

Literary Criticism, Theory, and Cultural Studies

LLT 4533

Fall 2018

Dr. Paul Jaussen

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Office Hours: S228, MW 1-2, and by appointment.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Alfred North Whitehead famously claimed that all of philosophy begins with Plato. Plato, in turn, begins by picking a fight with poetry, which is a sign that works of art present fundamental intellectual problems. Research in literary theory and criticism attempts to address those problems: What is the nature of artistic representation? How does art influence and shape its audience? Where does art come from, and how does it reflect or critique its social context? What properties can we attribute to aesthetic form? What are the risks and rewards of artistic beauty?

This course will survey many competing answers to these questions, with a particular eye on current debates. Our timeline will be, necessarily, uneven. We will begin with the ancient origins of theory and criticism found in Plato and Aristotle, who set forth competing yet still-relevant approaches to literary analysis. From there, we will turn to four key thematic problems: form, material, structure, and subjects. In each case, we will look at major modern thinkers, like Kant, Marx, Hegel, Nietzsche, and Freud, before turning to some of their contemporary interlocutors and the fields of practice that their work inspired: Marxism and new historicism, structuralism and poststructuralism, psychoanalysis, cultural studies, and postcolonial theory.

While literature will be our primary focus, the course is designed to be of interest to anyone seeking a richer theoretical understanding of the arts. Be prepared to discuss a wide variety of topics: from inspiration to madness, from the uncanny to the cyborg, from beauty to the culture industry. Ultimately, this course will develop your conceptual vocabulary, enrich your understanding of what art is and does, and help you foster a more meaningful reading, writing, and imaginative experience. This semester also provides unique opportunities to experience literary criticism in person, through two visiting lectures sponsored by the Humanity+Technology symposium series.

To succeed in this course, you will need to read (and reread) regularly, thoughtfully, and imaginatively, write clearly and with precision, and participate actively in class discussion.

Course Outcomes

By taking this course, students will develop...

- ✓ A detailed knowledge of the questions and problems in literary criticism, theory, and cultural studies, which includes developing a vocabulary of theoretical terms
- ✓ A familiarity with several individual works by major theorists and philosophers
- ✓ Enhanced skills in close reading and artistic interpretation
- ✓ Improved written and oral communication skills, including advanced research

REQUIRED STUDENT WORK

1. Close and attentive reading of the assigned texts; active, engaged, and daily contribution to the class discussion.
2. Alone or with a partner, facilitation of one of our seminar sessions.
3. 2 discussion board posts
4. 2-3 page proposal and an 8-10 page final paper.

GRADE CALCULATION

Participation: 30%

Seminar Facilitation: 20%

Discussion board posts: 10%

Proposal: 10%

Final Paper: 30%

The following grading scale will be used for computation, **although attendance will directly influence your course grade—see attendance policy below:**

A, 100% - 95%,	B, 85% - 83%	C-, 72% - 70%
A-, 94% - 90%	B-, 82% - 80%	D+, 69% - 66%
B+, 89% - 86%	C+, 79% - 76%	D, 65% - 63%
	C 75% - 73%	D-, 62% - 60%

REQUIRED TEXTS

In the bookstore (you MUST purchase this edition)

David H. Richter, *The Critical Tradition: Classic Texts and Contemporary Trends*, Shorter 3rd. Ed. (Boston: Beford/St. Martin's, 2016). ISBN: 9781319011185

On Canvas

Various PDFs. **Print and bring hard copies on the day these texts are assigned.**

EXPECTATIONS, POLICIES, ADVICE

On Reading

Henry David Thoreau said that the best books require the best of us, and that “reading in the high sense” is “not that which lulls us as a luxury and suffers the nobler faculties to sleep [...], but what we have to stand on tip-toe to read and devote our most alert and wakeful hours to.” The more actively and intelligently you engage with these texts, the more you will get out of this course. Prepare to spend the bulk of your studying time for this class carefully reading (and rereading) the assigned texts. We will spend some time discussing what this means but, at minimum, it requires you to read **with a pen in hand** (underlining, making comments in the margins, taking notes). I will be looking for evidence of engaged reading as the course proceeds. **ADDITIONALLY: you must bring all REQUIRED material to class in *HARD COPY*. If you do not have a paper copy of the reading with you, you will be marked absent.**

Participation/Attendance

Per LTU guidelines, I will be keeping attendance every day and students who miss more than 6 class sessions risk failing the course. I believe that you are ultimately responsible for your own learning. Whether or not you attend class is entirely up to you; apart from the regulations imposed by the university, I will not reward you simply for being here or penalize you for not being here.

However, a seminar is not a lecture, but an exercise in shared learning. We teach one another in this course, and thus, if you ARE in class, I expect your fully engaged presence. As your instructor, I am responsible for guaranteeing the best classroom environment, which informs my participation guidelines. Additionally, if your classroom behaviors indicate that you are not here to learn, I will ask you to leave. Specifically, I may ask you to leave if...

...you do not have hard copies of the assigned readings.

...you use your cell phone (if you need to take a call or text, simply step outside).

...you use your laptop without prior permission.

...you engage in other behaviors that distract from or diminish the quality of our conversation.

Obviously, if you are not here, you will not be able to earn participation points. Your participation score will fall into one of four categories. Here are the characteristics of each category.

Excellent participation (full points): Demonstrates leadership in our class discussion by initiating conversation on a daily basis. Listens to fellow classmates and responds to them directly. Attends each class prepared to offer relevant, insightful, and thoughtful comments and discussion questions. Demonstrates a thoughtful reading of the material, and is prepared to

respond to questions about the text. Takes regular notes and actively annotates the readings.

Good participation (3/4 points): Speaks up in class on a daily basis. Demonstrates that he/she has read and engaged the material to some degree, but offers little insight or poor discussion questions. Contributes to small group discussion, but fails to show leadership. Takes minimal notes.

Passing participation (half points): Speaks up in class occasionally, but does not make a significant contribution to the class discussion. Participates in small group discussions, but minimally. Does not demonstrate basic knowledge of the material. Takes no notes.

Failing participation (no points): Attends class, but does not speak. Does not demonstrate that he/she has read the material. Does not contribute actively to small group activities, and sits passively during large group discussion.

I will be giving you feedback throughout the term so you know where you stand on your participation grade.

Due Dates

Late essays will be penalized one third of a letter grade for each 12-hour period. Thus, an “A” essay due at 11:59 pm turned in at 5 am the next day will score at B+; at 5 pm, it will score a B, etc.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism, or academic dishonesty, is presenting someone else's ideas or writing as your own. In your writing for this class, you are encouraged to refer to other people's thoughts and writing—as long as you cite them. As a matter of policy, any plagiarized piece of writing will receive an F with no possibility of revision, ***even if the plagiarism is unintentional***. Additionally, students who commit flagrant or persistent plagiarism will be reported to the Academic Honor Board for review and risk failing the course. Note that plagiarism is an insult to me as your instructor and to your peers. There is no reason for you to stoop to this in this course. If at any point you have further questions about this, or aren't sure whether or not something is plagiarism, come and see me.

You will be required to type the undergraduate Honor Code Pledge on all papers and other work completed outside of class. Failure to do so will result in a lowered grade for that particular assignment. The Honor Code Pledge is as follows: “I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in completing this work, nor have I presented someone else's work as my own.”

Finally, the Department of Humanities, Social Sciences, and Communications requires students to submit all final copies of expository essays to VeriCite, an anti-

plagiarism software. Instructions on submitting work to VeriCite will be provided at a later date.

Accommodations

Please let me know if you need accommodation of any sort. I will work with Disability Services to provide what you require. I am very willing to take suggestions specific to this class to meet your needs. This syllabus is available in large print, as are other class materials.

Collaborative Reading Schedule

In the final weeks of the semester, we will be turning to very contemporary issues in literary and cultural theory: gender and sexuality, race, hybridity, postcolonialism, posthumanism, and technocultural studies. I have chosen texts that are both representative of these issues and conceptually rich. However, I am eager to shape the course to the needs and interests of the students, and our anthology offers us many possible pathways to pursue. Consequently, as we move forward this term, note topics and areas of interest that you would like us to explore, and we can collectively decide how to shape the final weeks of the term. We can place more emphasis on one or more of the topics I have mentioned, or, alternatively, we can explore other themes. Topics might include film theory and visual cultural studies, critical race theory, modernism/postmodernism, queer theory, disability studies, ecocriticism, popular culture, digital/technological studies, cognitive aesthetics/neuroaesthetics, or consumer culture.

READING SCHEDULE (Subject to change; required readings/assignments in bold)

Introduction/Origins

8/27 **"The Seminar"; Scott, "Better Living Through Criticism"; syllabus**

8/29 **Richter, "Introduction"; in-class viewing of *Pervert's Guide to Cinema*; seminar leadership assigned**

9/3: **LABOR DAY: NO CLASS**

9/5: **Plato, *Republic Book X*; final paper/proposal assigned**

9/10 **Plato, *Ion*; discussion board assigned**

9/12 **Aristotle, *Poetics***

9/17 **Aristotle, *Poetics***

Form

9/19 **Kant, *Critique of Judgment***

9/24 **Kant**

9/26 **Kant**

10/1 Wimsatt and Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy," Seminar Leadership (hereafter SL) 1

10/3 Shklovsky, "Art as Technique," SL 2

Technostudies Interlude

10/8 N. Katherine Hayles reading TBD

10/10 NO CLASS: MEET WITH N. Katherine Hayles/Attend Humanity+Technology Lecture on 11 October

Materialism and Historicism

10/15 Hegel (Canvas), Marx (all selections)

10/17 Marx, SL 3

10/22 Marx

10/24 Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," SL 4

Structures

10/29 Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense" (Canvas); deconstruction lecture (Canvas)

10/31 Lévi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth"

11/5 Umberto Eco, "The Myth of Superman," SL 5

11/7 Barthes, "Death of the Author"

11/12 Foucault, "What is an Author"? SL 6

Subjects and Subjectivity

11/14 NO CLASS: ATTEND Humanity+Technology Lecture 15 November

11/19 Freud, "Creative Writers and Daydreaming"

SL 7

11/21 NO CLASS—THANKSGIVING BREAK

11/26 Freud, "The Uncanny" (Canvas)

11/28 Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," SL8; Paper Proposal Due

12/3 Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," (Canvas) SL9

12/5 Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto," (Canvas) SL10

Conclusion: Criticism Now

12/10 Best and Marcus, "Surface Reading: An Introduction" OR Felski, from *Limits of Critique* (TBD) (Canvas)

12/12 Wrap-up; Final Paper due date TBD