinical Practice and Narrative
Reading: Roger Pitman and Scott Orr, "The Black Hole of Trauma"
(LEARN/Course Reserve, 469-471); Bessel van der Kolk and Alexander
McFarlane, "The Black Hole of Trauma" (LEARN/Course Reserve, 487- 502)

W-3/16 Clinical Practice and Narrative
Reading: Arthur Frank, "When Bodies Need Voices" (LEARN/Course Reserve,
1-25)

Week Eleven

M-3/21 Ethics of Reading and Writing Bodies
Reading: Mark Ledbetter, "Doing Violence to the Body: An Ethic of Reading and
Writing" (LEARN/Course Reserve, 1-21)

**Application of Theories:
Margaret Edson's *Wit***

W- 3/23 Edson, 1-20

Week Twelve

M- 3/28 Edson, 21-50

W- 3/30 Edson, 51-73

Week Thirteen

M-4/4 Edson, 73-85
Due: Application Essay #2 / Edson (Friday, April 8th by midnight)

ADDITIONAL DETAILS AND PROCEDURES

ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSION AND LATE ASSIGNMENTS

- All assignments will be submitted to a dropbox on LEARN. A few days before an assignment is due (for example, Week 6), I will set up a dropbox. Assignments must be submitted (preferably as a Word document) no later than midnight on the due date. Assignments submitted after the midnight deadline will be marked 2% per day late, including weekends.
- **Attendance and Participation:**
Since we will not be meeting in-person until at least January 27th, I will not be assessing course participation until that time. If we do not return to campus for the entire winter term, I will remove the participation component from the course marking scheme and assess overall course marks based on the three assigned essays (on a 90 point scale).

Assuming that we do return to campus, I'll expect that you will attend class on a regular basis. I will also expect that you will have read the material for each day in thoughtful and critical ways. You should have something to say about the readings each day – meaning that you should contribute to class discussion on a regular basis. In terms of participation marking (10% of the overall mark), you should expect the following: if you do not attend class on a regular basis, your participation mark will be assessed at 0-50; if you attend class but do not contribute to course discussion on a regular basis, expect a mark between 60-70; if you attend class regularly and participate in meaningful ways, you should expect a participation mark ranging from 75-100.

EMAIL COMMUNICATION AND OFFICE HOURS

Students using email to contact me should include their first and last names, as well as the course in which they are enrolled in the email subject line. Feel free to contact me about the course through email, but please keep the following in mind:

- I am unable to provide in-depth responses about assignments, readings, and proofreading. If you wish to discuss these matters after reviewing guidelines for an assignment, please set up a time for a virtual office meeting. I may also save general questions to be addressed during the Friday live meetings.

UW POLICY REGARDING ILLNESS AND MISSED TESTS

The University of Waterloo Examination Regulations (www.registrar.uwaterloo.ca/exams/ExamRegs.pdf) states 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.
- 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.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Students should be aware that this course contains the intellectual property of their instructor, TA, and/or St. Jerome's University. Intellectual property includes items such as:

- Lecture content, spoken and written (and any audio/video recording thereof);
- Lecture handouts, presentations, and other materials prepared for the course (e.g., PowerPoint slides);
- Questions or solution sets from various types of assessments (e.g., assignments, quizzes, tests, final exams); and
- Work protected by copyright (e.g., any work authored by the instructor or TA or used by the instructor or TA with permission of the copyright owner).

Course materials and the intellectual property contained therein, are used to enhance a student's educational experience. However, sharing this intellectual property without the intellectual property owner's permission is a violation of intellectual property rights. For this reason, it is necessary to ask the instructor, TA, and/or St. Jerome's University for permission before uploading and sharing the intellectual property of others online (e.g., to an online repository).

Permission from an instructor, TA, or the University is also necessary before sharing the intellectual property of others from completed courses with students taking the same/similar courses in subsequent terms/years. In many cases, instructors might be happy to allow distribution of certain materials. However, doing so without expressed permission is considered a violation of intellectual property rights.

Please alert the instructor if you become aware of intellectual property belonging to others (past or present) circulating, either through the student body or online. The intellectual property rights owner deserves to know (and may have already given their consent).

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

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/ 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.](#) 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/ 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](#). For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students should refer to University of Waterloo [Policy 71, Student Discipline](#). For typical penalties, check the [Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties](#).

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](#).

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.