FLLG 501.01: Research Methods and Criticism and Theory

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Syllabus
FLLG 501: Research Methods and Criticism & Theory

Instructor: Christopher Anderson
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Goals: Successful students of this course can expect to master the research procedures (use of library card catalogues, bibliographies, indexes and electronic databases) essential for scholarship and necessary for graduate level study. Furthermore, students will be introduced to a wide variety of critical theories necessary for rigorous literary interpretation, and given the opportunity to apply one or more theories to literary texts. This course should be viewed ideally as an apprenticeship in rigorous and professional literary criticism.

Methods: Four sessions during the semester will take place in the Mansfield Library and be devoted to library research procedures. The remaining classes will be devoted to discussion of various critical models and how they apply to literary texts. The theories will be arranged thematically, beginning with linguistic theories (structuralism, semiotics, narratology) and moving through deconstruction theory, psychoanalytic theory, Marxist and ideological theories, feminist theories, hermeneutics and reception theories, and cognitive theories. The Norton Critical Edition of Conrad’s Heart of Darkness provides practical examples of literary criticism from a variety of critical approaches.

There will be three papers (5-7 pages) due, each requiring an application of a separate critical theory to a literary text (for example, an interpretation of a literary text using a psychoanalytic theory, an interpretation using reader-response theory, an interpretation using feminist theory). Note the due dates on the following schedule and plan ahead in order to present your best effort.

Your comprehension of all the critical models studied in the course will be assessed through a mid-term exam and a final exam.

Your responsibilities: Active participation in class discussions is required. This means that reading assignments must be completed before class, and questions and comments formulated about what a critical theory might mean to literature, film and popular culture and how such theories might be applied to specific texts. Papers must be turned in on the due date in order to receive a grade.

My responsibilities: Assure a high level of discussion centered on the texts at hand, devise paper topics and test questions that will further your learning, apply the same grading standards to all, and, when necessary, make myself available to you for individual instruction during my office hours.
Reading Schedule

The four sessions devoted to library research (schedule to be announced) will have no effect on reading assignments, i.e., you must prepare the required readings even if the class period is devoted to learning research procedures.

Week 1: Structuralist poetics
January 29                                      Introduction to course
January 31                                      *MC&T*, pp. 1-9, pp. 30-60; *HD*, pp.7-33

Week 2 Structuralism & Narratology
February 5                                       *MC&T*, pp. 104-136; 137-144; *HD*, pp. 33-54
February 7                                       *MC&T*, pp. 145-172; *HD*, pp. 54-76

Week 3 Structuralism & Narratology
February 12                                      *MC&T*, pp. 206-216; 393-402; *HD*, pp. 262-268
February 14                                      *MC&T*, pp. 331-347; *HD*, pp. 358-374

Week 4 Deconstruction
February 19                                      *MC&T*, pp. 88-103 Library MLIB 283 Student Learning Center
February 21                                      *MC&T*, pp. 241-253; 254-262

Week 5 Deconstruction
February 26                                      *MC&T*, pp. 331-347; 403-412
February 28                                      *MC&T*, pp. 475-493; 374-386 First paper due

Week 6 Psychoanalysis
March 5                                           *MC&T*, pp. 61-87; 217-229
March 7                                           *MC&T*, pp. 217-229; 263-270

Week 7 Psychoanalysis
March 12                                          *MC&T*, pp. 374-386; 387-392; 413-423
March 14                                          *Midterm Exam*
Week 8  Politics, ideology, cultural history
March 18-22  SPRING BREAK, NO CLASS
Readings:  MC&T, pp. 10-29; 104-136; HD, pp.251-262

Week 9  Politics, ideology, cultural history
March 26  MC&T, pp. 173-187; 206-216; HD, pp.268-280
March 28  MC&T, pp. 271-286; 348-359

Week 10  Politics, ideology, cultural history
April 2  MC&T, pp. 360-373; 387-392; HD, pp.280-285
April 4  MC&T, pp. 403-412; 448-474; HD, pp.336

Week 11  Politics, ideology, cultural history
April 9  MC&T, pp. 475-493; 494-511; HD, pp.336-357
April 11  MC&T, pp. 494-511  Second paper due

Week 12  Feminism
April 16  MC&T, pp. 263-270; 307-330
April 18  MC&T, pp. 387-392; 413-423

Week 13  Feminism
April 23  MC&T, pp. 424-447
April 25  MC&T, pp. 448-474; 475-493

Week 14  Hermeneutics, reception theory, reader-response
April 30  MC&T, pp. 188-205; 230-240
May 2  MC&T, pp. 287-306; 424-447

Week 15  Cognitive literary scholarship
May 7  MC&T, pp. 230-240; 512-520  3rd paper due
May 10  MC&T, pp. 241-253

Week 16
May 13-17:  Final Exams: see class schedule, Spring 2002 for day and time of final exam for this class