

ENGLISH 635: LITERARY THEORY AND CRITICISM**SPRING 2010**

Instructor: Jake Jakaitis	Meeting Time: 6:15 ⇒9 p.m. Tu
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REQUIRED TEXTS

Davis, Garrick and William Logan, eds. *Praising It New: The Best of the New Criticism*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio UP, 2008. 10-0-8040-1109-5

DeLillo, Don. *Mao II*. New York: Penguin, 1991. 0-14-015274-1

Jameson, Fredric. *The Political Unconscious*. Cornell UP, 1981. 0-8014-9222-x

Macey, David. *Dictionary of Critical Theory*. Penguin, 2001. 0-140-51369-8

Professor's Pack. [This will be available through Goetz Printing, but has not yet been completed. I will contact you when the professor's pack is available; please do not call Goetz Printing until you hear from me.]

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

You will submit two papers in the course: an 8⇒10 page analysis or a final seminar paper proposal [See options I, II, & III below.] and a 16⇒20 page seminar paper due at the semester's end. This component is worth 60% of the course grade.

You will also write response papers worth 30% of the course grade. These will either ask you to briefly summarize and respond to a theorist's position or to respond to questions about the assigned readings. Each week, three students will volunteer/be designated to write a response paper on one of the assigned readings for the following week and to submit that paper by e-mail attachment on the Sunday preceding our class meeting. Since the response papers are designed to facilitate discussion, their authors are expected to come to class prepared to raise issues and ask questions designed to provoke conversation. I will assist in this process by returning response papers as e-mail attachments no later than Monday evening.

Attendance and participation will account for the final 10% of the course grade.

All submissions will be typed, double-spaced, with 1" margins top, bottom, and both sides of the page and presented in Times New Roman 12 font. Please do not right justify your margins

PAPER OPTIONS

Option I: Write an 8⇒10 page analysis of any text of your choice and submit your analysis by the 12th week of classes. I use the term "text" to allow you complete freedom of choice and to suit the needs of non-English major graduate students. Your text might be a poem (or a short series of poems by a single poet), a short story or novella, sequential art [graphic novel or comic books], a performance, a film, or any other suitable "text" that you clear with me. The idea here is to present me with a conventional discussion (conforming to your current

critical practice) of a literary work, product of culture, or issue. I will return this essay with comments and suggestions for expansion, but this assignment will not receive a formal grade.

Your ultimate task is to discuss the same text(s) from two competing critical perspectives. Your first, short essay, then, will lay the foundation for your final seminar paper through close reading and examination of text(s) and context(s). Your final seminar paper--due at our final exam meeting--will most likely make use of your initial interpretive analysis but will extend that analysis to a more sophisticated critique by examining theoretical issues opened by alternative critical perspectives applied to the same text(s) and context(s). The idea of the seminar paper is to demonstrate how your engagement with theory and criticism has affected your critical practice.

That is, your final seminar paper should begin by introducing the text, defining the two critical methodologies that you will apply to the text, and stating the reasons for your choices. This introduction should be followed by a modified version of your first, shorter paper (presented as the before the theory course analysis) and then a second examination of the text that relies on a critical methodology learned through your readings in theory and criticism. Your conclusion might discuss the benefits and losses resulting from each approach, striving for a synthesis resulting in a personally defined critical method or in a more theoretical discussion of the relation of theory to interpretation and analysis.

Option II. Demonstrate your engagement with theoretical issues and critical methodologies studied in this course by writing an analysis of Don DeLillo's *Mao II*. By the 12th week of classes, submit an abstract of the proposed paper defining your goals and intent and identifying the theoretical position[s] that will sustain your analysis. Attach a bibliography that includes both theory and DeLillo criticism. Your completed 16⇒20 page seminar paper will be submitted during our final examination session.

If you prefer to discuss a literary work other than *Mao II*, You may choose a novel, play, or other literary work[s] for Option II as long as you clear your choice with me in advance. Material relevant to a developing master's paper or thesis project might be a good choice.

Option III. Option three involves a more conventional research project that is less theoretical in its emphases but more demanding of your time for additional research and reading. In the 12th week of classes, present an 6⇒8 page statement of intent in which you define your interest in a particular critical methodology or theoretical issue. This statement will be accompanied by a working bibliography of sources that you intend to more thoroughly investigate in the remaining weeks of the semester. Your statement should define the issue or methodology convincingly, based on reading that you have already completed and should reference those readings as you define the larger project. In other words, this becomes a kind of problem/solution research essay in which through preliminary reading you define the issues or conflicts affecting a particular discourse community. The seminar paper presented at semester's end would more fully discuss the voices/perspectives speaking within that community and come to some resolution about how you place yourself within this debate. Here are just a few possible starting places for this option:

The Function of Criticism
New Historicism/Historicisms
The Postmodern Subject

Feminism[s]
Stuart Hall/Cultural Studies/Definitions of Culture
Bakhtin/Dialogism
Fredric Jameson/Althusserian Marxism
Postcolonial Theory
Deconstruction

These are, of course, just starting points; each would have to be narrowed to a sharper focus. Of course, as you read the material for this course, other possibilities will occur to you. As long as you clear your interest with me, virtually any topic is fair game. The Hall and Jameson choices, of course, demonstrate that investigating a single critic/theorist's project is an acceptable choice.

PRELIMINARY SCHEDULE OF READINGS

[The full schedule of readings will be posted at my web site: <http://isu.indstate.edu/jakaitis>]

Date	Assignment
1-12	Course Introduction Lackey, Michael. "A.S. Byatt's <i>Morpho Eugenio</i> : Prolegomena to Any Future Theory." <i>College Literature</i> 35.1 [Winter 2008]. PDF in e-mail. Womack, Kenneth. "Authorship and the Beatles." <i>College Literature</i> 34.3 [Summer 2007]. PDF in e-mail.
1-19	Arnold, Matthew. "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time." from <i>The Poetry and Criticism of Matthew Arnold</i> . Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961: 237-258. [Handout] Leavis, F.R. "The Responsible Critic or the Function of Criticism at Any Time." and "The Responsible Critic: A Reply." by F.W. Bateson: both from <i>A Selection from Scrutiny</i> . London: Cambridge UP, 1968: 280-316. [Handout] Eliot, T.S. "The Function of Criticism." <i>Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot</i> . Frank Kermode, Ed. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975: 68-76. [Handout]
1-26	DeLillo, Don. <i>Mao II</i> . New York: Penguin, 1991
2-2	Logan, William. "Forward into the Past: Reading the new Critics." In <i>Praising It New!</i> : [ix-xvi]. Davis, Garrick. "The Golden Age of Poetry Criticism." In <i>Praising It New!</i> : [xxi-xxviii]. From T.S. Eliot: <i>Selected Essays 1917-1932</i> . New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1950: "Tradition and The Individual Talent" [1919]: 3-11. [Handout] In <i>Praising It New!</i> : Eliot, T.S. "Introduction to the Sacred Wood" [3-6]; "The Perfect Critic" [7-15]; "Hamlet and His Problems" [138-142]; & "The Metaphysical Poets" [143-151].