Course Title: History of Literary Theory and Criticism

Course Code: ENG 310

Course Type: Compulsory (for students taking the literature track; elective for students of all other tracks)

Level: Undergraduate

Year / Semester: 3rd year / 6th semester

Teacher’s Name: Maria Margaroni

ECTS: 7.5

Lectures / week: 3 hours per week

Laboratories / week: none

Course Purpose and Objectives:
The course offers an introduction to Literary Criticism and Theory, giving students the opportunity to explore some of the concerns and debates that have remained central from Aristotle to the present. The main questions around which the course is structured are the following:

- What is the politics of English as a cultural institution and a discipline?
- What are the function and role of the Humanities today?
- What is the distinctiveness of “Literature” as an aesthetic category?
- How is literary value to be determined? How has the literary canon been formed?
- What is the relation between a literary work and the historical/institutional frame that encloses/defines it as such?
- If a literary text can always travel beyond the distinct local, historical borders that have shaped it, how can we conceptualize its worldliness?
- Is the relation between a literary work and its creator one of filiation?
- In what ways is the concept of the ‘author’ the product of particular historical coordinates?
- Are texts gendered? Are they racialized?

Learning Outcomes:

- Knowledge & Understanding (Theory Component)
  - Develop a historically-informed understanding of the key developments in the wider field of contemporary literary theory and criticism;
  - Appreciate the institutional politics of English as a discipline;
  - Reflect critically on one’s own experience of reading and discussing literary texts;
  - Investigate the connections between aesthetic form, literary value, the socio-political functions of ideology and cultural power;
  - Examine the central concerns and debates in post-1960s literary theory; develop the ability to comparatively discuss and evaluate different positions in these debates.

- Key Skills (Practical Component)
  - Apply the critical and analytical skills required in scholarly research to reflect on and evaluate the bibliography studied;
  - Acquire the ability to put forward a theoretically-informed argument in a well-written academic essay;
  - Debate the validity of different arguments and compose informed responses to the competing theoretical perspectives examined in the course;
  - Develop effective presentation and argumentation skills.
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<th>Prerequisites</th>
<th>N/A</th>
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<td><strong>Course Content</strong></td>
<td><strong>WEEK 1:</strong> <em>Introduction to the course</em></td>
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<td><strong>Watch:</strong> “The 60s: The Years that Changed America”</td>
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<td><a href="https://youtube.com/watch?v=4VNtTuxEUBI">https://youtube.com/watch?v=4VNtTuxEUBI</a></td>
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<td>“Turn On, Tune In, Drop Out: Counterculture of the 1960’s”</td>
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<td>“May 68: When France took a stand”</td>
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<td><strong>WEEK 2:</strong> <em>What Is Literature?</em></td>
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<td><strong>WEEK 3:</strong> P. B. Shelley, “A Defence of Poetry” (cont.)</td>
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WEEK 5: Terry Eagleton (cont.)

**Debate session 1: Politics vs. Aesthetics**

WEEK 6: Midterm Quiz

**The Subject of (in) Literature**


WEEK 8: Roland Barthes (cont.)


**Debate session 2: I write? He writes? It writes? – Conjugating authorship**

**WEEK 10:** *Literature and Value*


**WEEK 11:** Lillian S. Robinson (cont.)


**Debate Session 3: A Master-Canon or an infinity of minor canons?**
WEEK 13: Literature, the Nation and the World


Debate Session 4: Can a literary text travel beyond the local, historical borders that have shaped it?

Teaching Methodology

A combination of lecturing (use of power-point, audio-visual material), open seminar discussion and debate sessions.

Bibliography


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<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Active participation in debate sessions and class-discussions, a midterm exam, an extended final essay (3000 words) focusing on one or more of the key concerns/questions/debates discussed in class.</th>
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<tbody>
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