

SYLLABUS

Introduction to Literary Theory

In this course you will explore the various schools of modern literary criticism. You will be introduced to the various ways in which scholars of literature have tried to interpret texts, and will learn how to read texts using the methods they have developed. Readings include important critical texts by well-known scholars, read in conjunction with a general explanation that outlines their place in the various schools of literary thought. Additionally, we will apply some of the critical methods we learn to select readings of fiction.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- Leitch, Vincent, ed. *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. W. W. Norton, 2001.
- Tyson, Lois. *Critical Theory Today – A User-Friendly Guide*. Garland Publishing, 1999.
- Ousmane, Sembene. *Xala*. Lawrence Hill & Co., 1997.
- Kafka, Franz. *The Metamorphosis and Other Stories*. Dover, 1996.

The Norton Anthology contains important primary texts on critical theory. We will read these texts selectively. The Tyson is a textbook that provides a general overview of the “schools” of modern criticism; we will read most of it. The Ousmane and the Kafka will be used as “case studies.” Any other reading assignments will either be handed out in class or be available on electronic reserve.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

You are required to have done your reading for each class meeting, in full. This ensures that, as a class, we can have a lively and informed discussion on the works assigned. Critical theory has a steep learning curve sometimes, but we’ll work through it together. While I will take up some of class time with lecture, discussion is a major component of this course. Class **participation** is therefore a must. You are responsible for participating *actively*. Your class participation grade is based largely on your *actual verbal participation* in the classroom (i.e. what you say out loud, which should be both pertinent to the discussion and stated at the appropriate time). Speak up, and respect others’ rights to do so as well! It not only affects your grade, but makes the class much more productive and enjoyable. I am confident that we, as a group, can create an environment where everyone will feel comfortable contributing. Here are a few pointers on how to participate successfully in class discussion. The student who *consistently* makes the effort to contribute according to these guidelines will receive a grade in the A to B range. A C grade, FYI, is fairly consistent participation that shows a basic understanding of the readings and other assignments.

- If you are usually comfortable with speaking in class, then choose the moments you wish to speak carefully; more is not necessarily better. On the flipside, if you tend to be a bit quiet, don't necessarily wait until the opportunity to speak is handed to you. Be proactive. Are you shy? Prepare some comments ahead of class and read them out loud instead. Come talk to me if you'd like some help.
- Sometimes I will give you reading questions ahead of time. Sometimes I'll leave you to your own devices. In either case, as you read, TAKE NOTES. Don't just breeze through. You'll be surprised at how many ideas you'll have when you look back over what you wrote down. Use these notes to prepare some comments for class.
- When you speak, state your point concisely and stay on the point under discussion. If tangential perspectives emerge, as they invariably will, write them down so you can return to the issue later. Of course, if the discussion seems ready to move in a different direction, then please proceed. I will do my best to keep us on track, but part of that responsibility is yours, too.
- Support your points on the basis of the viewings and readings. That means citing exact page numbers, reading short passages aloud, identifying key terms/issues, and/or accurately summarizing in addition to stating your idea/asking your question. This last bullet point is *especially* important for this class!

Throughout the semester, you will each present on a particular theorist. This 10-minute **presentation** should be a well-researched, yet *concise* treatment of the person's work (did I say CONCISE?). You are also required to produce a well-organized, "studyable" handout for your classmates. This means that you provide a) a meaningful summary of their ideas, which will show us how they relate with the particular piece we're reading in class, and b) an annotated bibliography of at least three sources, two of which are NOT from the Internet.

There will be a *late* **midterm**, which will test you extensively on terminology, as well as your overall grasp of the material we've covered up to that point.

You will also write **four papers** on assigned topics. The first, 3-4 pages, will be your attempt to summarize the main points of one of our theoretical texts. Paper two, at 5-6 pages, will be a so-called "case study" where you will write about a primary text (Kafka) using theoretical principles you have already learned. Examining how two different critical approaches compare to one another will be the task for paper three (also 5-6 pages). The last paper, at 7-8 pages, is another "case study," but this time you'll try to use your OWN mix of critical perspectives to analyze the text (Ousmane). This last paper stands in the place of a final exam.

Lastly, a note on **attendance**: needless to say, your presence in class is key to your success in this course. If you aren't here, you can't participate; chronic absenteeism will not be tolerated. You are allowed two *excused* absences (i.e., talk to me ahead of time if possible). *Each* unexcused absence (i.e. not a official medical excuse, family emergency or the like) after that will have a significant negative impact on your final grade.

GRADING:

Participation	15%
Presentation	10%
Paper 1	10%
Paper 2	10%
Paper 3	15%
Paper 4	20%
Midterm	20%

SCHEDULE (subject to change):

<i>Week 1</i>	<i>Beginnings</i>
January 17	Introductions
January 19	What is theory? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Introduction to Theory and Criticism” in Norton, pp. 1-28 • Tyson, Chapter 1, pp. 1-11
<i>Week 2</i>	<i>The Death of the Author</i>
January 24	New Criticism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tyson, Chapter 5, pp. 117-152 • MacLeish, “Ars Poetica” (photocopy) Presentation #1 (Cleanth Brooks)
January 26	Reader Response Theory <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tyson, Chapter 6, pp. 153-195 Presentation #2 (Stanley Fish)
<i>Week 3</i>	<i>Psychoanalytic Criticism</i>
January 31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tyson, Chapter 2, pp. 13-47 Presentation #3 (Sigmund Freud)
February 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freud, Selections from <i>The Interpretation of Dreams</i>; “The ‘Uncanny’”; “Fetishism” in Norton, pp. 919-956 Presentation #4 (Jacques Lacan)
<i>Week 4</i>	<i>Marxist Criticism</i>
February 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tyson, Chapter 3, pp. 49-79 Presentation #5 (Karl Marx) Paper #1 due
February 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marx/Engels, various excerpts in Norton, pp. 764-788

<i>Week 5</i>	
February 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kafka, “The Metamorphosis” Althusser, excerpt from <i>Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses</i> in Norton, pp. 1483-1509 Presentation #6 (Louis Althusser)
February 16	Kafka cont’d
<i>Week 6</i>	<i>Feminist Criticism</i>
February 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tyson, Chapter 4, pp. 81-116 Woolf, selections from <i>A Room of One’s Own</i> in Norton, pp. 1021-1029 Gilbert & Gubar, excerpt from <i>The Madwoman in the Attic</i> in Norton, pp. 2023-2035
February 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Atwood, “Bluebeard’s Egg” (ER) Paper #2 due
<i>Week 7</i>	<i>Structuralist Criticism</i>
February 28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tyson, Chapter 7, pp. 197-240 Presentation #7 (Ferdinand de Saussure) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Saussure, selections from <i>Course in General Linguistics</i> in Norton, pp. 960-977
March 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lévi-Strauss, “The Structural Study of Myth” (ER) Presentation #8 (Claude Lévi-Strauss)
<i>Week 8</i>	
March 7	Midterm review
March 9	Midterm
	SPRING BREAK!
<i>Week 9</i>	<i>Deconstructive Criticism</i>
March 28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tyson, Chapter 8, pp. 241-276 Presentation #9 (Jacques Derrida)
March 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plato, excerpt from <i>Phaedrus</i> in Norton, pp. 81-85 Derrida, selections from <i>Dissemination</i> in Norton, pp. 1830-1878
<i>Week 10</i>	
April 4	Derrida and Plato cont’d
April 6	No class meeting

<i>Week 11</i>	<i>Cultural Studies (or The Death of the Author, Revisited)</i>
April 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tyson, Chapter 9, pp. 277-315 Presentation #10 (Michel Foucault)
April 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foucault, "What is an Author?" in Norton, pp. 1622-1636 Barthes, "The Death of the Author" in Norton, pp. 1466-1470 Presentation #11 (Roland Barthes)
<i>Week 12</i>	<i>Postcolonial Criticism and beyond...?</i>
April 18	Foucault cont'd
April 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tyson, Chapter 11, pp. 363-422 Said, "Introduction" to <i>Orientalism</i> in Norton, pp. 1991-2012 Paper #3 due
<i>Week 13</i>	
April 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bhabha, "The Commitment to Theory" in Norton, pp. 2379-2397 Presentation #12 (Homi Bhabha)
April 27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ousmane, <i>Xala</i>
<i>Week 14</i>	
May 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ousmane cont'd.
May 4	Course evaluations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tyson, Chapter 12, pp. 423-429
May 14	Paper #4 due

Enjoy the summer!