

APPROACHES TO LITERARY STUDY (ENGL-20100-01)

Fall 2009

MWF 10:00 – 10:50, CHS 201

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Other times by appointment.

COURSE GOALS:

Why do we read, what do we read, how can we read it—and why would anyone ever write about reading? Organized around those huge questions, this course will encourage students to grapple with the issues and concerns that occupy critics when they think about literature. In the process, it will attempt to make students more self-conscious about their own strategies for reading and interpreting, as well as the biases and assumptions that guide them. We will also take a behind-the-scenes look at the field of literary studies and the controversies that have transformed the ways literature is studied. A few of the many questions to be considered: How did the academy come to have such a thing as an English Department in the first place? What is the “canon” and who decides what it includes? What interpretive challenges are created by editing or translating texts? What are the virtues and limitations of “close reading”? What “critical approaches” can one employ, and what distinguishes them? What is literary theory?

On what is perhaps a more practical level, we’ll practice reading, understanding, using, and citing critical/scholarly work.

REQUIREMENTS AND POLICIES:

1) **Preparation and participation.** This class will be primarily discussion. For it to be successful, you and I will have to make an investment in it. Please do the reading for every class, and come prepared to discuss those readings. Underlining as you read, taking down notes, jotting down questions are all necessary strategies for preparing for discussion. Always come to class with the text that we are scheduled to discuss and with some writing, formal or informal, assigned or not, about that text. Perhaps you’ll write in the margins of the text, in a separate notebook, or on your computer, but write! You will already have begun a private discussion of the text that will enable you to participate more readily in our class discussion.

2) **Attendance.** I expect every student to attend every class session. But knowing that sometimes religious holidays, snowstorms, illnesses, and other circumstances prevent a student from getting to class, I allow three absences (“absences,” not “cuts”) without penalty. Each additional absence, however, will affect the final grade: one-third of a grade will be deducted from the final mark (such as from B to B-) for each additional class missed, and the ninth absence will result in an F for the course.

In addition to attending, please observe some basic rules of classroom decorum: arrive on time, don’t walk out of the room in mid-class (except in truly serious cases), stay awake (bring coffee if you need it), and don’t let your electronic devices be a distraction.

3) **Written work.**

Minor Assignments. You will be required to submit a number of short pieces (1 to 2 typed pages) throughout the semester, responding to specific topics that usually concern a particular day’s reading. The purpose is to set up class discussions and to generate ideas for the major essays. I cannot

accept late minor assignments. Most of these will simply earn checks or check-pluses or –minuses. (Pop quizzes over the readings are also possible and will be graded.)

Major Assignments. You will write three fairly short essays and one longer paper (on Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*); some will require research. Normally, on days that the short essays are due, we will devote the class period to brief presentations in which you'll explain your basic argument to your classmates; the idea is to use these essays to encourage the development of a real interpretive community as opposed to keeping the essays a secret between the individual writer and the instructor. Anyone who wishes to revise the first short essay (due on Sept. 16) will be welcome to do so, and I'll average the two grades to arrive at a grade for the assignment.

Some further comments about written work.

- * Keep a copy of everything you turn in.
- * Don't let a paper deadline keep you from attending class.
- * Don't commit plagiarism, which I consider a very serious offense. One of the purposes of this course is to practice using scholarly sources properly, and that purpose inclines me even more to deal with plagiarism mercilessly. In recent years, thanks to the Internet, we in the Ithaca College English Department have seen a considerable amount of cheating in essays, with ideas and even whole passages lifted from websites without attribution. So this is fair warning: academic dishonesty will result in an F as a course grade and whatever other sanctions may be imposed by the college's Office of Judicial Affairs.

4) **Final grade.** Assuming good attendance, the final course grade will be computed as follows:

3 short essays – total 55%

8-page research paper – 25%

exercises, presentations, class participation – 20%

Reasonable accommodation will be provided to students with documented disabilities on a case-by-case basis. Students must register with the Office of Academic Support Services and provide appropriate documentation to the College before any academic adjustment will be provided.

TEXTS:

Course booklet (available from Muller 309)

Peter Barry. *Beginning Theory*. Manchester Univ. Press.

James Joyce. *The Dead*. Ed. Daniel R. Schwartz. Bedford Case Studies in Contemporary Criticism.

Ernest Hemingway. *The Sun Also Rises*. Scribner / Simon & Schuster.

Euripides. *Helen*. Trans. Michie and Leach. Oxford Univ. Press.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS:

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| Aug. 26 | Introduction. |
| | <u>Writing assignment for Fri:</u> What do you read on your own, and why? |
| 28 | Reading for pleasure / reading for English class. Bloom and Pollitt (booklet 1-7). |
| | <u>Writing assignment for Mon:</u> 1-page summary of Eagleton's essay. |
| Aug. 31 | Reading as an ideological enterprise? Discuss Eagleton, "The Rise of English" (booklet 8-13). |

- Sept. 2 Writing inside and outside the academy: response, review, analysis. Salter, "Welcome to Hiroshima" (booklet 40).
- 4 A brief history of English studies. What we can do without theory, from Barry, "Tackling Textuality" (booklet 29-31).
- 7 LABOR DAY – no class.
- 9 Liberal humanism (Barry, *BT* 11-32). Wordsworth, "Simon Lee: The Old Huntsman." (booklet 32-33).
- 11 Booker, "The New Criticism" (booklet 34-39). Salter, "Welcome to Hiroshima" again and "Costanza Bonarelli" (booklet 40-41).
- 14 The matter of "canon": tables of contents of three anthologies (booklet 14-28).
- 16 **Short essay due**, on Salter's poetry. Presentations.
- 18 Joyce, "The Dead" (21-29).
- 21 Joyce, "The Dead" (29-45).
- 23 Joyce, "The Dead" (45-59); reader-response criticism (125-133, 137-149).
- 25 Psychoanalytic criticism of Joyce's "The Dead" (85-96, 102-124). New historicism and Joyce's "The Dead" (150-158, 163-177).
- 28 [Yom Kippur] Moving into post-structuralism (Barry, *BT* 39-73).
- 30 Deconstruction and Joyce's "The Dead" (206-215, 219-233).
- Oct. 2 Feminist criticism and Joyce's "The Dead" (178-185, 190-205).
- 5 Feminist criticism, continued (Barry, *BT* 121-130, 134). Rossetti, "Maude Clare" (booklet 42).
- 7 Practice quoting and documenting sources (booklet i-vii).
- 9 QUIZ ON FORMAT FOR QUOTING/CITING.
- 12 **Short essay due**, on "The Dead." Presentations.
- 14 Postcolonial criticism. Barry, *BT* 192-202). Walcott, "A Far Cry from Africa" and notes (booklet 43, 45).
- 16 FALL BREAK – no class.
- 19 Postcolonial criticism, continued. Walcott's essay "The Muse of History" (46-48) and his poem "Ruins of a Great House" (booklet 44-45).
- 21 Euripides, *Helen* (English lines 1-1105, pages 21-59).
- 23 Euripides, *Helen* (English lines 1106-1791, pages 59-83). Also Leach's Introduction, pages 3-17).
- 26 Allan's commentary on Euripides' *Helen* (booklet 85-101).
- 28 Further commentaries on Euripides' *Helen*, TBA.
- 30 The challenge of studying works in translation.
- Nov. 2 **Short essay due**, on Helen. Presentations.
- 4 Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises*, epigraphs and Chapters 1-4 (through page 42).
- 6 Session in library: researching Ernest Hemingway.

- 9 *TSAR*, Chs. 5-8 (43-86).
11 *TSAR*, Chs. 9-12 (87-130). Lesbian/Gay criticism (Barry, *BT* 139-149).
13 Discussion of a critical commentary on gender issues in *TSAR*.
- Nov. 16 *TSAR*, Chs. 13-15 (131-173).
 18 *TSAR*, Chs. 16-18 (174-228).
 20 *TSAR*, Ch. 19 (231-251).

THANKSGIVING RECESS, November 22 – 27

- Nov. 30 Additional critical commentaries on *TSAR* (TBA).
Dec. 2 The future of English studies: Delbanco (booklet 66-81) and Fish (booklet 82-89).
 4 The future of English studies: Barry (90-92), Sommer (booklet 93-96), and Bassnet
 (booklet 97-106).

 7 Presentations on research papers.
 9 Presentations on research papers.
 11 Presentations on research papers.

Research papers due on Thursday, Dec. 17, at 1:30 pm [regularly scheduled exam time].