Course Description and Objectives:

Understanding what literary criticism is and how to use it enhances one’s enjoyment, analysis, and understanding of literature in very exciting ways. In this course, we will begin by aiming to define conceptually literary criticism and theory. We will then proceed to explore the different schools of theory – New Criticism, Reader Response, Structuralism, Deconstruction, Marxism, Psychoanalytic, Feminism, New Historicism, and Cultural Studies. We will define each school of theory, as well as analyze its strengths and weaknesses through our application of each theory to various selections of literature. In doing so, the goal is for you to learn about theory and about yourself as a theorist, that is, to gain understanding of which theory when applied to literature provides you with the greatest sense of fulfillment and understanding.

In this course, you will also sharpen your critical thinking skills as you engage in imperative and fulfilling work with writing, explication, discussion, speech, and analysis. As you can see, we have much to do this semester, and this course promises to be rewarding so long as you are willing to invest energy and a great part of yourself in the wonderful task of using literary criticism to connect to literature and to your understanding of your own individual viewpoints, personal development, and analytic thought processes.

Required Texts:

- *Literary Criticism, An Introduction to Theory and Practice*, 3rd edition, Charles E. Bressler, isbn# 0130333972
- *Dracula* (unabridged), Bram Stoker, Dover, isbn# 0486411095
- *The Great Gatsby*, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Scribner, isbn# 0684801523
- *Note* -- I will be distributing many handouts in class; you are responsible for making certain *before you come to class* that you have and have read the handouts I distribute during the prior class.

Course Requirements:

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Essay #1</td>
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<td>Essay #2</td>
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<td>Midterm Exam</td>
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<td>Final Exam</td>
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<td>Focus question freewrites</td>
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<td>Class participation &amp; professionalism</td>
<td>20%</td>
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I expect to find no instances of plagiarism throughout the semester; plagiarism is a serious offense and will not be tolerated under any circumstances. I abide by the statement about dishonesty as illustrated in the current edition of the Undergraduate Catalog.
Grading:

Your final grade will be determined according to the following scale:

- A = 94-100%
- B = 84-86%
- C = 74-76%
- D = 60-64%
- A- = 90-93%
- B- = 80-83%
- C- = 70-73%
- F = 59% and under
- B+ = 87-89%
- C+ = 77-79%
- D+ = 65-69%

Papers are due at the beginning of class on the due date. After that, they’re late.

* You are allowed one (only) “computer excuse” (i.e. printing problems, computer lockup, disk problems, etc.) for final drafts, so long as I get the paper by the time I go home that day. It is your job, in this case, to ensure that you place the paper in my hands before I leave campus that day. I never take responsibility for papers that are not placed directly in my hands.

* The final paper grade will be lowered a grade (e.g. from B to B-) if you fail to fulfill the peer review component of the essay assignments.

* Final paper grades are lowered a grade (e.g. from A- to B+) for each class day that either a first or final draft is handed in late.

* It is important, if you expect your paper will be late due to a family emergency or illness to discuss the matter with me before the paper is late. Otherwise, the paper is most likely subject to all late penalties.

* I do not accept any papers that are more than two weeks late.

Class Participation and Attendance Policy:

This course will be successful only if everyone participates enthusiastically and regularly. Being present in class is imperative because your comments in class are valuable and constructive; they are therefore necessary if this course is to reach its full potential. Please regularly participate and enjoy speaking in class, asking questions, and responding to your classmates’ presentations. The more you participate, the more we all will benefit from this course. Students absent more than three times this semester may find their final course grade lowered one grade (e.g. from C to C-) for each additional absence.

Focus Question Freewrites:

At the end of class each day, I will give you a question aimed at helping you focus your reading as you prepare for our following class. For each day’s reading assignment, after you finish your reading but before you come to class, you are to freewrite your answer to this question. Each freewrite should be one page long. A strong entry will make reference to textual evidence, much as would a formal paper that does literary analysis. I will collect your Focus Question Freewrites each class day before class starts. I do not accept FQFs after class has started. Late penalties are the same for FQF as they are for essays. No credit will be given for FQFs handed in more than one week late. Printing up or otherwise copying even a small portion from any internet site results in immediate failure of the course and a record of academic dishonesty kept on file in the registrar’s office with regard to your transcript.
Literary Criticism Schedule of Assigned Readings

“No theory is good except on condition that one use to go beyond”

-- Andre Gide, Journals, 1918

BRING YOUR TEXT TO CLASS EACH DAY

**Monday 22 January: Welcome to Literary Criticism**

**Wednesday 24 January: Defining Literary Theory and Criticism**
- Have read for class from Bressler text: pp. 1-15
- Skim pp. 16-35 of Bressler text

Focus question: ________________________________________________________________

**Monday 29 January: Introduction to New Criticism**
- Have read for class from Bressler text:
  - pp. 37-48,
  - pp. 214, John Keats, “To Autumn”
  - pp. 50-54

Focus question: ________________________________________________________________

**Wednesday 31 January: New Criticism – day 2**
- Have read for class through Chapter IV of Dracula (through p. 45)

Focus question: ________________________________________________________________

**Monday 5 February: Introduction to Reader-Response**
- Have read for class from Bressler text:
  - pp. 55-70
  - pp. 72-74

Focus question: ________________________________________________________________

**Wednesday 7 February: Reader Response – day 2**
- Have read for class through Chapter VIII of Dracula (through p. 89)
- Read the underlined sections of Wolfgang Iser, “The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach” (distributed 2-5)

Focus question: ________________________________________________________________

**Monday 12 February: Introduction to Structuralism**
• Have read for class from Bressler text:
  pp. 75-89
  pp. 91-3

Focus question:  ________________________________________________________________

Wednesday 14 February:  Structuralism – day 2
• Have read for class through Chapter XI of Dracula (through p. 124)

Focus question:  ________________________________________________________________

Monday 19 February:  DUE:  First Draft of Essay #1 – Peer review

Wednesday 21 February:  Introduction to Deconstruction
• Have read for class from Bressler text:
  pp. 94-114
  pp. 116-8

DUE:  FINAL draft of Essay #1

Focus question:  ________________________________________________________________

Monday 26 February:  Deconstruction – day 2
• Have read for class through Chapter XVII of Dracula (through p. 198)

Focus question:  ________________________________________________________________

Wednesday 28 February:  Deconstruction – day 3
• Have read the underlined sections of Jacques Derrida, “Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences” (distributed 2-26)
• Read the underlined sections of Claude Levi-Strauss, “The Structural Study of Myth” (distributed 2-26)

Focus question:  ________________________________________________________________

Monday 5 March:  “Wrapping up” : ) Deconstruction & Introduction to Marxism
• Have read for class from Bressler text:
  pp. 161-74
  pp. 175-78

Focus question:  ________________________________________________________________

Wednesday 7 March:  Marxism – day 2
• Have read for class through the conclusion of Dracula

Focus question:  ________________________________________________________________
Monday 12 March – Friday 16 March: Spring Break
Best wishes for a safe and relaxing week.

Monday 19 March: DUE: TAKE-HOME MIDTERM EXAM

Wednesday 21 March: Introduction to Psychoanalytic Criticism
- Have read for class from Bressler text:
  pp. 119-36
  pp. 137-41

Focus question: ________________________________________________________________

Monday 26 March: Psychoanalytic Criticism – The Freudians
- Have read: Sigmund Freud, Creative Writers and Daydreaming” (distributed 03-21)

Focus question: ________________________________________________________________

Wednesday 28 March: Psychoanalytic Criticism – The Freudians, day 2
- Have read for class the underlined sections of Harold Bloom, “A Meditation upon Priority” (distributed 03-26)

Focus question: ________________________________________________________________

Thursday 29 March & Friday 30 March: Classes cancelled
Best wishes for a blessed and beautiful Easter holiday.

Monday 2 April: Psychoanalytic Criticism – The Lacanians
- Take a look at for class Jacques Lacan, “The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious or Reason Since Freud” (distributed 03-28)
- Read underlined sections of Jane Gallop, “From Reading Lacan” (distributed 03-28)

Focus question: ________________________________________________________________

Wednesday 4 April: Introduction to Feminism
- Have read for class from Bressler text:
  pp. 142-56
- Have read for class the underlined sections of Judith Fetterley, “Introduction to The Resisting Reader” (distributed 04/02)

Monday 9 April: Feminism – day 2
- Read through Chapter IV of The Great Gatsby (through p. 85)

Focus question: ________________________________________________________________

Wednesday 11 April: Introduction to New Historicism
- Have read for class from Bressler text:
Monday 16 April:  **DUE:** First draft of Essay #2 – Peer review

Wednesday 18 April: **New Historicism – day 2**
- Have read for class Clifford Geertz, “Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight” (distributed 4-16)
- **DUE:** Final draft of Essay #2

Monday 23 April: **New Historicism – day 3**
- Have read for class through Chapter VI of *The Great Gatsby* (through p. 118)

Wednesday 25 April: **Introduction to Cultural Studies**
- Have read for class from Bressler text
  - pp. 197-209
  - pp. 211-13

Monday 30 April: **Cultural Studies – day 2**
- Have read for class through Chapter VII (through p. 154)

Wednesday 2 May: **Conclusions -- What kind of theorist are YOU?**
- Have read for class through the conclusion of *The Great Gatsby*

**FINAL EXAM DATE:** WEDNESDAY 9 MAY ~ 12-2:30 pm