

English 101 – Introduction to Literary Criticism
Spring 2009, San José State University
Section 03: T/R 10:30-11:45am, Sweeney Hall 411

Dr. Katherine D. Harris

Email: katherine.harris@sjsu.edu

Website: www.sjsu.edu/faculty/harris

Writing Center: www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter

Office: FO 220

Phone: (408) 924-4475

Office Hours: T/R 1:30-2:30 & 4:30-5pm

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Do you see hidden meanings in literary texts? Billboards? Movies? Advertisements? Can you come up with 3 variant meanings for Ezra Pound's poem, "In a Station of the Metro"? There are many possible readings of all literary and visual texts. Even your own identity governs your interpretation of the material. What kind of critic are you? For this course, we will discover and apply critical models to various literary, visual, and digital texts. Critical models will include foundational twentieth-century theory as well as contemporary approaches to literature (feminism, Queer theory, Marxism, post-colonialism, and more). Though we will apply these critical models to texts across several historical periods and literary genres, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* will be our ur-text.

Pre-requisite: Engl. 100W

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Explore a wide variety of approaches to literature.
- Learn to apply these methodologies directly to literary texts, especially to works of prose and poetry (and build on the skills learned in 100W in regards to analyzing poetry).
- Attain a knowledge of the tools of analysis necessary for working in our discipline.
- Complete a minimum of 5,000 words in written assignments.

REQUIRED BOOKS & MATERIALS (on Reserve in King Library)

Texts and Contexts. Ed. Steven Lynn, 5th ed. Pearson, 2008. (ISBN 978032144907X)

Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism. Ed. Vincent B. Leitch. Norton, 2001. (ISBN 9780393974294)

Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness*. 2nd ed. Bedford, 1996. (ISBN 9780312114916) – **be sure to get this edition!**

Suggested (all on course reserve in King Library):

A Research Guide for Undergraduates in English & American Literature. MLA, 2006 (ISBN 9780873529242)

A Dictionary of Cultural and Critical Theory. Ed. Michael Payne. Blackwells, 1996. (ISBN 9780631207535)

Hacker, Diana. *A Writer's Reference* (or other writing handbook)

Dictionary, Collegiate-level

GRADE DISTRIBUTION

- 10% Class Discussion & Participation
- 20% In-Class & Emailed Response Essays (ICE/OCE)
- 25% Annotated Bibliography & Reflective Essay
- 25% Critical Model Presentation & Essay
- 20% Critical Analysis Essay (Final Exam Essay)

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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.*

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: 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.
- To earn a "B," 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: 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 Essays (ICE) & Out-of-Class Emailed Essays (OCE)

Because literary criticism is as much about writing as it is reading, each week we will write essay responses to an assigned question about the current reading assignment. As the semester progresses, this essay will turn into an out-of-class emailed essay of approximately 300-500 words. Your understanding of that week’s critical models and class discussion are imperative to produce a sufficient piece of writing. Each OCE/ICE 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. The OCE is formal writing that should conform to MLA style with proper citation format and should be edited for grammar and typographical mistakes. Sloppy writing will be penalized by a letter grade.

There are no make-ups for an ICE/OCE; you simply receive a zero for that essay. An OCE needs to be emailed by the date and time specified in order to receive credit; a late OCE will receive a zero. Please be aware that missing even a few of these essays will cause your final grade to drop significantly. The lowest grade in this entire group of essays will be dropped.

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Annotated Bibliography & Reflective Essay

In order to understand how other scholars use theoretical models to analyze literature, this assignment asks you to find and annotate five contemporary literary critical articles that focus on *Heart of Darkness* (not in the *Heart of Darkness* critical edition that we are using for class). Our library session will provide a tutorial on searching the MLA Bibliography, JSTOR and Project Muse as well as retrieving them through King Library’s “Get Text,” Interlibrary Loan and Link+. A 600-word reflective essay on your research experience will also be required.

MLA style for documentation, in-text citation methods and Bibliography 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 and visit the Writing Center. In addition to handing in a paper copy, your Annotated Bibliography and Reflective Essay will be submitted to Turnitin.com for verification. Further instructions will be provided later.

Critical Model 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 presentation will be followed by a brief question and answer session from your peers. The following week, a 1600-word written essay is due. The main goal of this presentation is to provide an example of using a critical model. The essay will contain all of the elements that you presented, but in greater detail and in a formal style (MLA style, including a Works Cited). The essay gives you an opportunity to address any questions or dilemmas that were broached during the Q&A session. (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. Further instructions will be provided later.

Final Exam Essay

The 1500-1750-word final exam/essay (written outside of class) will be based on a literary text to which you will apply at least one critical model. This text and critical model(s) must be a different from those included in your presentation. We will discuss the Final Exam Essay towards the conclusion of the semester. In addition to handing in a paper copy, your essay will be submitted to Turnitin.com for verification.

GRADING POLICY

The Department of English reaffirms its commitment to the differential grading scale as defined in the official 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. Courses graded according to the A,B,C,NoCredit system shall follow the same pattern, except that NC, for NoCredit, shall replace D or F. In A,B,C,NoCredit courses NC shall also substitute for W (for Withdrawl) because neither NC nor W affects students’ grade point averages.

In English Department courses, instructors will comment on and grade the quality of student writing as well as the quality of the ideas being conveyed. All student writing should be distinguished by correct grammar and punctuation, appropriate diction and syntax, and well-organized paragraphs.

For your 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.

COURSE POLICIES

Late Assignments/Essays

Any late ICE/OCE will not be accepted. For all other assignments: 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.*

SJSU Academic Integrity Policy

Your own commitment to learning, as evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University, and the University’s Academic Integrity Policy require you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty are required to report all infractions to the office of Judicial Affairs. The policy on academic integrity can be found at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/S04-12.htm>. The SJSU rules against plagiarism are set forth in the SJSU Catalog, which defines plagiarism as the act of representing the work of another as one’s own (without giving appropriate credit) regardless of how that work was obtained, and submitting it to fulfill academic requirements. Plagiarism at SJSU includes, but is not limited to: (1) the act of incorporating the ideas, words, sentences, paragraphs, or parts thereof, or the specific substance of another’s work, without giving appropriate credit, and representing the product as one’s own work. It is the role and obligation of each student to know the rules that preserve academic integrity and abide by them at all times. This includes learning and following the particular rules associated with specific classes, exams, and/or course assignments. Ignorance of these rules is not a defense to the charge of violating the Academic Integrity Policy.

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. 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. **To sign up for Turnitin use the Class ID 2583634 and Password litcrit09.** 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: Arrive on time (excessive tardiness will effect 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 Protocols

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, your question/comment or your OCE. 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.*

GENERAL INFORMATION

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

As we move along in the semester, course materials and updated reading schedules 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 SJSU Writing Center, check my office hours, discover local literary events or double-check the meaning of “plagiarism.”

SJSU Writing Center

Visit me during office hours for help with your writing. For even further help, go to the Writing Center located in Clark Hall, Suite 126. Hours: Monday-Thursday 9-7 and Friday 9-1. Call for appointments at 924-2308 or go online at www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter. Work with tutors in a one-on-one environment. Make appointments online at the above website.

Library Liaison

For library research questions, contact Toby Matoush, the English Department’s Library Liaison: (408) 808-2096 or tmatoush@sjsu.edu. King Library has created an extensive and very useful list of the library’s resources specifically for English majors: <http://www.sjlibrary.org/research/web/literature.htm>.

Peer Mentor Center

The Peer Mentor Center is located on the 1st floor of Clark Hall in the Academic Success Center. The Peer Mentor Center is staffed with Peer Mentors who excel in helping students manage university life, tackling problems that range from academic challenges to interpersonal struggles. On the road to graduation, Peer Mentors are navigators, offering “roadside assistance” to peers who feel a bit lost or simply need help mapping out the locations of campus resources. Peer Mentor services are free and available on a drop –in basis, no reservation required. The Peer Mentor Center website is located at <http://www.sjsu.edu/muse/peermentor/>.

Student Technology Resources

Computer labs for student use are available in the Academic Success Center located on the 1st floor of Clark Hall and on the 2nd floor of the Student Union. Additional computer labs may be available in your department/college. Computers are also available in the Martin Luther King Library. A wide variety of audio-visual equipment is available for student checkout from Media Services located in IRC 112. These items include digital and VHS camcorders, VHS and Beta video players, 16 mm, slide, overhead, DVD, CD, and audiotape players, sound systems, wireless microphones, projection screens and monitors.

Campus Policy on Compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act

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 DRC to establish a record of their disability. The DRC website is <http://www.drc.sjsu.edu>.