



**ENG 420.001 (20280)—Approaches to Literature
“Methods and Approaches to Literary Theory”**

**Spring 2015
MWF—12:00 pm-12:50 pm
Room: HL 304**

Instructor: (Christopher Gonzalez, PhD – Assistant Professor)
Office Location: Hall of Languages (HL) 225
Office Hours: TR 1:00 pm-3:30 pm and by appointment
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NOTE: I reserve the right to revise the contents of this syllabus as I deem necessary.

COURSE INFORMATION

Materials – Textbooks, Readings, Supplementary Readings:

Textbooks Required:

A Brief History of Seven Killings, Marlon James. ISBN: 9781594486005

How to Interpret Literature, 3rd Edition. Robert Dale Parker. ISBN: 9780199331161

Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction, Jonathan Culler. ISBN: 9780199691340

Recommended:

Literary Criticism and Theory: From Plato to Postcolonialism, Pelagia Goulimari. ISBN: 9780415544320

(ENG 420 catalogue description): Approaches to Literature - Three semester hours. An introduction to historical and contemporary theoretical and critical approaches to textual analysis within the discipline of literary studies. Different methods and theories may be chosen for the course, but the goal is to improve learners' skills in reading, discussing and writing about texts from a variety of genres and media. Prerequisite Eng 1302.

Course Description

ENG 420 is designed to provide upper-level undergraduate students with an opportunity to familiarize themselves with a wide array of critical literary theories and approaches. In this particular iteration of ENG 420, the emphasis is on understanding a broad range of critical approaches to literature in its many

forms. Further, because literary theory is capacious; there are many orientations and approaches to it, making it potentially disorienting and difficult. Thus, the course aims to lay out the many theorists and perspectives that inform critical literary theory. The course will treat all approaches equally and will encourage students to gravitate to those that they find compelling for personal reasons. Indeed, literature—as a creative process, as an immersive experience, as a cultural artifact—helps define who we are. It is best to think of literary theory as a toolbox replete with a variety of instruments that help unlock specific meanings to any given work of literature. Thus, by using different critical approaches on a single work of literature, distinct interpretations of that work may be equally valid and compelling.

This course is an exploration of the expansive field of Literary Theory, from its Aristotelian roots to recent developments in cognitive science and neuroscience. As we trace our way through the major movements of this field, we will apply our understanding of these theoretical positions to a specific commonplace text and also well-known examples from novels, poetry, film, television, comics, and nonfiction. We will consider developments in the field including New Criticism, Structuralism, Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis, Feminism, Queer Studies, Marxism, Historicism, Cultural Studies, Postcolonial, Race Studies, Reader Response, Cognitive Narratology, Ecocriticism, and Disability Studies. At its core, this journey through Literary Theory will make students more cognizant of the structural and dynamic features that undergird the power and meaning of literature, how literary works are experienced, and how they remain relevant in our changing world. Students should plan to engage in productive discussions based on the theoretical and commonplace readings; compose a paper applying one theoretical approach to the commonplace novel; demonstrate knowledge and understanding of discussions and readings via quizzes; create an infographic concerning a specific aspect of the course; a midterm exam, and a final exam.

Course Objectives:

- Students will further develop their ability to research and present information in a visually economical and appealing way.
- Students will demonstrate their understanding of approaches to literature.
- Students will hone their ability to write a critical essay.

Student Learning Outcomes:

- Students will further develop their ability to research and present information in a visually economical and appealing way by creating a successful infographic.
- Students will hone their ability to interpret literature using literary theory by submitting a critical essay for grading.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Instructional / Methods / Activities Assessments

This course consists of a series of activities and assessments to assist you in achieving the outcomes and objectives of this course and instructional units/modules. By the end of this course the class will read and discuss several book-length texts as well as secondary materials.

During the semester you will complete several major assignments designed to build on each other intellectually and conceptually. These assignments are:

Class Participation**10%**

Active class participation is vital in class, but it is at times difficult to measure. You should be prepared to discuss several aspects of the readings during each class meeting. Each class meeting ought to be viewed as a collaboration of an investigative team that is charged with examining a problem. Everyone's sustained attention and participation is key to this approach. Expect to be called on to discuss some facet of the day's readings and to elaborate on these points via discussion.

Quizzes**10%**

As an opportunity to demonstrate your understanding of the course material, you will take regular quizzes. These quizzes will be conducted online and outside of class.

Critical Analysis Essay**20%**

For this assignment you will compose an analytical essay on the commonplace text, *A Brief History of Seven Killings*, using a theoretical approach of your own choosing. You are encouraged to use secondary sources to bolster your argument. The essay should be a minimum of seven double-spaced pages plus a Works Cited page. Please use MLA style.

Infographic**20%**

Using an aspect of literary theory of your own choosing, you will create an infographic. The purpose is to research a large, perhaps difficult to understand concept and distill it into an easy to read, creatively-rendered infographic.

Midterm Exam**20%**

The Midterm Exam will cover key concepts and topics from class discussions and readings.

Final Exam**20%**

The Final Exam will cover key concepts and topics from class discussions and readings *since the Midterm*.

Class Participation	10%
Quizzes	10%
Critical Analysis Essay	20%
Infographic	20%
Midterm Exam	20%
Final Exam	20%
Total:	100%

Scale used to compute final letter grades:**Percentage**

- A: 100-90
- B: 89-80
- C: 79-70
- D: 69-60
- F: 59-0

Technology

This course is conducted face to face (f2f). However, some aspects of the course (e.g., grades, dropbox) are accessed online. This course will not use eCollege. Instead, you will receive information on how to access grades and the dropbox during class. Do not allow a technological problem or question keep you from a successful outcome in this course. Technology is designed to facilitate your learning experience in this class, not to hinder it.

There will be no extra credit assignments. As a rule, I do not accept late work.

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

Course Specific Procedures:

Academic Honesty Policy

Texas A&M University-Commerce and the Department of Literature and Languages do not tolerate **plagiarism** and other forms of **academic dishonesty**. Conduct that violates generally-accepted standards of academic honesty is defined as academic dishonesty. “Academic dishonesty” includes, but is not limited to, plagiarism (the appropriation or stealing of the ideas or words of another person and passing them off as one’s own), cheating on exams or other course assignments, collusion (the unauthorized collaboration with others in preparing course assignments), and abuse (destruction, defacing, or removal) of resource material. Instructors uphold and support the highest academic standards, and students are expected to do likewise. Penalties for students guilty of academic dishonesty include disciplinary probation, suspension and expulsion (Texas A&M University-Commerce Code of Student Conduct 5.b[1, 2, 3]). Cheating, including plagiarizing papers in whole or part, will result in a grade of zero (0) on the assignment for the first offense and failure of the course for any subsequent offenses.

Attendance Policy

Attendance in this class equates to participation in the discussions and is important to the success of this class and to your development as a writer/student. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that you notify me of potential conflicts with course expectations. The expectation is that you will do more than simply show up to class. Your active participation, in the form of discussion responses and questions, is vital for success in this course. Deadline extensions and other allowances can often be accommodated before they are required, but this requires advance notice. Related to this, SEE ASSIGNMENT POLICY

Assignment Policy

Student work must be completed and submitted on time. All assignments should be turned in during the class period when they are due. Students who know they will miss class when an assignment is due must contact the instructor as soon as possible in advance of class to arrange for submission of the assignment.

All papers should conform to the MLA style guidelines, with the exception of your weekly responses.

Late Work

I will not accept any assignment after its due date. Assignments submitted after the due date may receive a score of zero (0).

Drop a Course

A student may drop a course by logging into his/her myLEO account and clicking on the hyperlink labeled “Drop a class” from among the choices found under the myLeo section of the Web page.

Incompletes

Incompletes (grade of “X”) are granted only under rare and extraordinary circumstances.

Administrative Withdrawal

I reserve the right to drop a student from the course administratively for excessive absences or violations of student conduct codes.

University Specific Procedures:

ADA Statement

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services

Texas A&M University-Commerce

Gee Library 132

Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835

Fax (903) 468-8148

StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu

Student Conduct

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. It is next to impossible to explore ideas in a classroom setting if students and instructors do not feel safe or otherwise supported. I will not tolerate discrimination in all its forms. Likewise, rudeness has no place in any classroom, and I will ensure that my classroom remains a rudeness-free environment. (See *Code of Student Conduct from Student Guide Handbook*).

Responsibility

You are responsible for understanding all of the material contained in this syllabus, as well as any announced changes to this syllabus. You are also responsible for understanding instructions and directives related to assignments, exams, and grades. This means visiting your professor during office hours if instructions and/or directives remain unclear. Unless you state otherwise, I will assume that you have understood what is expected of you in this class.

COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR

The following course schedule is subject to revisions and other modifications as the instructor deems necessary for the course. Any changes to the course schedule will be announced on the course website in advance of the week in which the change will occur.

Spring 2015

Date	Agenda
Week 1	<p>Wednesday 1/21: Introduction, syllabus overview</p> <p>Friday 1/23: <i>VSI</i> Chapter 1 and 2</p>
Week 2	<p>Monday 1/26: <i>HIL</i> Chapter 1; <i>VSI</i> Chapter 3</p> <p>Wednesday 1/28: <i>VSI</i> Chapter 4; Quiz 1</p> <p>Friday 1/30: <i>VSI</i> Chapter 5</p>
Week 3	<p>Monday 2/2: <i>VSI</i> Chapter 6</p> <p>Wednesday 2/4: <i>VSI</i> Chapter 7; Quiz 2</p> <p>Friday 2/6: <i>VSI</i> Chapter 8</p>
Week 4	<p>Monday 2/9: <i>HIL</i> “New Criticism”; “Before New Criticism”; “How to Interpret: Key Concepts for New Critical Interpretation”; “Historicizing the New Criticism: Rethinking Literary Unity”</p> <p>Wednesday 2/11: <i>HIL</i> “The Intentional Fallacy and the Affective Fallacy”; “How to Interpret: A New Critical Example”; “The Influence of New Criticism”; Quiz 3</p> <p>Friday 2/13: Prepare for further discussion on New Criticism. No readings.</p>
<p>Week 5</p> <p>NOTE: YOU SHOULD BE FINISHED WITH A BRIEF HISTORY OF SEVEN KILLINGS BY THIS POINT.</p>	<p>Monday 2/16: <i>HIL</i> “Structuralism”; “Key Concepts in Structuralism”; “how to Interpret: Structuralism in Cultural and Literary Studies”; “The Death of the Author”</p> <p>Wednesday 2/18: <i>HIL</i> “How to Interpret: The Detective Novel”; “Structuralism, Formalism, and Literary History”; “The Structuralist Study of Narrative: Narratology”; “How to Interpret: Focalization and Free Indirect Discourse”; “Narrative Syntax, and Metaphor and Metonymy”; Quiz 4</p> <p>Friday 2/20: Prepare for further discussion on Structuralism. No readings.</p>
Week 6	<p>Monday 2/23: “Deconstruction”; “Key Concepts in Deconstruction”; “How to Interpret: A Deconstructionist Example”; “Writing, Speech, and <i>Différance</i>”</p> <p>Wednesday 2/25: “Deconstruction beyond Derrida”; “Deconstruction, Essentialism, and Identity”; “How to Interpret: Further Deconstructionist Examples”; Quiz 5</p> <p>Friday 2/27: Prepare for further discussion on Deconstruction. No readings. Infographic Due</p>
Week 7	<p>Monday 3/2: “Psychoanalysis”; “Clinical Psychoanalysis”; “Key Concepts in Psychoanalysis: The Psychoanalytic Understanding of the Mind”; “Sigmund Freud”; “How to Interpret: Models of Psychoanalytic Interpretation”</p> <p>Wednesday 3/4: “From the Interpretation of Dreams to the Interpretation of Literature”; “How to Interpret: Further Psychoanalytic Examples”; “Jacques Lacan”; “How to Interpret: A Lacanian Example”; Midterm Exam</p>

	Friday 3/6: Prepare for further discussion on Psychoanalysis. No readings.
Week 8	<p>Monday 3/9: “Feminism”; “What Is Feminism?”; “Early Feminist Criticism”; “Sex and Gender”; “Feminisms”</p> <p>Wednesday 3/11: “How to Interpret: Feminist Examples”; “Feminism and Visual Pleasure”; “Intersectionality and the Interdisciplinary Ethos of Contemporary Feminism”; Quiz 6</p> <p>Friday 3/13: Prepare for further discussion on Feminism. No readings.</p>
Week 9	<p>Monday 3/23: “Queer Studies”; “Key Concepts in Queer Studies”; “How to Interpret: A Queer Studies Example”; “Outing: Writers, Characters, and the Literary Closet”</p> <p>Wednesday 3/25: “Homosexuality and Homosexual Panic”; “Queer of Color Critique”; “How to Interpret: Another Queer Studies Example”; “Questions That Queer Studies Critics Ask”</p> <p>Friday 3/27: Prepare for further discussion on Queer Studies. No readings.</p>
Week 10	<p>Monday 3/30: “Marxism”; “Key concepts in Marxism”; “Lukács, Gramsci, and Marxist Interpretations of Culture”; “Contemporary Marxism, Ideology, and Agency”</p> <p>Wednesday 4/1: “How to Interpret: An Example from Popular Culture”; “Variations in Marxist Criticism”; “How to Interpret: Further Marxist Examples”; Quiz 7</p> <p>Friday 4/3: Prepare for further discussion on Marxism. No readings.</p>
Week 11	<p>Monday 4/6: “Historicism and Cultural Studies”; “New Historicism”; “How to Interpret: Historicist Examples”; “Michel Foucault”</p> <p>Wednesday 4/8: “Cultural Studies”; “How to Interpret: A Cultural Studies Example”; “Cultural Studies, Historicism, and Literature”; Quiz 8</p> <p>Friday 4/10: Prepare for further discussion on Historicism and Cultural Studies. No readings.</p>
Week 12	<p>Monday 4/13: “Postcolonial and Race Studies”; “Postcolonialism”; “From Orientalism to Deconstruction: Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak”; “How to Interpret: A Postcolonial Studies Example”; Critical Analysis Essay Due</p> <p>Wednesday 4/15: “Race Studies”; “How to Interpret: Postcolonial and Race Studies Examples”; “Postcolonial and Race Studies and Literary Studies”; Quiz 9</p> <p>Friday 4/17: Prepare for further discussion on Postcolonialism and Race Studies. No readings.</p>
Week 13	<p>Monday 4/20: “Reader Response”; “Ideal, Implied, and Actual Readers”; “Structuralist Models of Reading and Communication”; “Aesthetic Judgment, Interpretive Communities, and Resisting Readers”</p> <p>Wednesday 4/22: “Reception Theory and Reception History”; “Paranoid, Suspicious, and Symptomatic Reading versus Surface Reading”; “Readers</p>

	and the New Technologies”; Quiz 10 Friday 4/24: Prepare for further discussion on Reader Response. No readings.
Week 14	Monday 4/27: “Recent and Emerging Developments: Ecocriticism and Disability Studies”; “Ecocriticism and Environmental Criticism” Wednesday 4/29: “Disability Studies”; “A Future for Critical Theory” Friday 5/1: Prepare for further discussion on Ecocriticism and Disability Studies. No readings.
Week 15	Monday 5/4: “Theory Futures” by Leitch Wednesday 5/6: “Bad Writing” by D.G. Myers Friday 5/8: Course Wrap-Up
	Final Exam: May 11, 2014