

RAMAPO COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY
Salameno School of American & International Studies
LITR 306-01

Literature: Theory and Criticism

Professor: Dr. Todd Landon Barnes
Assistant Professor of Literature
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Office: B-141
Office Hours: MR 5:30-6:30/R 12-1pm

Term: Fall 2013
Class Hours: MR 2-3:30pm
Location: G-106
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Catalog Course Description:

LITR 306 is an exploration in historical and contemporary terms of the tradition, from Plato to post-modernism, that struggles both to express the mysterious power of art and language and to explain it—to make it a conscious, even rational, activity. The course, which will focus on how literary discourse responds to historical change, concludes with a workshop component in the currents shaping such discourse today. Students will understand the assumptions and practices that have silently shaped their thinking and become conscious shapers of their own responses.

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In this course, students will study a series of methodological approaches that have been used historically to understand literary representation. We will begin in the classical world, with Platonic and Sophistic theories of representation, make our way through medieval and early modern notions of exegesis and spend the second third of the course looking at 20th and 21st literary theories (Russian formalism, French structuralism and Saussurean semiotics, cultural materialism, along with feminist, queer, Marxist, psychoanalytic, postcolonial, ecocritical and deconstructive approaches to the literary object). The final third of the course will be devoted to student research, as students will be given the opportunity to further research and employ one of the methods studied throughout the semester.

Course Goals: In this course, students will learn about the history of literary criticism. As a result, they will be better able to frame and historicize their interactions with literary texts. Students will become familiar with classical, early modern and postmodern approaches to literature, and they will select and further research a contemporary methodology. Throughout the course, students will remain focused on the structural/formal properties of literary representation; students will simultaneously study how those formal properties and arrangements connect to and arise from their historical contexts.

Measurable Student Learning Outcomes: Students will learn a series of 30 literary terms and figures related to the field of literary theory (*e.g.* semiotics, hermeneutics, exegesis, aesthetics, *différance*, polysemy, discourse, etc.). Students will learn historical background information about the classical, early modern, modern and post-modern world (*e.g.* reading, performance and printing practices, cosmologies and epistemologies). Students will be exposed to and become familiar with various methodological approaches to the study of literature (*e.g.* Russian formalism, French structuralism, postcolonial criticism, feminist criticism, Marxist criticism, Ecocriticism, deconstruction and queer theories of literature). Students will illustrate mastery of readings, concepts and terms through regular quizzes. Students will also demonstrate their familiarity with key concepts through their performance on a midterm and a final exam. Students

will illustrate their ability to synthesize these ideas with research of appropriate materials (*i.e.* information literacy) through regular essay writing (both online and on paper). Finally, students will also show their understanding of literary theory through an extensive research project.

Experiential Component: This course will include a minimum of five (5) hours of unmonitored appropriate experience outside of the classroom. This will involve keeping a journal in which students connect concepts and theories learned in class to “readings” and “writings” present in their everyday lives. Details regarding this requirement will be further explained in class.

Required Texts:

- Vladamir Propp’s *Morphology of the Folktale*,
- Sigmund Freud’s *Deleusion and Dream in Wilhelm Jensen’s Gradiva*
- Plato, *Phaedrus*
- *Literary Theory: The Basics*, 2nd Edition, Ed. Hans Bertens
- Students are required to read, **print**, annotate, and bring to class, all articles uploaded to **Moodle**.

Participation/Attendance: This class will not be possible without your participation. Unlike some courses, the success of this course depends on your contributions, your labor, and your perspective. Each class meeting will cover a wide range of material. The lessons of this course build cumulatively, so any absence threatens to quickly push you far behind. Students should come to class having printed out and read all required reading. Students should take notes while actively and courteously listening to and engaging with the professor and their peers. Any student discovered to be off-task (as determined by the professor) will be *marked absent*. Using technology to virtually exit the class will always constitute an *absence*. Coming to class after I’ve taken role or leaving before the class is over will constitute an *absence*. Students can miss two classes with no questions asked. A third absence lowers the student’s grade (by 1/2 a grade, 5%). A student absent four times in one semester cannot earn higher than a C+ (79%). If a student is absent five times, s/he automatically fails the course. **Please** do not e-mail me about your attendance. There are **no excused absences** in college (you are **already excused for two absences**), so do not offer “notes” from doctors, lawyers or parents. College policy states that students must notify faculty within the first three weeks of the semester if they anticipate missing any classes due to religious observance.

Papers: No late papers will be accepted. As Hamlet tells us, “The readiness is all.” Your essays need not be perfect, but I do expect them to be on time. If you are struggling with a project, let me know **in advance**, and we can arrange an extension (**really, please just ask**). All papers are to be typed and formatted according to the most recent MLA guidelines: <http://www.mla.org/>. Students may also use the Chicago Style. See the Chicago Manual of Style for the most recent guidelines: <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>.

For additional help in writing papers, I encourage you to visit our **Center for Reading and Writing**. Their helpful website can be accessed here: <http://ww2.ramapo.edu/crw/>

Plagiarism: ‘Plagiarism’, etymologically, means *kidnapping*. Do not steal the brainchildren of others. Students who engage in plagiarism will suffer the consequences set forth by the college. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, see one of your instructors, a tutor, or go visit this training module offered by our library:

http://library.ramapo.edu/captivate_tutorials/citation/citation.htm

This course will be powered by **TurnItIn.com**'s plagiarism detection technology.

Note: This course follows standard Ramapo College policy for Electronic Forms of Communication, Academic Integrity and Students with Disabilities. For details, please refer to the Academic Review Committee Website at <http://ww2.ramapo.edu/arc/>.

Disabilities/Accommodations: All students need accommodations to succeed. If you feel you might need any additional accommodations in order to succeed in this course, please let me know privately as soon as possible. Also, you should contact the Office of Specialized Services at 201.684.7514 (voice), 201.684.7092 (TTY), or oss@ramapo.edu (email).

Requirements/Grades

Your performance in this course (and your experience of this course) will be assessed through course blogs, class discussion, regular quizzes, an essay, a final exam and a final research paper. Your weighted grade in the course will be determined according to the following schema:

Narratology Project:	15%	Course Citizenship/Participation:	10%
Final Research Project:	25%	Experiential Journal:	05%
Quizzes/Reading Responses:	45%		

Course Blog: There will be an online component to this course. We will be utilizing Moodle. You can logon to Moodle here: <https://moodle.ramapo.edu/> Students will be required to regularly post short essays, comments and feedback through this site's forum. I will also use this site to post readings, make announcements and give student feedback. Our course's *home* is online. Most of your questions are answered there.

Course Satisfactions: GE-TOPICS ARTS AND HUMANITIES, SS-Sch Core-Consc & Society; This course also satisfies the "Theory and Process" requirement for the Literature major.

PROSPECTIVE SCHEDULE: *(subject to change at the professor's discretion)*

Week Zero: Introduction

9/5 R: Introduction

Week One: Classical Rhetoric and Philosophy

Plato *Phaedrus*

9/9 M: Socrates and the Sophists

9/12 R: Writing and Speech: The Oral Tradition

Week Two: Classical Poetics

Aristotle, *Poetics* (excerpt)
Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed* (excerpt)
Nietzsche, F. "The Problem of Socrates," from *Twilight of the Idols*

9/16 M: Aristotle
9/20 R: Boal, Nietzsche

Week Three: Medieval and Early Modern Poetics

Saint Augustine, "On Christian Teaching"
Gossen, S. "The Schoole of Abuse"
Sidney, P. "In Defense of Poesy"
de Certeau, M. "Reading as Poaching"

9/23 M: Augustine's semiotics and Sidney's humanism
9/26 R: de Certeau, Feudalism, and Consumption

Week Four: New Criticism and Russian Formalism

Propp, V. *Morphology of the Folktale*
Goldstein, D. *Fallen Princesses*
Wimsatt, W.K.
& Beardsley, M. "The Intentional Fallacy"

9/30 M: New Criticism
10/3 R: Russian Formalism and Propp's Functions

Week Five: French Structuralism

Barthes, R. "The Death of the Author"
Foucault, M. "The Author Function"
Bertens, H. *Literary Theory*, pp. 41-60

10/7 M: French Structuralism
10/10R: Barthes and Foucault

Week Six: Marxist Structuralism

Althusser, L. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses"
Bertens, H. *Literary Theory*, pp. 61-73

10/14M: Base, Infrastructure, Superstructure
10/17R: Materialism and Ideology

Week Seven: Marxist-Psychoanalytic Criticism

Freud, S. *Delusion and Dream in Wilhelm Jensen's Gradiva*
Ryan, M. "Psychoanalysis"

10/21:M: Althusser continued
10/24 R: Jensen's *Gradiva*

Week Eight: Psychoanalytic Criticism

Freud, S. *Delusion and Dream in Wilhelm Jensen's Gradiva*

10/28M: Freud's Structuralism
10/31R: Freud's Jensen

Week Nine: Critical Race Studies & Marxist Feminism

Gates, H.L. "Writing, 'Race', and the Difference It Makes"
hooks, b. "Postmodern Blackness," "Feminist Politics: Where We Stand,"
 "Feminist Class Struggle," & "Race and Gender"
Bertens, H. *Literary Theory*, pp. 73-90

11/4 M: Bertens and Gates
11/7 R: hooks

Week Ten: Poststructuralism & Deconstruction

Derrida, J. "Plato's Pharmacy" from *Dissemination* (excerpt)
Derrida, J. "Theses" and "Postscript" from *Archive Fever* (excerpt)
Bertens, H. *Literary Theory* (pp. 91-115)

11/11 M: Derrida on Plato's *Phaedrus* in *Dissemination*, Bertens
11/14 R: Derrida on Freud's Jensen in *Archive Fever*

Week Eleven: Poststructuralism and Power

Foucault, M. "Panopticism" from *Discipline & Punish*
Nietzsche, F. "On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense"
Bertens, H. *Literary Theory* (pp. 115-125; 135-153)

11/18 M: The Birth of the Prison
11/21 R: Historiography and New Historicism, Bertens

Week Twelve: New Historicism and Cultural Materialism

Foucault, M. "Nietzsche, Philosophy, History"
Benjamin, W. "Theses on the Philosophy of History"
Bertens, H. *Literary Theory*, pp. 135-154
Nietzsche, F. "Reason in Philosophy," from *Twilight of the Idols*

11/25 M: Nietzsche and Foucault on "Genealogy," Benjamin and the Angel of History
11/28 R: **HOLIDAY**

Week Thirteen: Ecocriticism and Ecofeminism

Schlessinger, L. "The Private Lives of Plants," from *Nature's Body: Gender in the Making of Modern Science*
Martin, E. "The Egg and the Sperm: How Science Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles"
Bertens, H. *Literary Theory*, pp. 195-213

12/2 M: "The Private Lives of Plants," Bertens
12/5 R: The Egg and the Sperm

Week Fourteen: Queer and Legal Theories

Warner, M. "Queer & Then?"
Constable, M. "Interview with Marianne Constable," from *The Believer*
Bertens, H. *Literary Theory*, pp. 177-194

12/9 M: Queer Theory and Gender, Warner, Bertens
12/12R: Silence and the Law, Constable

Final Class: December 19, 3-6pm