

COLT 302: Introduction to Literary Theory

Catalogue Description: Introduction to general forms of reflection on literary discourse.

Section: 22020R

Wednesday and Friday, 12-1:50

THH 215

Instructor: Michael du Plessis

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Office hours: Monday 12-1:30, Wednesday 2-3:30, or by appointment

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Course Description:

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.”

Goals of the course:

To read intensively and become familiar with selected key works in speculative writing about literature;

To think critically about and around the notion of “literature”;

To identify and describe various ways of looking at literary texts;

To articulate the workings of individual texts with persuasive reference to textual detail (such as imagery, syntax, rhetorical figures and devices);

To account for the interconnections between a literary work and a work of criticism;

To account for relations between or among texts (“intertextuality”);

To become familiar with some questions about the notion of a literary “canon”;

To deepen, refine, and sharpen skills of reading analysis;

To demonstrate your understanding in clear, well-organized, persuasively supported writing, whether in one of the essays, exams or exercises.

Required Texts:

Bennett, Andrew and Nicholas Royle. *An Introduction to Literary Criticism and Theory*. 4th edition. Harlow, U.K.: Pearson and Longman, 2009. **ISBN-13:** 978-1405859141.

Balzac, Honoré de. *The Girl with the Golden Eyes and Other Stories*. Translated by Peter Collier. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Oxford World’s Classics, 2012. **ISBN-10:** 978-0-19-957128-4.

Mullen, Harryette. *Sleeping with the Dictionary*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002. **ISBN-10:** 0520231430.

Rhys, Jean. *Wide Sargasso Sea*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1998. **ISBN-10:** 978-0393960129.

Required Texts on Blackboard:

Barthes, Roland. “The Death of the Author.” In *Image Music Text*. By Barthes. Translated by Stephen Heath. New York: Hill and Wang. 142-148.

---. “From Work to Text.” In *Image Music Text*. By Barthes. Translated by Stephen Heath. New York: Hill and Wang. 155-164.

---. "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives." In *Image Music Text*. By Barthes. Translated by Stephen Heath. New York: Hill and Wang. 79-124.

Freud, Sigmund. "The Uncanny." In *The Uncanny*. By Freud. Translated by David McLintock. New York: Penguin, 2003. 123-162.

Hoffmann, E.T.A. "The Sandman." In *The Golden Pot and Other Tales*. By Hoffmann. Translated by Ritchie Robertson. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Oxford World's Classics. 85-118.

Requirements and Grades:

3-page paper, due in class, Friday, September 20:	20%
3-page paper, due in class, Friday, October 25:	20%
3-page paper, due in class, Wednesday, December 4:	20%
Final paper (8 pages), due, electronically on Friday, December 13, by 4 p.m.:	25%
Unannounced in-class exercises:	15%

Informed engagement in class is, of course, a prerequisite.

JEP Participation:

We are collaborating with the Joint Education Program (JEP). Participating students will work to mentor either high school students with their writing or with students from grade school, depending in the needs of the program. This is a great opportunity to extend your learning as mentoring. A representative of JEP will be along to talk to our class the first week of class.

If you are interested, please let me know. You can access the system at <http://uscdornsife.usc.edu/secure/JEP/> or link to the system via JEP's website: www.usc.edu/jep.

This semester, the deadline to apply for JEP is Thursday, September 5 at 11:59pm (one day earlier than usual).

Participating students who successfully complete JEP will receive 5% extra credit in the course.

More about the Class:

Students are expected to read all assigned readings and participate in and contribute to class discussion. Student writing is an essential part of learning in this class.

In the case of all three 3-page papers, students may choose to revise and resubmit a paper for a different grade. I strongly encourage rewriting as part of the student learning process.

I will provide you with sets of guiding questions for each set of texts text studied and you may develop one of these questions as a topic for a paper. You are also welcome to develop your own topics about our readings in consultation with me. You must complete all the assignments in order to pass the course.

The first three papers are 3 pages long, the final 8. All papers must be typed, double-spaced, with one-inch margins, and a 12 pt. font.

All assignments must be submitted as hard copies in class on the date due, with the exception of the final electronic submission. Late papers will be penalized except in the case of illness or family emergency (in which case you must contact me as soon as possible and be prepared to document the emergency).

Late papers will have half a grade point subtracted for each week (and part of a week) they are late. Please get in touch with me as soon as possible if your work, for whatever reason, is late.

There will also be unannounced in-class writing exercises in the course of the semester, so be prepared. If you miss one of these exercises, please get in touch with me as soon as possible.

About the papers:

Write your name and the title of your paper at the top of the first page.

All papers must have titles.

You should number pages.

Spell check and proofread adequately.

All papers must cite the texts used—and that includes the copy of the text we have studied in class. You must learn to document all sources. Half a grade point will be subtracted for missing bibliographies. Please make sure that you cite all secondary material and present bibliographical information according to either the guidelines of either the Modern Language Association or Chicago.

You have the option to revise and resubmit the papers once, after consultation with me.

Please submit the papers as hard copies in class on the dates due. The last paper is due electronically.

Late papers will have half a grade point subtracted for each week (and part of a week) they are late.

Some basic dos and don'ts:

Keep up with the reading schedule and plan ahead.

Come to class prepared to discuss the day's text and bring to class the text we're discussing.

Keep up with handouts and other class notes.

Avail yourself of my consultation times and schedule at least one consultation this semester!

Be punctual; class will always begin on time.

Consult the reading schedule often and make note of any changes as announced.

Do not miss class; unexcused absences will have an impact on your final grade.

Do not leave class before the end.

Do not request extensions for papers or alternate dates for exams.

And **never** turn in written work that is not strictly your own.

Student Behavior

Behavior that persistently or grossly interferes with classroom activities is considered disruptive behavior and may be subject to disciplinary action. Such behavior inhibits other students' ability to learn and an instructor's ability to teach. A student responsible for disruptive behavior may be required to leave class pending discussion and resolution of the problem and may be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs for disciplinary action. These strictures may extend to behaviors outside the classroom that are related to the course.

Students with Disabilities

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

http://www.sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html

Academic Integrity

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. SCampus, the Student Guidebook, contains the Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A:

<http://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>

Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at:

<http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/>.

Course Outline:

Section One: Versions of the "Literary"

Week 1

Wednesday, August 28: Introduction: "Literature"?

Friday, August 30: Bennett and Royle, pp. 1-43 ("The Beginning" to "The Uncanny"); Mullen epigraph and contents to p. 7.

Week 2

Wednesday, September 4: Bennett and Royle, pp. 44-87 ("Monuments" to "Figures and Tropes"); Mullen, pp. 8-17.

Friday, September 6: Bennett and Royle, pp. 88-128 ("Creative Writing" to "History"); Mullen, pp. 18-23.

Week 3

Wednesday, September 11: Bennett and Royle, pp. 129-178 ("Me" to "Moving Pictures"); Mullen, pp. 24-44.

Friday, September 13: Bennett and Royle, pp. 179-225 ("Sexual Difference" to "Queer"); Mullen, pp. 45-55.

Week 4

Wednesday, September 18: Bennett and Royle, pp. 226-261 ("Suspense" to "Mutant"); Mullen, pp. 56-70.

Friday, September 20: Bennett and Royle, pp. 262-288 ("The Performative" to "The Postmodern"); Mullen, pp. 71-80. FIRST PAPER DUE AS A HARD COPY IN CLASS.

Week 5

Wednesday, September 25: Bennett and Royle, pp. 289-318 ("Pleasure" to "The End"); Mullen, pp. 81-85.

Section Two: Structuralism, Narratology, and Textuality

Friday, September 27: Barthes, "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives," pp. 79-124.

Week 6

Wednesday, October 2: Barthes, "Introduction," continued.

Friday, October 4: I will be absent; we will make arrangements as to how to make up the class, but a short exercise timed to the duration of the class could be an option—if so, this will count towards the quizzes and other exercises.

Week 7

Wednesday, October 9: "Sarrasine," In Balzac, pp. 3-37.

Friday, October 11: Barthes, "The Death of the Author," pp. 142-148, and "From Work to Text," pp. 155-164; "Sarrasine," continued.

Week 8

Wednesday, October 16: Balzac, "The Unknown Masterpiece," pp. 39-65.

Friday, October 18: Balzac, "The Unknown Masterpiece," continued.

Week 9

Wednesday, October 23: Balzac, "The Girl with the Golden Eyes," pp. 67-138.

Friday, October 25: Balzac, "The Girl with the Golden Eyes," continued. SECOND PAPER DUE AS A HARD COPY IN CLASS.

Week 10

Wednesday, October 30: I will be absent; we will make arrangements as to how to make up the class, but a short exercise timed to the duration of the class could be an option—if so, this will count towards the quizzes and other exercises.

Section Three: Psychoanalysis and Its Others: The Uncanny

Friday, November 1: Hoffmann, “The Sandman.” (Please read the entire text.)

Week 11

Wednesday, November 6: Hoffmann, “The Sandman,” continued.

Friday, November 8: Freud, “The Uncanny.”

Week 12

Wednesday, November 13: Freud, “The Uncanny,” continued.

Friday, November 15: Freud, “The Uncanny,” continued.

Section Four: Colonialism and Its Posts

Week 13

Wednesday, November 20: Rhys, pp. 9-68.

Friday, November 22: Rhys, pp. 69-112.

Week 14

Wednesday, November 27: THANKSGIVING.

Friday, November 29: THANKSGIVING.

Week 15

Wednesday, December 4: from Walcott to Drake, pp. 159-206, in Rhys. **THIRD PAPER DUE AS A HARD COPY IN CLASS.**

Friday, December 6: from Erwin to Raiskin, pp. 207-258, in Rhys.

FINAL PAPER, due, electronically by Friday, December 13, at 4 p.m.; please note: this is the time that is officially scheduled for our final exam.