

LITERARY CRITICISM & THEORY

Engl 4150, FALL 2021 / M 6:00-8:50 / LANG 104

(Pictured above: The Treachery of Images, a painting by Rene Magritte, 1929. Description: a large brown pipe centered on a yellow background, with the sentence "Ceci n'est pas une pipe" in large black cursive script below it.)

Prof: Deborah Needleman Armintor ("Dr. A")

My Pronouns: She/They

My Office Hours: By appt via Zoom or Phone (& sometimes in the classroom right before or after class, if you make arrangements with me in advance)

Email me 24/7 (response within 48 hours): dna@unt.edu or deborah.armintor@unt.edu

Text my cell 24/7 (response within 24 hours): 940-300-9857

My Zoom Classroom & Zoom Office:

<https://unt.zoom.us/j/6837842372>

Zoom by phone (audio only): 1 346-248-7799

Meeting ID: 683 784 2372

How to contact me with a question or to schedule an Office Hours appointment:

Email or Text me with your question or Office Hours appointment request at the email address or cell phone number listed above. Please do not attempt to reach me via Canvas chat, messenger, or any other Canvas interface. Be sure to state in the subject heading of every email and the body of each text: your full name, the name or number of the course, and your course section number.

Course Description: The purpose of this course is to teach English majors and minors the foundations of basic critical and theoretical literacy. As such, the course has 3 primary objectives: 1. To teach you what literary criticism and theory are, what they are not, and how they can be useful to you as readers of literature and culture, and as English majors and minors; 2. To familiarize you with major critical and theoretical movements, urtexts, and big-deal thinkers; and 3. To introduce you to the academic, geographical, and political histories of key critical and theoretical movements, trends, controversies, backlashes, and revivals, and how

they affect you as readers of literature and as English majors and minors. The readings for this course are often dense and difficult to comprehend at first read, but please do not despair. Our class discussions will help you to make sense of the readings and will give you the tools you need to read theory and criticism on your own. And maybe, just maybe, you'll even come to enjoy it.

Required Text: Literary Theory: an Anthology (Wiley-Blackwell; 3rd edition, 2017)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & GRADING:

Mid-Semester Test (in class, Week 10, 3/21, worth 33% of course grade): Closed book, closed notes, without consulting the syllabus or using the internet except to access the test on CANVAS for those taking it electronically. Covering material from weeks 1-7, the mid-semester test will consist of 12 multiple choice questions (A-D) on broad and specific aspects of the reading assignments and the major critical and theoretical movements covered in class; including some multiple-choice quote i.d. questions in which you'll be asked to identify the author of a passage previously discussed in class. The test is untimed and will begin at the class start time on the date specified. It can be taken on paper in person, on CANVAS in person, or on CANVAS in the virtual classroom. Students who need to take the test virtually at a different day or time (i.e. not during regular class hours) can let me know ahead of time to make arrangements.

There will be an in-class test review/Q&A session before the test. Notes from that review/Q&A session will be attached to the syllabus afterwards.

Critical Essays 1 and 2 (Due 4/9 & 5/13, worth 33% of course grade each): In each of these 6-page (or more) formal critical essays, you will be playing the role of a literary critic responding to the work of another literary critic. Your job is to pick a critical or theoretical text covered in either weeks 1-7 (for Essay 1) or 8-13 (for Essay 2), and to choose one of the following prompts [NOTE: For Essay 2, if you want to write about any of Val Vera's poems or his book of poetry, that will "count" as your chosen text for the second half of the semester, even though it's poetry and not criticism or theory. You would, however, have to include 1 or more pertinent critical or

theoretical texts in disability studies or any other theoretical/critical discipline we've covered in the second half of the semester from outside or inside the syllabus (doesn't matter which) to ground your argument about Vera's poetry in a theoretical/critical context] :

1. Identify, explain, and defend a point of contention or difference (major or minor, as long as it's interesting and productive for you and your reader) you have with any aspect of that critical or theoretical text's argument, providing examples from inside and outside your chosen text to prove your point;

or

2. Qualify any aspect of that critical or theoretical text's argument by taking it in a new direction via applying it creatively, thoughtfully, and critically to a written, cinematic, or cultural text of your choosing.

In each paragraph, be sure to quote directly and selectively from the text you're critiquing, and to analyze those passages closely and creatively, with attention to detail and context. Avoid dwelling on points we've already covered in class, unless it's a point that you made in class yourself. You may freely refer to any point already covered in class if you're using it as a springboard to saying something new. Avoiding the obvious: With every point you make, be sure to move beyond "arguing" a point that, though true, should be obvious to any other intelligent reader in the class. Good essays take the risk of introducing a counterintuitive or surprising argument that is somehow "new"; otherwise, it's not worth stating at all.

Formatting: papers must be 6 pages or more, 1.5- or double-spaced, in a reasonable font (11 or 12-point Times New Roman, for instance), and with 1 inch margins all around, submitted electronically via the course CANVAS page.

Making it through the semester (worth 1% of course grade): Congrats in advance. You got this!

COURSE POLICIES

COVID Safety & Respecting Boundaries:

UNT strongly encourages, but does not require, all students and instructors to wear an N95 or KN95 mask indoors, regardless of vaccination status, to protect ourselves and others from COVID infection, as recommended by current CDC guidelines for the recent COVID variants. UNT mask guidelines could change based on community health conditions, but for now instructors are prohibited from requiring masks in the classroom. However, if you choose to be in my classroom without a mask for whatever reason, I urge you to respect the personal boundaries and unknown health considerations of your fellow students and instructor by sitting as far from your classmates and instructor as the classroom setup allows. You never know who is immunocompromised or has immunocompromised or otherwise vulnerable family or roommates at home.

COVID Self-Care & Community Care:

If you are experiencing any COVID symptoms (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>) please seek medical attention from the Student Health and Wellness Center (940-565-2333 or askSHWC@unt.edu) or your health care provider PRIOR to coming to campus. UNT also requires you to contact the UNT COVID Team at COVID@unt.edu for guidance on actions to take due to symptoms, pending or positive test results, or potential exposure. Please get vaccinated and boosted, and please get tested, notify the UNT COVID Team above, and isolate for the time they recommend if you test positive. To learn more about UNT's vaccine incentive program: <https://healthalerts.unt.edu/vaccine>

Virtual Participation Option, Livestreaming, & Recording:

I will be livestreaming and recording all classes via the Zoom link at the top left-hand corner of the syllabus to accommodate students who can't wear a mask or choose not to wear one for any reason, as well as students who can't make it to campus for any reason, including confirmed illness, possible illness, COVID exposure, or possible COVID symptoms (no doctor's note necessary), mental health day, or any kind of unexpected emergency. You can participate via livestream from campus, home, or anywhere else with wifi access.

Required Physical or Virtual Attendance & Participation:

Regular attendance --physical, virtual, or some combination thereof-- is mandatory to succeed in this course. If you don't attend, it will be impossible to do well on the graded assignments. In addition to regular attendance, I expect active participation of all students. Active participation manifests itself differently in everyone, depending on your learning style, personality, introversion, or extroversion, etc., but always includes having the day's assigned reading with you (either a physical copy, or an electronic copy), following along in the reading as we discuss various passages, and being visibly and/or audibly engaged in the discussion at hand (knitting, doodling, etc., or moving about/fidgeting in the classroom is perfectly fine, whatever it takes for you to be comfortable and stay engaged, as long as you're respecting the boundaries, health, and safety of others!).

Missed Classes:

If you are unable to attend class in any form (neither in person nor via livestream), you do not need to give me a written or oral excuse, but you are responsible for keeping up with the readings, discussions, and class recordings on your own. I am willing and able to meet with students outside the classroom via phone or Zoom office hours by appointment, but only to supplement our regularly scheduled class meetings, not as a replacement for missed class meetings. Weekly Zoom recordings will be posted beneath each course date in the syllabus for anyone who misses class and for studying/review purposes.

Plagiarism Policy:

Any student who plagiarizes will receive an automatic "F" for the course. For UNT's full Academic Integrity Policy, see: <https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003>

Compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act:

The right to equal access and accommodation for people with disabilities is guaranteed under federal civil rights law by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), regardless of student status or UNT Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) registration. Reasonable accommodation and equal access for students with disabilities are important to me regardless of ODA status, and I will seek to accommodate you however I can; just let me know. Students seeking specific accommodations at UNT through ODA, however, must first register with the ODA to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding one's specific course needs. Students may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that the ODA requires that students obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the ODA website: <https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access>.

SYLLABUS

Readings & assignments are due on the days listed below. Readings are subject to change based on pace of class discussion. Any changes to the reading will be announced in class on the class day prior and adjusted in the CANVAS syllabus accordingly.

Week 1:

M, 1/17: No Class, MLK Day

Week 2, Intro to the Course

M, 1/24: Intro to the course (no reading)

Week 3, Formalism:

M, 1/31: Brooks, "The Formalist Critics," pp. 15-21; Wimsatt and Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy," pp. 29-41

Week 4, Structuralism:

M, 2/7: Culler, "The Linguistic Foundation," pp. 134-137; Saussure, "Course in General Linguistics," pp. 137-177

Week 5, Structuralism:

M, 2/14: Saussure, "Course in General Linguistics," pp. 137-177 (continued); Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," pp. 205-216; Barthes, "The Death of the Author," pp. 518-521

Week 6, Deconstruction (Early Poststructuralism):

M, 2/21: Derrida, "Difference," pp. 474-495; Derrida, "That Dangerous Supplement," pp. 496-517

Week 7, Postructuralism:

M, 2/28: Bataille, "Heterology,"
<http://ieas-szeged.hu/downtherabbithole/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Bataille-Heterology.pdf> ;
Baudrillard, "Simulacra and Simulations," <http://www.davidbardschwarz.com/pdf/simulacrum.pdf>

Week 8, Writing critically about criticism & theory. Test Prep Session and Q&A

M, 3/7: Writing critically about criticism & theory (critical essay workshop and Q&A, no new reading); Test Prep Session and Q&A (no new reading)

Week 9: Spring Break, No Class Week of 4/14

Week 10: TEST & Post-Freudian Psychoanalytic Theory

M, 3/21: TEST (IN CLASS; 1st half of class); 2nd half of class: Intro to Freud and Lacan (no new reading)

Week 11, Post-Freudian Psychoanalytic Theory

M, 3/28: Winnicott, "Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomenon, pp. 624-635; Hinrichsen, "Trauma Studies and the Literature of the US South," pp 636-649; Lacan, "The Mirror Stage," pp. 618-623

Week 12, New Historicism & Cultural Materialism

M, 4/4: Marx, pp. 717-735; Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," pp. 768-777; Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," pp. 736-744; Montrose, "New Historicisms," pp. 809-831

SATURDAY, APRIL 9th: CRITICAL ESSAY 1 DUE ON CANVAS BY 11:59 PM

Week 13: Feminist Criticism, Gender Studies, & Queer Theory

M, 4/11: Rubin, "The Traffic in Women," pp. 901-924; Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Experience," pp. 925-939; Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination," pp. 955-962; Berlant and Warner, "Sex in Public," pp. 1034-1049

Week 14: Disability Studies

M, 4/18: Grue, "Ablenationalists Assemble" Grue, Ablenationalists Assemble.pdf; Mollow, "Unvictamizable" Mollow, Unvictamizable-1.pdf; Val Vera, poems from Crip Lyrics: "Chair Thing," "Not Your Granddaddy's Crip," "Creation," "Dark Side" (all aforementioned poems linked here: Vera, selected poems from Crip Lyrics .pdf); Live Reading and Discussion from Crip Lyrics: The Unapologetic Poetry of Disability, with author, Val Vera. To contact Val Vera and/or to purchase a discounted signed copy of his book, email him at valverawrites@gmail.com

Week 15: Critical Race Theory & Postcolonial Theory

M, 4/25: Morrison, "Playing in the Dark," pp. 1163-1173; Gates, "The 'Blackness of Blackness:' A Critique of the Sign and the Signifying Monkey," The-Signifying-Monkey.pdf ; Fanon, "The Negro and Psychopathology," https://www.sas.upenn.edu/~cavitch/pdf-library/Fanon_Negro_and_Psychopathology.pdf; Said, "Orientalism," pp. 1107-1136; Spivak, "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism," pp. 1147-1162

Pre-Finals Week (no new reading)

M, 5/2: Critical Essay 2 Workshop; Evaluations

FRIDAY, MAY 13th: CRITICAL ESSAY 2 DUE ON CANVAS BY 11:59 PM

Note: There is no final exam in this course.