

**Department of English and Writing Studies
Western University**

**English 2210F
Fall 2014**

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and by appointment

Course Description

This course is intended to introduce students to a number of schools of contemporary theory and criticism. In particular, we will discuss approaches that have been crucial to the definition and study of literature throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first centuries, as well as the motivations and consequences of the rise of theory. Part of our concern will be to situate certain schools of theory (for example, structuralism, deconstruction, feminism, psychoanalysis, cultural studies) and also how they react, polemically or otherwise, to one another.

Course Objectives

One of my favourite theorists has stated that reading means being open to the unpredictable. Teaching and learning must also remain similarly open, which means that we cannot predict what the outcome of a course such as this might be (otherwise, there would be little point in taking it: you would already know now what you are going to know at the end). That said, a course on theory and criticism, while it draws on some of the reading skills you have developed in courses on literary works, where you read for character, theme, and style, will also entail analyzing critical and philosophical arguments. This will require breaking down biases, presuppositions, and the implications of his or her arguments. In written work, you will be asked to look closely at how claims are made and what purchase they have.

Required Text

Available at the Western Bookstore

The Norton Anthology of Theory & Criticism. 2nd ed. Vincent B. Leitch et al, eds. New York: Norton, 2010.

Resources

Grade Distribution

Short Paper	15%
Quizzes	10%
Essay outline, bibliography	10%
Final Paper	30%
Final Exam	35%

A student must receive a passing grade for **both** term work and the final examination in order to receive a passing grade for the course. Students whose term and final exam grades average 50% or above, even though one of the two is a failure, shall receive a default grade of 48%. Please note: The Department of English does not release final grades. All undergraduate grade reports will be available online from the office of the registrar.

Late Assignments

Late essays will be penalized 2% per day late. I will not accept essays more than one week late without consultation. Please note that **University Senate policy prohibits me from accepting any assignment after the last day of classes (December 3)**.

Short Paper

This paper will give you the opportunity to engage critically with concepts on the course. You will be asked to consider a problem raised in the work of an author, how the author handles the idea, what his or her presuppositions are, how the argument develops (and perhaps falls apart).

Final Paper

In your research essay you will be asked to consider a significant issue in theory and criticism and to analyze how it is taken up by two or perhaps three thinkers on the course. The essay must be thoroughly researched and documented.

To help prepare for this essay, you will submit a draft of your introduction, an outline, and an annotated bibliography in advance. These will be returned, with comments that you can use in organizing your thoughts, preparing your argument, and working on your writing.

Quizzes

6 **unannounced** quizzes will be given throughout the semester. They will be based on the assigned reading for that class and will be largely factual, to ensure that you have completed and understood the reading, and might also include a question or two that requires more analysis or application of the concepts in the reading.

The quizzes represent a great opportunity for you to bolster your grade: if you come prepared to class, there is absolutely no reason why you should not do very, very well on them. Also,

of the 6 quizzes I will count your 5 best grades (each for 2% of the final grade for a total of 10%).

Schedule of Classes

All readings are from the *Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. I encourage you also to read the introductions to the texts and authors in the anthology.

September 4: Introduction

Structuralism

September 9: de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (850-866); Levi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques* (1277-1286)

September 11: Barthes, *Mythologies* (1320-1322) (1322-1326)

Post-Structuralism and Deconstruction

September 16: -Moral (764-774); Derrida,
(photocopy)

September 18: Derrida,

September 23: Derrida, from *Of Grammatology* (photocopy)
(photocopy)

September (1365-1378)

Marxism, Historicism, Ideology, Culture

September 30: Marx and Engels (651-676)

October 1: **NO CLASS** (conference)

October 7: ;
(1335-1361)

October 9:

October 14: Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (photocopy), *The History of Sexuality* (1502-1521)

October 16:
