Spring 2017 ENGL 3000 Practical Criticism: Research and Methodology

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**Course Description:** No reading is “innocent.” We’ll begin with this assertion and ponder who/what are the influences that shape our ability to read, both the written word and the world. As a required prerequisite for upper-division English studies, this course provides an introduction to representative critical approaches to literature and an intensive participation in critical reading, analytical thinking, and argumentative writing. Enabling students to develop and articulate interpretations from a variety of theoretical approaches, the course investigates the key assumptions and methodologies of significant schools of literary criticism. Introducing students to theories that are based both on close textual study (formalism) and on contexts, such as psychoanalytic theories, gender studies, New Historicism, and postcolonialism, the course requires application of different kinds of critical readings to literary and filmic texts in a variety of genres and writing of short, analytical papers as well as a substantive documented paper.

**Required Texts:** Stephen Bonnycastle, *In Search of Authority*; Toni Morrison, *Sula*; film *Fight Club*; online selections from Angela Carter, *The Bloody Chamber*; selected literary and critical readings online or coureseden. Also, *MLA Handbook for Writers*) or online access.

**Course Objectives:**

Students will cultivate skills in reading, writing, and critical analysis appropriate for the advanced English major.

Students will understand major critical approaches that are employed in the field of literary studies.

Students will be able to read, discuss, and analyze literary works using a variety of critical perspectives.

Students will articulate how these perspectives both inform and direct our understanding and appreciation of literature.

Students will develop competence in literary analysis from at least three different critical perspectives.

Students will organize and complete a substantive research paper that demonstrates the ability to engage effectively in critical research and writing.

Students will demonstrate in both oral and written work a discipline-specific critical facility through convincing and well supported analysis of course-related material.

Students will demonstrate their command of academic English and of the tenets of sound composition by means of thesis-driven analytical prose.

This course meets the objective program goals of the department and of the university in very specific ways: for a complete list of these, see [http://www.westga.edu/~engdept/fr/CourseGuid/2300.html](http://www.westga.edu/~engdept/fr/CourseGuid/2300.html).
**Course Requirements:**
1. As an introduction to study of English as a discipline, this is a foundational course which serves as a kind of practicum. Reading assigned texts before class is essential; class attendance, discussion, and participation in in-class activities make up 20% of the grade. Missing class more than three times results in a failing grade for participation.

2. All written assignments must be completed in accordance with current MLA guidelines, so careful attention to the *MLA Handbook for Writers* is required.

3. Essays are due as scheduled on the syllabus; late papers are graded down one letter grade per day late (a paper is late if it not turned in at the beginning of the class period in which it is due).

4. Students will participate in informal group presentations as part of in-class work and an oral presentation at semester’s end applying a critical method to a selection from contemporary culture (song, film, TV show, exhibit, commercial)

5. The department requires the following as part of the research project: Prospectus for research project, progress report, draft and editing checklist, final documented paper demonstrating clear knowledge of and ability to use MLA style.

**Plagiarism Policy:** The Department of English and Philosophy defines plagiarism as taking personal credit for the words and ideas of others as they are presented in electronic, print, and verbal sources. The Department expects that students will accurately credit sources in all assignments. An equally dishonest practice is fabricating sources or facts; it is another form of misrepresenting the truth. Plagiarism is grounds for failing the course. Any plagiarized assignment will receive a Zero. Students will be reported to the appropriate university officials.

**UWG Policies, Services, and Requirements for all courses:**
[http://www.westga.edu/assetsDept/vpaa/Common_Language_for_Course_Syllabi.pdf](http://www.westga.edu/assetsDept/vpaa/Common_Language_for_Course_Syllabi.pdf)

**Grading Procedures:**
1. Essays are graded on the assumption that the fundamentals of good writing (including grammar, sentence style, and thesis-driven essay organization and development) have been gained in ENGL 1101 and 1102. We will also work on increased sentence effectiveness. If there are basic writing problems (major grammar errors or basic lack of organization), we will need to meet early in the semester to address these. Additional hours in the Writing Center for practice of basic skills may be required. Each essay assignment will offer specific guidelines and criteria and will measure the ability to put into practice the general critical principles of methods we discuss.

2. The research paper provides an opportunity to become competent in all phases of researched writing—collecting sources, planning a paper, writing an abstract, drafting, producing a correct bibliography, organizing an argument with attention to critical method, and revision and
polishing. Students will share their progress at each stage of the process in informal oral reports and one written progress report (all part of a participation grade). The final grade on the paper will be based on effective writing (organization, development of a sustained critically-focused argument, and grammar), effective use of sources, and correct MLA documentation style.

3. The final will be a general test of your knowledge of the basic fundamentals of each critical theory we have explored in the course (not tests on the literature).

Students will complete the following assignments:
1. One brief formalist explication (one page)
2. two short written assignments (2-3 pp and 4-5 pp. critical essays using different lenses)
3. one oral presentation on reading popular culture through a critical lens.
4. an extended, focused, and well-researched documented paper
5. One exam given after all critical methods units and before work on final paper

**Evaluation**: Students will be evaluated by the following:

- Essays 40%
- Participation (quizzes, workshops, deadlines during paper process) 20%
- Oral Presentation 10%
- Research Paper 20%
- Exam 10%

T 10 Introduction to course: Requirements, policies, and ‘innocent reading” / First response: Analysis of famous visual image, Photograph “The Soiling of Old Glory” (this photograph will be reviewed later in the semester through different critical lenses) / assign text readings

Th 12 Brief Debate from Graff’s *Teaching the Conflicts* (this will be handed out in class) / Introduction to methods of reading: All assigned page numbers refer to Bonnycastle text unless noted: 11-16, 22-24 (respond), 35-42

T 17 TEXT-Based Method: 83-89 and online reading

Formalism / Interpretive Workshop: Adrienne Rich’s “Aunt Jennifer’s, Tigers,” Seamus Heaney’s “Digging” (from web) PRINT OUT AND BRING TO CLASS notated / essay 1 assigned

Th 19 Writing Analytical Essays / Drafting and Effective Writing with quotations

T 24 Online class: reading questions on psych criticism due on coursedden by end of day. The link will take you to an online dictionary arranged from A-Z. Once the text loads, scroll down to the P’s and find Psychological Literary Criticism. Use this reading to answer questions on coursedden. Access reading here / Paper #1 Due on coursedden

Th 26 Discuss Psychoanalytical criticism / Is psych lit crit an embarrassment? Read Peter Brooks here / assign film
T 31 *Fight Club / assign scene selection for next week (students request scenes for analysis—groups assigned)

Th 2 Group work on scene analysis presentations (I have to leave a bit early this class period but students will have the entire time for prep)

T 7 Scene Presentations

Th 9 Gender Studies: 200-13 and queer theory reading available on courseden / assign Carter (online readings)

T 14 Carter: selections from *The Bloody Chamber / assign essay 2

Th 16 Draft Workshop / Writing Strategies: topic sentences, paragraph cohesion, introductions

T 21 Historical Methods: Marxism and Postcolonial methods 216-242 / essay 2 due

Th 23 African American Theory and Postcolonial Criticism: readings on courseden

T 28 Sula

Th 2 Sula cont’d / brainstorm critical lenses

Note: Th 3/2 is last day to withdraw with a grade of W

T 7 Finish Sula / assign essay 3 / assign targeted editing checklist based on previous essays

Th 9 Essay 3 draft workshop / both your draft and your checklist due in class hard copy

T 14 Exam

Th 16 Brainstorming research projects / introduction to prospectus writing / assign prospectus

T 21, Th 23 SPRING BREAK

T 28 Prospectus meeting/Assign initial 3 pp. draft / assign source workshop and progress report

Th 30 3 pg draft due in class / Source/bibliography workshop / MLA HANDBOOK in class / research methods / progress reports due


Th 6 pp. Draft Workshop: target: sentence variety, quotation variation / assign oral presentation and sign up

T 11 Final Draft Workshop / draft due to me /
Th 13 Contemporary Example presentations

T 18 Contemporary Example presentations / FINAL DRAFT of research paper due

Th 20 Contemporary Example Presentations / Return to initial class questions: pp. 247-255.

T 25, Th 27 No classes / revisions if required to research paper (to achieve at least a C evaluation on this paper)