

ENGLISH 211 2016: SEMINAR FOR ENGLISH HONOURS INTRODUCTION TO CRITICAL THEORY AND PRACTICE

Schedule: Monday 2-4 pm, Wednesday 2-3 pm

Location: Buchanan D317 (Monday), Buchanan B303 (Wednesday)

Instructor: Dr. Alexander Dick

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Office hours: Mondays 10 am – 12 pm

This course introduces students entering the English Honours Program to the major currents of literary theory commonly used in English studies today. We will review the schools and movements that have had the strongest influence on literary criticism in the twentieth century (and beyond) including structuralism deconstruction, psychoanalysis, feminism, queer theory, Marxism, post-colonialism, and eco-criticism. We will also examine the way that these theories have been applied in literary studies by reading a selection of criticism on Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Evaluation will be based on student contributions to ongoing discussions, a presentation, and two papers, one of which is written with work in ENGL 210.

Course Goals and Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course students should:

- be familiar and conversant in the major tenets of literary theory used in English criticism
- be ready to apply some of these theories in their critical practice
- have acquired some facility with techniques for integrating theory into their writing
- appreciate the histories behind and the limitations of critical and literary theories

Required Texts

- Primary Theoretical and Secondary Critical Essays – provided on course website
- Peter Barry, *Beginning Theory, 3rd Edition*, Manchester UP, 2009
- Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (Case Studies in Contemporary Criticism), Macmillan, 2015

Assignments, Due Dates, And Grade Distribution

Participation		10%
Online Blog	Ongoing	10%
Seminar Presentation and Report	Ongoing	30%
Mid-term Comparison paper	February 27	20%
Final Paper (written with ENGL 210)	April 19	30%

Course website

Many of the readings for the course will be available via the course UBC blogsite at: <https://blogs.ubc.ca/engl211honourstheory/>. On the site you will also find the blog-forum for questions and impromptu discussion on any aspect of the course. More information below.

Classroom Expectations and Policies

1. **Make the most of the class:** Most students take courses because they are interested in and excited by the topic or texts. Others take courses to fulfill requirements and others to fill gaps in schedules. Regardless of why you take any class, you might as well engage with the material as actively as you do in your other classes. You may discover ideas and things that you haven't before and that prove to be very relevant to you.
2. **Bring an open mind:** This class will present you with new and challenging ideas or with views and opinions (not necessarily the instructors') that you find disagreeable or frustrating. This is fine; indeed, we expect and encourage it. But closing yourself off from the topics or perspectives offered in class can stop you from getting the most out of it. Opening your mind can help you nuance your own views in positive ways.
3. **Rethink familiar ideas:** Some of the topics we discuss in this class may appear familiar at first, but it is unlikely that you will have had the opportunity to think about them in the ways we will be doing in the class or to use the analytical skills and apparatuses that you'll be using and applying to those topics.
4. **Ask questions:** If the instructor says something that you don't understand or that you can't quite make sense of, ask to hear it again. If you want further explanation about something, ask for more details. These might be really important opportunity for tricky issues to be discussed by the whole class and thus become giant leaps forward in the learning process.
5. **Answer questions:** If you are asked to respond to something, make a stab at it. You might feel intimidated at first (that's completely normal) and like you want to say "I'm probably totally wrong about this..." But sometimes the simplest or zaniest reactions are the most interesting and rewarding.
6. **Hydrate:** Just as your body needs liquids when you are at the gym, your brain needs hydration in order for you to concentrate in class. So stay hydrated. Water is best; coffee may be better. It's a long day and the rooms get stuffy. Snacks or meals get messy and distracting, but liquids are important.
7. **Make eye contact:** Making eye contact with the instructor (or whoever else is talking) will ensure that you stay focused on the discussion. If you're looking at something else (a screen for instance) you may still hear a voice, but you won't really be listening. We hear with our eyes as much as with our ears.
8. **Listen:** While eye contact is crucial, your ears still have work to do! You may feel like the most important information in the class is up on the board or on a screen. It isn't. Slides are just guides for the conversation, keeping the instructor on track and the class moving ahead (otherwise it is easy to get bogged down). Sometimes, it's helpful to put your pen down or close your laptop and just listen.
9. **Make appointments:** If you are struggling with an idea, or an assignment, or the whole class, let's talk about it. If you let the problems fester, we might run out of time to address them. Email your TA explaining briefly the issue you want to discuss and suggesting a time when you are available to meet. Your TA may recommend also meeting with the instructor. Office hours are good opportunities to meet, but there may be other times or venues that are more convenient.
10. **Be polite:** Common social courtesies apply in university classrooms and in related communication. Address your fellow students, TAs, and instructors appropriately.

Classroom Expectations and Policies (continued)

Attendance: UBC and the Department of English have strict guidelines about attendance in class. Attendance is mandatory, absences not at all encouraged. Although attendance is important and your participation grade for the course depends in part on it, participation does not *equal* attendance.

Reading: It is essential that you are prepared before coming to every class **by completing the assigned reading**. We will not necessarily cover every aspect of the assigned reading in every class; you are nevertheless encouraged to read all of the reading and, if appropriate, to bring up relevant details during discussion. You will find some of the theoretical readings a bit obscure. Be patient. Read with care and precision. Read out loud. Take notes. Pay attention to details, patterns, and correspondences. Use Barry's *Beginning Theory* as a guide while you read the original theory, but do not rely on it exclusively. Reflect on the ways that the theories you are reading have already influenced your critical practices and those of your teachers. The readings are there for you to encounter and absorb the aims, principles, key terms, and problems of the theory. Class time is our opportunity to discuss and probe the issues that arise.

Electronic Media: I allow students to bring laptops and other electronic devices to class; however, these are *not* to be used during discussion. Make sure that you have a notebook and pen to take class notes, supplementary to your reading notes. If you take notes on line, print them out before coming to class. No photographic or recording devices may be used either. PowerPoint slides, if used at all, will **not** be posted on UBC Connect or any other service. Their purpose will be to facilitate focus and discussion; they are NOT a substitute for attendance or notes. You will not get the full benefit of these discussions if you rely exclusively on slides or other electronic supplements. Student presentations may use PowerPoint, Prezi, or other mediation tools but these should not be relied on as the primary vehicles of interpretive work.

Disability and Counseling Services: The University accommodates students with disabilities who have registered with the Access and Diversity Centre. If you are registered please let me know; I will of course abide by any recommendations that have been made for you. The university will also accommodate students whose religious obligations conflict with attendance, submitting assignments, or completing tests and examinations. However, you must make official arrangements through your faculty advising offices. Holidays involving fasting, abstention from study, or participation in activities are listed online. If illness prevents you from attending class or completing term work, contact a faculty advisor and make arrangements for a standing deferred or other accommodation. Health and wellness ALWAYS take precedence over homework. If you plan to be absent for varsity athletics, family obligations, or other commitments, don't assume accommodation.

Assignments and Grading Rationale

In-class Participation: 10%

The material in this course can be difficult, strange, even alienating. We will be reading neither criticism nor literature in ways that are entirely familiar to you. As a result, discussion, and participation in and out class will be vital to your success in the class. A significant proportion of the grade is dedicated to productive contributions to class discussion and evidence of complete and astute readings of the primary and secondary texts. Consistent, productive participation in the class will result in a significant increase in your final grade.

On-line blog: 10%; 10 entries (150-250 words each) due every MONDAY BY NOON

The purpose of the blog is for students to have a forum to express and discuss their responses to the weekly course readings. These will also help to generate topics for discussion in class: students should expect to be called on to expand on their views during class time as part of the general discussion. For more information on registration for the blog see <http://blogs.ubc.ca>.

Comparison Paper: 20%; 2000 words (6-8 pages); due Feb 27

The purpose of this paper is for you to consider how critical theories overlap. You are asked to *compare* two or more selections from the first six weeks of the course. This should not simply be a list of similarities, but rather a demonstration of how different theoretical methods inform, influence, and change each other. Your thesis should focus on a particular way that two (or more) theoretical approaches intersect. You might consider, for instance, the way one theorist has interpreted another across fields or the way theorists utilize similar tropes, structures, metaphors, or motifs. You are not required to apply the theories to any literary work for this assignment, but you may use examples from literary texts if they help to make your argument clear. These papers must be submitted in MLA format and include a complete Works Cited.

Presentations: 30%; oral presentation and written report; schedule TBA

During Wednesday sessions two students will present to the class examples of how to use, adapt, and apply a particular theoretical method in literary criticism by summarizing and analyzing an essay on Frankstein. *All students* are required to complete the readings. The presentations should review the principles and method of the theory and use the essay to illustrate their application to *Frankenstein*. Background information on the critics is not necessary and should be limited if not omitted. PowerPoint or Prezi or other electronic aids may be used but are not required. The presentations will be followed by questions and discussion, led by presenters. You are encouraged to collaborate on the presentations – though each student will be responsible for presenting on one story. One week after the presentation, each student will submit a written report encapsulating the method used, reading the story according to the method, and, if appropriate, responding to discussion. The report must be in MLA format.

Final Paper: 30%; 3000 words (10-12 pages); due April 19

The capstone project for the course is an essay in which you apply one or more of the critical methods we have developed in ENGL 211 to one of the works you read in ENGL 210. You may use not same method that you studied for your presentation; in fact, I strongly encourage you to use some *other* method or methods. Your paper should make direct references to the theoretical text(s) that we read in ENGL 211. Your paper can also reflect on how critical practice helps us to develop or challenge literary theories. The paper must be in MLA format, have an interesting and focused thesis, and include a complete Works Cited.

Course Schedule And Readings

Week 1: Introductions to Course and Readings

January 4: Barry, *Beginning Theory*, chapter 1.

Week 2 Structuralism

January 9: Roland Barthes, "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative" *New Literary History* 6 (1975): 237-272; Barry, *Beginning Theory*, chapter 2.

January 11: Beth Newman, "Narratives of Seduction and the Seductions of Narrative: The Frame Structure of *Frankenstein*" *English Literary History* 53 (1986): 141-63. (presentation)

Week 3 Deconstruction

January 16: Jacques Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" from *Writing and Difference* (1967) Trans. Alan Bass. London: Routledge, 2001. 351-370; Barry, *Beginning Theory*, chapter 3.

January 18: Barbara Freeman, "*Frankenstein* with Kant: A Theory of Monstrosity, or the Monstrosity of Theory," *SubStance* 16 (1987), 21-31. (presentation)

Week 4 Psychoanalysis I

January 23: Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny" (1919) from *The Uncanny* (ed. Adam Phillips), London: Penguin, 2003; Barry, *Beginning Theory*, chapter 5 (pp. 92-104)

January 25: Paul Sherwin, "*Frankenstein*: Creation as Catastrophe" *PMLA* 96 (1981): 883-903. (presentation)

Week 5 Psychoanalysis II

January 30: Jacques Lacan, "The Insistence of the Letter in the Unconscious," *Yale French Studies* 36/37 (1966), 122-147, Barry, *Beginning Theory*, chapter 5 (pp. 104-113)

February 1: David Collings, "The Monster and the Maternal Thing: Mary Shelley's Critique of Ideology" in Smith, *Frankenstein* (presentation)

Week 6 Feminism I

February 6: Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, "Infections of the Sentence: The Woman Writer and the Anxieties of Authorship" from *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Imagination*, New Haven, Yale UP, 1979; Barry, *Beginning Theory*, chapter 6

February 8: Johanna Smith, "'Cooped Up' with 'Sad Trash': Domesticity and the Sciences in *Frankenstein*" in Smith, *Frankenstein* (presentation)

Week 7 Feminism II

February 13: Helene Cixous, "Laugh of the Medusa" *Signs* 1 (1976): 875-893

February 15: Joyce Zonana, "'They Will Prove the Truth of My Tale': Safie's Letters as the Feminist Core of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*" *Journal of Narrative Technique* 21 (1991): 170-84. (presentation)

READING WEEK (February 20-24)

Week 8 Marxism I

February 27: Terry Eagleton, "Literature and History" and "Form and Content" from *Marxism and Literary Criticism*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1976. Barry, *Beginning Theory*, chapter 8;

Mid-term paper due

March 1: Montag "'The Workshop of Filthy Creation': A Marxist Reading of *Frankenstein*" in Smith, *Frankenstein* (presentation)

Week 9 Marxism II

March 6: Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of its Mechanical Reproducibility" (1936) in *The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*. ed. Michael Jennings et al. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2008.

March 8: Paul O'Flinn, "Production and Reproduction: the Case of *Frankenstein*" *Literature and History* 9 (1983): 194-213. (presentation)

Week 10 Postcolonialism

March 13: Homi Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man" *October* 28 (1984) 125-33; Barry, *Beginning Theory*, chapter 10.

March 15: Allan Lloyd Smith, "'This Thing of Darkness': Racial Discourse in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*" in Smith, *Frankenstein* (presentation)

Week 11 Queer Theory

March 20: Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Introduction" to *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, New York: Columbia UP, 1985; Barry, *Beginning Theory*, chapter 7

March 22: Grant Scott, "Victor's Secret: Queer Gothic in Lynd Ward's Illustrations to *Frankenstein* (1934)" in Smith, *Frankenstein* (presentation)

Week 12 Eco-criticism

March 27: Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses" *Critical Inquiry* 35 (2009), 197-222; Barry, *Beginning Theory*, chapter 13.

March 29: Siobhan Carroll, "Crusades Against Frost: *Frankenstein*, Polar Ice, and Climate Change in 1818" in Smith, *Frankenstein* (presentation)

Week 13 Post-Humanism

April 3: Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century" from *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*.

April 5: Sean McQueen, "Biocapitalism and Schizophrenia: Rethinking the Frankenstein Barrier" *Science Fiction Studies* 41 (2014): 120-135. (presentation)

Final Papers Due April 19

CRITERIA FOR PAPERS IN ENGLISH COURSES

Students should consider issues of focus, content, structure, language, mechanics, documentation, and presentation in their essay writing. For example:

1. Is the paper on topic from beginning to end?
2. Does the paper present strong and logical claims fully supported with examples, explanations, and, where appropriate, textual evidence?
3. Does the paper have a strong and logical structure, including all of the following elements:
 - (a) an original title
 - (b) a substantial and unified introduction that includes a focused, specific, and logically ordered thesis
 - (c) body paragraphs linked to the thesis and/or to one another by logical transitions
 - (d) unified and coherent presentation of claims and support, all connected to clear topic sentences
 - (e) an effective conclusion that does more than rehash the thesis and/or the main points of the essay
4. Does the paper express the argument in clear and effective language, including the following:
 - (a) clear evidence of sentence variety throughout the essay
 - (b) expression in clear, unpretentious diction suited to the subject matter, the audience, and the writing situation
 - (c) control of basic patterns of grammar and sentence structure, and no patterns of error in the following categories: fragments, mixed constructions, dangling or misplaced modifiers, run-on sentences, comma splices, noun-pronoun or subject-verb agreements, verb form, verb tense, tense sequence errors, number, article, or preposition errors.
5. Does the paper show good control of the mechanics of spelling and punctuation? Does the paper have good command of the strategies for incorporating quoted material into the fabric of the essay's sentences and paragraphs?
6. If the paper analyses a text and/or draws upon primary or secondary sources for its proof, does it conform to the University's rules for crediting sources? Does it credit those sources in the most recent MLA (Modern Language Association) style? For the MLA style manual, see http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_mla.html.
7. Is the paper as neat as possible in its presentation? Is it double spaced throughout? Is it properly paginated? Does it include adequate margins? Does it end with a works cited/consulted page in the MLA style?

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT GRADING STANDARDS

All essay assignments in First-Year English are to be awarded letter grades to be converted to numerical values at the end of the term:

An “A” paper: [an outstanding paper] (80-100%)

This paper must be fully focused on the topic and consistently strong in structure, content, expression, mechanics, and presentation. If the paper is based on a text or if it draws material from other primary or secondary sources, it must include full documentation in the MLA style. An “A” paper should contain an original and credible argument in response to the topic. Any significant errors of expression that detract from the paper’s effectiveness would mean that the paper could not earn an “A” level mark.

A “B” paper: [a competent paper] (68-79%)

This paper must be well-focused on the topic; its thesis must be well-supported by convincing evidence and explanations. The structure of a “B” paper must be strong and clear; its thesis must be specific and significant. If this paper contains errors of expression, they must be occasional rather than chronic, and they must not obscure meaning. A “B” paper based on research must be accurately documented in the MLA style. The principal difference between an “A” paper and a “B” paper is in the quality and level of the argument. A “B” paper is less adventurous than an “A”; it may tend to rely more heavily on materials and arguments raised in class than an “A” paper would.

A “C-D” paper: [an adequate paper] (50-67%)

A paper at this level is generally clear in its expression, but it is weaker in content and/or structure than a “B” paper. Its thesis may be vague (but still on topic); its transitions may be inconsistent; its evidence may be occasionally unconvincing or incomplete. Language errors in this category will be more frequent than those at the “A” or the “B” level, but they will not be so serious or so chronic that they make a paper difficult or impossible to understand.

An “F” paper: [an inadequate paper] (0-49%)

A paper at this level will suffer from one or more of the following serious flaws: it may be off topic; it may lack a thesis; it may lack clear and adequate development and paragraphing; it may be deficient in the presentation of evidence; it may contain serious and repeated errors in sentence structure, diction, and grammar—errors that obscure meaning.

Note: A paper that does not give complete and accurate credit for directly quoted material or for ideas and arguments that the student has summarized or paraphrased from another source must receive a grade of zero. A paper edited or revised by a so-called tutoring service must also receive a failing grade of zero for it does not constitute a student’s own work or best efforts. A paper submitted after a deadline will be assessed a daily penalty to be announced in writing by the course instructor.

Your Name and student number

ENGL 359A 001 2015

Professor Alexander Dick/TA's name

September 9, 2015

The Title of Your Paper Goes Here

This is a sample of what MLA (Modern Language Association) formatted essays look like. You can find many other examples at the OWL (from Purdue University) or elsewhere online. MLA papers do **not** have title pages. If you put a title page on your paper, it will be removed. As you can see, all necessary information is included in the **top left corner** of the **first page only**; do not put it in a header. Following pages will not have this information. Instead, the **top right corner** will show your last name and the page number. The entire paper will be **double spaced, in 12 pt. Times New Roman font, with one-inch margins all the way around and left justification only**. Do **not** use any other font or formatting.

When you use or cite any source, including primary sources, you must reference that work and you must also follow the MLA citation guidelines in doing so. MLA uses a parenthetical referencing style. As the OWL website says, "This method involves placing relevant source information in parentheses after a quote or paraphrase" (Stolley). When you cite a printed book, you **always** include the page number in parenthesis and, when necessary, the author's last name. For instance, cite a short passage from Kathleen Jamie's *Findings* like this: "I like the precise gestures of the sun, at this time of year" (Jamie 4). A quotation of **80 words or less** will appear in quotation marks within the body of your prose. A quotation of **more than 80 words** must be separated off from the body of your text, as in this example from Kathleen Jamie:

On the table made of washed-up pier-stanchion are two pale sticks, like eels, or the first man and the first woman. There's the gannet's shank, its tiny orchid-shaped bone, and

the whale's vertebra. These are in my study. Tim had celebrated his birthday on the yacht, and as a present I'd given him the orb of quartz. The bits or aeroplane, traffic cone and whale will still be on the shores of the Monach Islands. The penknife, the one I'd used to cut off the original gannet's head, is presently in my handbag. I'd found it—did I mention this?—one spring day on a beach in Fife.

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If you are quoting a poem, you use a separated or block quotation format for **more than 4 lines**. If you quote four lines of poetry or less, use quotation marks and slashes, retaining all original punctuation and spelling and citing the poem by title and line, like this: "I wandered thro' each charter'd street/ Near where the charter'd Thames does flow" (Blake, "London" ll. 1-2). You must indent the entire quotation **one additional inch** on the **left margin only** for separated quotations. Never use full justification. At the end of your separated quotation you must cite the source using a parenthetical reference *after* the final punctuation mark like this.

You must include secondary sources with primary sources in a list of Works Cited placed immediately after the last line of your prose. In MLA format the Works Cited uses a hanging indent. For instructions on how to format your list of Works Cited, please see the examples below and consult the OWL.

Works Cited

Blake, William. "London" in *Romanticism: An Anthology* 4th ed. Ed. Duncan Wu, Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.

Jamie, Kathleen. *Findings; Essays on the Natural and Unnatural World*, Graywolf, 2005.

Stolley, Karl, et al. "MLA Formatting and Style Guide." The OWL at Purdue. 10 May 2006.