

Eng 101 – Introduction to Literary Criticism
Fall 2006, San José State University
Section 1: T/R 10:30-11:45am, BBC 122

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Do you see hidden meanings in literary texts? Billboards? Movies? Advertisements? Can you come up with 3 variant meanings for Pound's poem, "In a Station of the Metro"? There are many possible readings of all literary and visual texts. Even your own mental baggage governs your interpretation of the material. For this course, we will discover and apply critical methods to various literary, visual and dynamic texts. Critical models will include foundational twentieth-century theory as well as contemporary approaches to literature (feminism, Queer theory, Marxism, post-colonialism and more). We will apply this critical theory to texts across several historical periods or literary genres. *Pre-requisite: Engl. 100W*

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- ~~To study and apply various historical and contemporary approaches to literature;~~
- To encourage close reading and understanding of individual texts;
- To articulate literary criticism and critical theory in a coherent and logical piece of writing.

REQUIRED BOOKS & MATERIALS

Texts and Contexts. Ed. Steven Lynn, 4th ed. Longman (ISBN: 0321209427)
Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism. Ed. Vincent B. Leitch. (Norton ISBN 0393974294)
A Dictionary of Cultural and Critical Theory. Ed. Michael Payne. Blackwell (ISBN: 0631207538)
Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness*. 2nd ed. Bedford (ISBN 0312114915)

Suggested:

A Research Guide for Undergraduates in English & American Literature. MLA, 2006 (ISBN: 0873529243)
Hacker, Diana. *A Writer's Reference* (or other writing handbook)
Dictionary, Collegiate-level

GRADE DISTRIBUTION

10%	Class Discussion & Participation
15%	In-Class Response Essays
15%	Critical Review Essay
20%	Presentation & Essay
20%	Mid-Term Exam
20%	Final Exam/Essay

Class Discussion & Participation

The reading load for this course is dense with theoretical articles along with the more light-hearted materials. All will require much discussion during our meetings. For these reasons, your participation during class is imperative. Since this class is largely discussion-based, arrive to class prepared with the proper readings. *Bring the appropriate texts to our class meetings; always bring Heart of Darkness*. Without them in front of you, you will get lost.

A student's participation is assessed by his/her contribution throughout the semester. Use the following as guidelines for this portion of your final grade:

- To earn a "C," do the minimum: at every meeting, read and prepare assigned readings so you are never at a loss if you are asked a question, but speak only when called upon, do "ordinary," plain-vanilla presentations and responses. This is the "bottom line" for getting a "C" in this part of the course.

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- To earn a "B," at every meeting, prepare assigned readings thoroughly, initiate discussions about them by asking good questions or suggesting ways to interpret readings, do presentations that reveal that you have done good additional work that you can make both interesting and meaningful to our discussions, and participate actively in those discussions.
- For an "A," take it up another level entirely: at every meeting, prepare readings thoroughly, find and talk about connections among them and among other aspects of culture (then and now), take a real leadership role in class discussions, including working actively to get others involved in the talk, make your presentations and responses "sparkle" by bringing to them something really special in terms of your own contributions, interests, skills, and abilities to think in broad even interdisciplinary terms. Most of all, remember that an "A" indicates the very best grade a person can get; that should tell you what sort of work you need to do to earn the grade of "A."

If you miss class, contact a classmate for notes, reading assignments and handouts – or check our Course Website. (Please do not email me to ask “Did I miss anything important?”)

In-Class Response Essays

Because literary criticism is as much about reading as it is writing, we will spend the first 10-20 minutes each Thursday writing an essay response to an assigned question about the current reading assignment. To prepare for this essay, pick one or two quotes from the days' readings – quotes that you would like to write explore further or about which you have questions. Each in-class essay will receive a grade based on the *quality* of your response. This weekly writing will also allow you to explore methodologies based on focused questions, clarify your thoughts on a theoretical model or comment on your peer's presentation. This weekly writing will also allow you to practice your in-class writing skills. We will discuss what makes an effective response. *There will be no make-up for an in-class response essay; you simply receive a zero for that essay.* The lowest in-class response grade will be dropped.

Critical Review Essay

Scholars use a variety of theoretical models to analyze literature. To gain an understanding of just how various models are used, you will write a 600-word review of a published example of literary scholarship (article assigned by me) to see how other scholars perform their work. MLA style for documentation, in-text citation methods and Works Cited are required. If you need help on MLA style, please see me before submitting anything. (Essay grades will be reduced for inaccurate citation and Works Cited submissions.) See also our Course Website for MLA style online resources. In addition to handing in a paper copy, your essay will be submitted to Turnitin.com for verification.

Presentation & Essay

To gain a better understanding of at least one critical theory, each student will give a presentation on a particular model, using a text to exemplify it. The presentation will include a *brief* summary of one literary critical model, summary and discussion of an article (from *Norton*) pertaining to that model and an analysis of a selection from *Heart of Darkness*. The following week, a 1200-word written essay is due. The essay will contain all of the elements that you presented, but in greater detail and in a more formal style (MLA style, including a Works Cited). (Essay grades will be reduced for inaccurate citation and Works Cited submissions.) In addition to handing in a paper copy, your essay will be submitted to Turnitin.com for verification.

Mid-Term Essay

The mid-term will be an out-of-class essay response to a single question and will assess your ability to use theory and understand literary criticism. Your resulting 1200-word essay is due at the next class meeting. The exam will require you to apply particular critical models to an analysis of a text, including an explanation of key terms and use of at least one theorist (and his/her articles). MLA style, including a Works Cited is expected. In addition to handing in a paper copy, your essay will be submitted to Turnitin.com for verification.

Final Exam/Essay

The 2000-word final exam/essay (written outside of class) will be based on a literary text to which you will

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apply a critical model. This text must be a different genre from the literary text included in your presentation. We will discuss the Final Exam towards the conclusion of the semester. In addition to handing in a paper copy, your essay will be submitted to Turnitin.com for verification. (*Note: Graduate students are expected to write a 20-25pp graduate-level essay.*)

GRADING POLICY

The Department of English reaffirms its commitment to the differential grading scale as defined in the SJSU Catalog (“The Grading System”). Grades issued must represent a full range of student performance: A= excellent; B= above average; C= average; D= below average; F= failure. For final grades, 100-90 is an A, 89-80 is a B, 79-70 is a C, 69-60 is a D, and below 60 is an F. Pluses and minuses are the middle of each range. In calculating the final grade, a set number will represent each letter grade; for example, B+ is 87.5, B is 85, and B- is 82.5.

In English Department courses, instructors will comment on and grade the quality of student writing as well as the quality of ideas being conveyed. All student writing should be distinguished by correct grammar and punctuation, appropriate diction and syntax, and well-organized paragraphs. Grades issued will represent a full range of student performance (no extra credit offered) and will adhere to the following SJSU academic standards of assessment:

- The “**A**” essay will be well organized and well developed, demonstrating a clear understanding and fulfillment of the assignment. It will show the student’s ability to use language effectively and construct sentences distinguished by syntactic complexity and variety. Such essays will be essentially free of grammatical, mechanical, and usage errors.
- The “**B**” essay will demonstrate competence in the same categories as the “A” essay. The chief difference is that the “B” essay will show some descriptably slight weaknesses in one of those categories. It may slight one of the assigned tasks, show less facility of expression, or contain some minor grammatical, mechanical, or usage flaws.
- The “**C**” essay will complete all tasks set by the assignment, but show weakness in fundamentals (usually development), with barely enough specific information to illustrate the experience or support generalizations. The sentence construction may be less mature, and the use of language less effective and correct than the “B” essay.
- The “**D**” essay will neglect one of the assigned tasks and be noticeably superficial in its treatment of the assignment—that is, too simplistic or short. The essay may reveal some problems in development, with insufficient specific information to illustrate the experience or support generalizations. It will contain grammatical, mechanical, and usage errors that render some sentences incomprehensible.
- The “**F**” essay will demonstrate a striking underdevelopment of ideas and insufficient or unfocused organization. It will contain serious grammatical, mechanical, and usage errors that render some sentences incomprehensible.

COURSE POLICIES

Late Assignments/Essays

If you cannot meet a deadline, you must contact me *at least 72 hours prior* to our class meeting to discuss the situation. If this is not done, for *every day* that an essay is late, you will be penalized one grade step: A becomes A-, A- becomes a B+, etc. The weekend will count as one day. Unless you have prior permission or the assignment specifically requests it, *absolutely no assignment will be accepted via email.*

Academic Honesty

Your own commitment to learning, as evidenced by your enrollment at San José State University, and the University’s Academic Integrity Policy requires you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the Office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. The Policy on academic integrity can be found at: http://sa.sjsu.edu/student_conduct.

Avoiding Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of somebody else’s words or ideas and is considered an instance of

academic dishonesty that instructors must report. You commit plagiarism by

- buying, stealing, or borrowing a paper;
- hiring someone to write a paper;
- building on someone's ideas without providing a citation;
- or copying from another source or using a source too closely when paraphrasing.

In other words, submit only your own work. In addition, please know that submitting work from another course (recycling) is also against the Academic Honesty Policy. To learn how to cite sources accurately and forthrightly, consult your handbook. If you have any questions about when or how to document a source, do not hesitate to ask me for clarification. Turning in plagiarized work may result in immediate failure in the course and could result in dismissal from San José State University. See King Library's definition, the University policy and a plagiarism tutorial: www.sjlibrary.org/services/literacy/info_comp/plagiarism.htm

Plagiarism checks will be performed by asking students to submit various written exercises or essays to Turnitin.com, a service which scans documents for all references to Web sources and other essays. The instructor reserves the right to revise the requirements and to notify students of such revision in a timely manner.

Classroom Environment

Respect your fellow students and I: Attend class, arrive on time (excessive tardiness will affect your participation grade) and do not partake in disruptive behavior. If you are late, wait for an appropriate moment to enter so you do not disturb the class. Turn off cell phones or put them on silent mode during the class period.

Email

Email is the best possible way to contact me (9am-5pm) and has the added bonus of recording our conversations. When emailing me, please consider it a formal communication: include the appropriate salutation, your name and your question/comment. Know that long conversations over email are not fruitful merely because of the limitations of technology. If you have an extended question or dilemma, please visit me during office hours. I will amass a class email list and will occasionally send out information regarding our meetings or the readings. *Please provide an email address that you check daily.*

Course Website – <http://www.sjsu.edu/faculty/harris/>

As we move along in the semester, course materials will be posted on the course website. After you have entered, simply click on our class title to print the current schedule or handouts, visit outside web projects, print copies of lost documents, find the campus computer rooms, check my office hours, find writing help, discover local literary events or double-check the meaning of "plagiarism."

LARC (Learning Assistance Resource Center)

The Learning Assistance Resource Center is an on-campus facility that provides peer tutoring for San José State University students. LARC offers assistance with writing, and if you feel as if you need intensive help beyond what I can offer during office hours, please request a writing tutor. The Center is located in The Student Services Center in the 10th Street Parking Garage, Room 600. The phone number is (408) 924-2587.

Disabilities Policy

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. Presidential Directive 97-03 requires that students with disabilities register with the DRC to establish a record of their disability.

Dr. Katherine D. Harris
Intro. to Literary Criticism (Engl 101, Sect 1)
Fall 2006

Name: _____

E-mail: _____

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

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Please respond using complete sentences

1. Indicate if you are an English major, minor or other. Are you a sophomore, junior or senior?

2. Have you taken Engl. 100W, any pre-1900 literature courses or post-1900 literature courses? Have you taken Engl. 56A (British Survey to 1800) or Engl. 144 (Shakespeare)?

3. Do you have access to a computer at home? Yes No
(If not, become familiar with SJSU's computer labs.)

4. **Briefly** summarize the important policies presented on this syllabus.

5. Write one or two sentences defining “plagiarism.”

6. Have you taken any literature courses on critical theory? If so, what course(s)?

7. Write a **brief** paragraph explaining what “theory” means to you.

8. Do you have a favorite author? Who? Why?

By signing below, the individual acknowledges receiving a copy of the class syllabus and understands the schedule of work, participation requirements, grading criteria and other important information. The individual also acknowledges understanding plagiarism and its consequences.

Name: _____

Signature: _____