

Introduction to Literary Theory

COLT 302, 22020R, Fall 2015, Monday, Wednesday, & Friday, 2:00 - 2:50 pm, THH 209

This course offers students an introduction to ways of thinking about literature in itself as well as in relation to other modes of communication. What is "literature"? How do we read it? Why? In what ways do literary texts read us? We will use Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle's *Introduction to Literature, Criticism, and Theory* throughout the semester to help us frame some of our questions and investigations.

The course will be divided into three parts. In the first, "What Is an Author, or, Is Shakespeare an Author?" we will examine notions of canons, of the permanence of literature, and of the shifting possibilities of literature as we look at questions about authorship, biography, and identity. We will read a selection of Shakespeare's sonnets, as well as essays by Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault. In the second part, "What Is a Story? What Is an Image?" we will consider the function of imagery in literary texts and examine texts from the vantage point of psychoanalysis.

We will read Sigmund Freud's "The Uncanny," among other essays, as well as "The Sandman," a Romantic tale by E.T.A. Hoffmann and "Dead Mabelle" by Elizabeth Bowen. We will also read Edgar Allan Poe's short story, "The Fall of the House of Usher" and look at some cinematic adaptations of the text. The third, and final part of our course will be "What Is Reading?" and here we will examine a variety of ways of approaching notions of text—postcolonial theory, queer theory, various feminisms, as well as theories of class (such as Marxism). Our readings will include Franz Kafka's "The Penal Colony" and Harryette Mullen's collection of poetry, *Sleeping with the Dictionary*. There will be a three-page paper due at the end of each section, a presentation, and a final 7-page paper.

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

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William Kentridge. Linocut on Pages from the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary