

## Literary Theory and Criticism

ENGL 4533

Spring 2023

TR 12:30-1:50, PY 205

Professor Kirsten Lodge

[kirsten.lodge@msutexas.edu](mailto:kirsten.lodge@msutexas.edu), 940-397-4363

**Office:** 217 Bea Wood Hall

**Office Hours:** MWF 12-12:50, TR 11-12, and by appointment

This course will introduce upper-level students to the most significant approaches to literary and cultural theory and to canonical theorists and theoretical texts. I have given preference to theories that best lend themselves to broad practical application, and students will write papers applying different theoretical lenses to a single story. We will also read examples of how the theorists themselves and other scholars have applied the different theories to texts, and we will discuss and practice different ways to apply the theories to literature. Students will be expected to grapple with difficult primary texts in their efforts to understand the theory firsthand, rather than mediated through a textbook or other condensed description of theoretical approaches, although we will also be reading a textbook as a secondary source. We will contextualize the theories historically, examine them critically, and discuss how they respond to one another. Students will thus not only learn about theory, but also come to terms with difficult essays and ideas, master important theoretical terms, and develop critical thinking skills. The assignments are designed to hone students' speaking and writing skills as well. Students should realize that the texts we will be reading are difficult, and not expect to understand everything or feel that they do not have the necessary background or capabilities. We will work through the texts together through discussion, presentations, and class activities, and students should feel empowered when they realize that they are indeed able to apply theoretical principles to literature.

**Note:** The starred texts are on D2L, not in the anthology.

### *Course Schedule*

**Jan. 17** \*The Harvard Writing Center, "How To Do a Close Reading"; Barry, pp. 1-8 and 16-20

### **Russian Formalism, New Criticism, and Rhetoric**

**19** Shklovsky, "Art as Technique"; Eichenbaum, "The Formal Method"; Barry, pp. 318-21; "The Virgins" (read by Feb. 2)

**24** \*Tomashevsky, "Thematics"

26 \*Eichenbaum, “How ‘The Overcoat’ Is Made” (II-III); \*Chizhevsky, “About Gogol’s ‘Overcoat’” (I-V); Wimsatt and Beardsley, “The Intentional Fallacy”

31 Wimsatt and Beardsley, “The Affective Fallacy”; \*Ian Watt, “The First Pages of ‘The Ambassadors’: An Explication”; Student Paper, “Motion and Emotion: A Close Reading of *The Aeneid* 6.402-6.416”; Corbett, From *Classical Rhetoric*; Lanham, “Tacit Persuasion Patterns and A Dictionary of Rhetorical Terms”

### Structuralism, Linguistics, and Narratology

**Feb. 2** Saussure, From *A Course in General Linguistics*; \*Lodge, “The Semiotics of Gogol’s *Dead Souls*”; Barry, 38-43

7 \*Lotman, “Text and System,” “On the Specific Character of the Artistic World,” “F.I. Tiutchev,” and “A.A. Blok”

**First Paper Due (Close Reading)**

9 Jakobson, “Two Aspects of Language” and \* “Grammar of Poetry and Poetry of Grammar”; \*Lodge, “Application of Theoretical Principles to a Poem by Velimir Khlebnikov”

14 Propp, From *Morphology of the Folktale*; \*Levi-Strauss, “The Structural Study of Myth”

16 \*Todorov, “Grammar of Narrative,” “Secret of Narrative,” and “Poetics”; Barry, 214-22

21 \*Genette, “Structuralism and Literary Criticism”; Barthes, From *Mythologies* and \* “The Struggle with the Angel”; Barry, 222-33

23, 28 Barthes, *S/Z* (read the story in the appendix first); Barry, 233-37

### Reader Response Theory

**Mar. 2** Fish, “Interpretive Communities”; Frow, “Text and System”; \*Iser, “Interaction between Text and Reader”; \*Gibson, “Authors, Speakers, Readers, and Mock Readers”

**Second Paper Due** (Structuralism, Linguistics, Narratology)

7 Eco, “Overinterpreting Texts” and “Between Author and Text”; Culler, “In Defence of Overinterpretation” (both in *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*)

### Post-Structuralism and Postmodernism

9 Bakhtin, From *Discourse in the Novel, Rabelais and His World* (Part VII of the anthology) and \**Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*

### **13-17 No Class: Spring Break**

**21** \*Johnson, “The Critical Difference: BartheS/BalZac” and “Writing”; \*Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” \*’From Work to Text,” and \*From *The Pleasure of the Text*; Barry, 59-67

**23** Derrida, “Differance” and \*’The Exorbitant: Question of Method”  
**Guest Lecturer:** Dr. Tyler Williams

**27** *Last Day for ‘W’*

**28** \*Derrida, “Mallarmé”; \*Johnson, From *Melville’s Fist: The Execution of Billy Budd*; Barry, 68-71

**30** Lyotard, From *The Postmodern Condition*; Baudrillard, “Simulacra and Simulations”; Barry 71-76

### **Psychoanalysis and Psychology**

**Apr. 4** Freud, From *The Interpretation of Dreams*, “On Narcissism,” “The Uncanny” (I-II)

**Third Paper Due** (Reader Response Theory, Bakhtin, Post-Structuralism, Postmodernism)

**6 No Class**

**11** Freud, From *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*; “Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego”; “The Theme of the Three Caskets”; Brooks, “Narrative Desire”; Barry, 92-103

**13** Lacan, “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I”; Van der Kolk and McFarlane, “The Black Hole of Trauma”; Barry, 104-13

### **Feminism**

**18** Irigay, “The Power of Discourse and the Subordination of the Feminine”; Gilbert and Gubar, From *The Madwoman in the Attic*; Barry, 116-20

**Fourth Paper Due** (Psychoanalysis, Psychology)

**20** \*Bordo, “The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity”; \*Žižek, “Courtly Love, or, Woman as a Thing”; \*bell hooks, “Sexism in Spike Lee”; Barry, 125-30

### **Power Relations, Race and Gender Theory**

**25** Foucault, From *Discipline and Punish*; Althusser, From *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus*; Barry, 160-64

27 \*Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”; McClintock, “The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term ‘Post-Colonialism’”; Barry, 185-94

**May 3** Fishkin, “Interrogating ‘Whiteness’”; Sedgwick, From *Epistemology of the Closet*; Barry, 137-47

**Final Paper Proposal Due**

### Historicisms

5 Montrose, “‘Professing the Renaissance’: The Poetics and Politics of Culture”; and one other essay of your choice from Part Six (Historicisms); Barry, 166-75

**Fifth Paper Due** (Feminism, Power Relations, Race and Gender Theory)

**12 Final Paper Due**

Course Requirements:

**1. Participation (10%).** You will get the most out of class and improve the verbal formulation of your thoughts if you participate in the discussions and class activities, especially since the texts we will be reading are *difficult*. Please bring the readings to class. I encourage you to speak with all of your classmates and respond to one another’s ideas during discussion, rather than addressing your thoughts only to me.

**2. First Short Paper (10%).** A 2-3 page close reading of the opening of “The Virgins” is due on **Jan. 31**. You should read the entire text before doing the close reading. You may write up to 4 pages if you feel you need the extra space. All papers for this course should be submitted in hard copy except for the final paper.

**3. Second through Fifth Short Papers (12.5% each).** In each 3-4 page paper, you will approach “The Virgins” from any one of the theoretical standpoints we have covered since the preceding paper (see the lists in the syllabus for specifics). You may write up to five pages if you feel you need the extra space. The purpose of these assignments is to show you that a single text can yield multiple interpretations; there is no one “correct reading” of any text. You will discover new aspects of the story as you approach it through different theoretical lenses. You should cite any sources you use in MLA style. I have included the bibliographical information for sources posted on D2L so that you may cite them accurately. Consult the MLA website or the Writing Center if you need guidance.

**4. Paper Presentation (5%).** At the beginning of the semester you will sign up to present one of your papers to the class on the day it is due. You should make an outline of your paper, including your thesis and all supporting details, and summarize your argument in about 5 minutes. Students may then ask you questions. Given the number of students in the class, we will have several short presentations on the due date of each paper. Please submit your outline to me on the day of your presentation. Paper discussions should stay focused on the papers presented, because I would like to minimize general discussion so that subsequent papers will be as original as possible.

**5. Two Theory Presentations (5% each).** At the beginning of the semester you will sign up to present on two primary readings (or theorists). Your presentation should be 5-10 minutes long. You should begin your presentation with what you understood from the text(s), then raise questions for discussion. Some texts are particularly difficult. You are not expected to fully understand them; just tell us what you got out of the reading. You may change the date of your presentation within the first two weeks of the semester. If you do not present when you are signed up to present, you will get a zero for the assignment unless you have a documented excused absence. You may do background research on the subject of your presentation if you wish.

**6. Final Paper (15%).** You will submit a 5-7 page term paper applying any theoretical approach to a text of your choice by **May 12**. Please send it to me by email. Please email or see me with a short, informal proposal by **May 3**.

**7. Attendance.** You must attend class to help you understand the material. You are permitted two unexcused absences. Absences will be excused on the basis of a note from a doctor, dean, military official, or coach. If you believe that your absence should be excused but you do not have a note, you must see me in person and explain your absence. I will then tell you whether your absence is excused. Having to work does not constitute an excused absence. Communication is essential: if you do not explain your absence to me immediately before or after, it will not be excused. Your final grade will be lowered by one point for each unexcused absence in excess of the two permitted unexcused absences.

### **Course Policies:**

**Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty:** Plagiarism will not be tolerated. If you deliberately plagiarize on any assignments or papers, or engage in any other form of academic dishonesty as defined by the MSU Student Handbook and the course Academic Dishonesty Policy (distributed in class and available on D2L), *you will get an F in the course and disciplinary proceedings will be initiated. There will be no second chances.* Other forms of academic dishonesty include, for instance, forging doctor's notes and lying to the professor.

**Late Papers:** Grades for late papers will be reduced by one-third of a letter grade per day (e.g., A > A-), including weekends and holidays, unless you have a good reason for submitting the paper late and you have spoken to me about it.

**Cellphones and computers:** Please do not use cellphones or computers in class. Exceptions: if you wish to consult an e-text on your device, please tell me ahead of time; in addition, if a question arises that we cannot answer, I may suggest you do a google search on your device. If you wish to take notes on your computer, please inform me at the beginning of the semester and show me your notes at my request.

**Attention:** Please be alert and do not lay your head down on your desk during class, or I may mark you late or absent without warning.

**Class Dismissal:** Please do not start to pack up your things or leave until I have dismissed the class. If you believe I have gone over the allotted time, please raise your hand and let me know.

**Food and Beverages:** You may bring beverages to class, but please do not eat while class is in session.

**Email Communication:** The only way I can communicate with you outside of class is through email. You are responsible for checking your “preferred” email regularly for any reminders, clarifications, or other communications from me.

**Safe Zone Statement:** This classroom is a “safe zone” in which all students will be treated and will treat one another equally, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, political beliefs, age, or ability. Diversity of thought is encouraged.

***REPEATED AND/OR SERIOUS VIOLATIONS OF ANY OF THESE POLICIES WILL RESULT IN A LOWERED GRADE WITHOUT WARNING, ESPECIALLY IF YOUR GRADE IS BORDERLINE.***

### **Additional Information:**

**“The Virgins”:** At the beginning of the semester, I will post the story “The Virgins” on D2L. Throughout the semester, in each of your papers, you will apply different theories to the interpretation of this story. You will not be given the author’s name. It is important that you should not know who wrote the story or when it was written for two reasons. First, this will enable you to concentrate entirely on the text. Most of the theories we cover do not require any background knowledge of the story or the author, and I want you to focus exclusively on the theory and its application to the text. Second, I do not want you to consult any secondary sources on the story. Each of your papers should be entirely original. This is why we will not discuss the story in class, except for paper presentations, and during the presentations we will not be sidetracked from discussion of how students applied the theory to the text. Please do not try to Google the text or otherwise attempt to find out who the author is, as that would defeat the main purpose of the course.

**Office Hours:** My office hours are given above, and I am always happy to help you with any questions you may have, or you may just come by to talk. If you can’t make my office hours, we can make an appointment.

**Academic Accommodations:** If you require special accommodations, please contact Disability Support Service, 168 Clark Student Center, 397-4140, at the beginning of the semester so that appropriate arrangements can be made. Arrangements cannot be applied retroactively.

**TASP's Learning Center (TLC):** Located on the first floor of Moffett Library, TASP's Learning Center offers drop-in tutoring support for most general subject areas including but not limited to Writing, Math, Science, Business, and Foreign Languages. Students

check in to work one-on-one with a tutor typically for an hour regarding specific concepts. To check the availability of tutors in a specific subject area, navigate to: <https://msutexas.edu/academics/tasp/on-campus.php>.

### **Required Books:**

Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Manchester UP, 2009.

Barthes, Roland. *S/Z: An Essay*. Tr. Richard Miller. Hill and Wang, 1975.

Eco, Umberto. *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, with Richard Rorty, Jonathan Culler and Christine Brooke-Rose. Ed. Stefan Collini. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004.

Rivkin, Julie and Michael Ryan, ed. *Literary Theory: An Anthology*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Blackwell Publishing, 2004.

**Additional required readings have been posted on D2L.**