

Department of English & Writing Studies

History of Theory and Criticism
English 2200F (001)
Fall/Winter 2022-23

Instructor : Anne Schuurman

Course Day /Time: Tuesdays, 12:30-1:30 &
Thursdays, 12:30-2:30

Course Location: SSC 3028

Antirequisites: English 2235A/B

Prerequisites : At least 60% in 1.0 of English 1020-1999 or permission of the Department
Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your
Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your
record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the
event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Course Description

“For a poet is an airy thing, winged and holy, and he is not able to make poetry until he becomes inspired and goes out of his mind and his intellect is no longer in him.” So says Socrates to Ion on the craft of literary art, in a dialogue written by Plato, thus beginning a long tradition in the West of understanding the poet’s art as both a divine gift and a kind of madness. Elsewhere, Plato argues that poetry should be banished from the ideal political order because it deceives the mind and inflames the passions, thus beginning another long tradition of mistrusting poetry, of associating creative arts in general with irrational and subversive impulses.

This course begins with Plato to embark on a historical journey through some of the most influential ideas in and about literature and the arts from ancient Greece to the turn of the twentieth century in Europe. Many of these ideas return to the themes of inspiration, madness, and lies, but many others challenge Plato, offering different answers to questions that stand at the foundations of English as an academic discipline: What is literature for? Why does it matter? Why does studying it matter? What is the nature of truth in literature? Should literature teach morality? What is beauty? How are these central concepts forged? What are their consequences? By reading what philosophers and poets have written in answer to these questions, you will begin to formulate your own answers, situating yourselves as readers and writers in the field of English studies.

Objectives :

- x To develop the critical skills required to analyze arguments about literature and art.
- x To begin to use some of the theories and critical practices under consideration in your own analyses of literature and art.
- x To discover something unexpected about literature — about how we approach it in English and what it means.
- x To



