

# Introduction to Literary Theory

COLT 302, 22020R, Fall 2014, Monday & Wednesday, 2:00 - 3:20 pm, WPH B30

This class will introduce students to ways of reflecting conceptually and critically about “literature” itself. What is literature? What is the “literary”? How has “literature” emerged historically? What may be specific to literature that is not shared by other uses of language? We will consider influential articulations of literature with critical reflection on the literary; we will read, intensively, speculative, philosophical, aesthetic, analytical, theoretical works alongside, with, through, and by means of, literary texts—two novels, poems, and other short texts. We will read critical work by Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle, Roland Barthes, Sigmund Freud, and others, in conjunction with literary texts by Harryette Mullen, Honoré de Balzac, E.T.A. Hoffmann, Jean Rhys, and others.

The course will consist of 4 sections. In the first section we will thoroughly and carefully familiarize ourselves with terms and approaches suggested by Bennett and Royle in *Literary Criticism and Theory*, along with poems by Mullen in *Sleeping with the Dictionary*. We will read selections Roland Barthes in the second section, and consider the movement from the detailed and objective study of structures and narrative forms to an emphasis on “text” and “textuality,” as we study narratives by Balzac. We will then investigate narrative as object of analysis via psychoanalysis as a way of thinking about literature and fiction and read E.T.A. Hoffmann’s story, “The Sandman,” with Sigmund Freud’s influential essay, “The Uncanny.” In the fourth section, we will read in detail Jean Rhys’ novel, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, alongside essays on postcolonial literary studies to conclude our partial survey of “literature” and “theory.”

*This is a required course for all Tracks of the Comparative Literature Major and Minor.*

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Giuseppe Arcimboldo, *The Librarian*, (1566), oil on canvas.