

Hacettepe University
Faculty of Letters
Department of English Language and Literature

Title of the Course: 6/734 Contemporary Literary Theory

Instructor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Aytül Özüm

Year and Term: 2011-12 Spring

Classroom and Hours: Seminar Room, Tuesday 9:00-12.45

Aim and Content: The course aims to analyse the major principles and approaches of contemporary literary theory and criticism both in the 20th and 21st century with a focused reading of the theory's main objectives. The course brings together the theory and practice by concentrating on the major philosophical modes of thought and their contribution to the understanding of the literary works. After working on the theories of new criticism, Russian formalism and structuralism the course will mainly focus on the French literary theory (poststructuralism, new historicism, cultural materialism, feminist theories, psychoanalytical criticism) and also reception aesthetics and reader response theory. Reading and examining the major works of Derrida, Lacan, Barthes Paul de Man, Kristeva, Foucault, among others, will enable the students to have a wide perspective on the contemporary theoretical debates on reading theory and applying it onto literary texts. The students should first understand the aim of literary criticism and be affiliated with the key theoretical concepts, terminology of various literary theories and the differences between them, they should also know the methods of literary interpretation and articulate their own responses to literary texts and finally they should develop the ability to write a critical essay which integrates the theory and its application to the literary text.

Course Outline:

Week I-II The New Criticism and Russian Formalism.

H. Adams and Searle (eds.) *Critical Theory Since 1965*, Ewa Thompson, *Russian Formalism and Anglo-American Criticism*, Wimsatt and Beardsley, "The Affective Fallacy and Intentional Fallacy," C. Brooks *The Well Wrought Urn* (Chps. 7&8). I. A. Richards, J.C. Ransom, T.S. Eliot Poe's "Tell-Tale Heart," John Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale," Ted Hughes's "Thought Fox," Browning's "My Last Duchess", C Raine "A Martian Sends a Postcard Home"

Week III-IV Structuralist Criticism and its application. Saussure, "Course in General Linguistics," C. Lévi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth," R. Barthes "The Structuralist Activity" and *Mythologies* ("Myth Today") J. Donne "Flea" A. Pope "An Essay on Criticism," Hemingway "The Cat in the Rain"

Week V-VI Poststructuralism and its application. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, "Differance" in *Margins of Philosophy*, "Elipsis" in *Writing and Difference*, Foucault, "What is an Author?" R. Young (ed) *Untying the Text* ("The Order of Discourse"), R. Barthes, *S/Z, The Pleasure of the Text*. Foucault, "The Order of Discourse", "Discourse on Language" from Adams and Searle, *The Foucault Reader*, Spivak, "Translator's Preface" in *Of Grammatology*, J. Culler, *On Deconstruction*.

Week VII Midterm I and Reader-Response Criticism

Week VIII Reader-Response Criticism, methods and texts. W. Iser, *The Act of Reading*, S. Fish, *Is There a Text in this Class?*,

Week IX- X The New Historicism and Cultural Materialism. D.LaCapra, L. Montrose, Hayden White, *Metahistory*, *The Content of the Form*, S. Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, "Invisible Bullets." Veenser (ed.) *The New Historicism*.

Week XI-XII Feminist Criticism, (French School) and Psychoanalytical Criticism, Lacan: "The Agency of the Letter in The Unconscious," "The Mirror Stage" in *Écrits*, "Freudian Unconscious and Ours" in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* "The Purloined Letter" in *The Seminars of Jacques Lacan* Book II and "The Symbolic Order" in Book I, major theorists and texts.

Week XIII-XIV Ecocriticism C. Glothfelty and H. Fromm (eds.) *Ecocriticism*, L. Buell *The Future of Environmental Criticism*, G. Garrard *Ecocriticism (New Critical Idiom)* and reading methods.

Week XV Final Exam

The list is not limited to the texts above.

L. Tyson's *Critical Theory Today* and P. Barry's *Beginning Theory* will be very helpful for those who have not taken any criticism course before.

Method of Instruction: Lectures and student presentations.

Requirements: Attendance is compulsory. More than three weeks of absence will result in F1. The students are expected to read, study and think about the assigned course material. Each student is expected to read every text listed in the syllabus and to come to class having worked on the material to be covered. Participating in discussions either with questions or with comments is both compulsory and necessary for the students to develop a critical insight concerning the theory and its practice. Each week there will be an introductory survey of the theory to be covered. Each student will have to choose two texts from the list or a literary work that they find appropriate for analysis and prepare their essays on different theories and decide on their short papers themselves, in the short paper presentation they can either concentrate on the terminology or on its application. Students can resubmit their first papers after they receive corrections.

Assessment: In the grading of oral and written work 20% will be taken off for language mistakes. There will be:

two major papers 30%

midterm 20%

final 20%

two short papers 10%

class participation 20%

Although the percentages vary the students are obliged to fulfil all these items, the students can not make any omissions.