# ENGLISH 211 Seminar for English Honours: Introduction to Critical Theory

Term 2 Winter 2021



"A Klee painting named 'Angelus Novus' shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing in from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such a violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress." —Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History"

### LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Department of English Language and Literatures at UBC Vancouver is on the unsurrendered traditional territories of the Musqueam people; our departmental offices are located on ?əlqsən, called Point Grey in English, a promontory claimed by the British as a Colonial Admiralty reserve in the mid-nineteenth century and occupied by the University of British Columbia since 1914.

This territory has been a site of learning for many generations before UBC stood here, and we recognize our obligations as teachers, researchers, scholars, and learners in ensuring that our classrooms and our work uphold the best of that longstanding learning context now and into the future.

We also recognize the myriad ways that English as a discipline has been informed, shaped, and challenged by both colonizing violence and decolonial commitment, and that these complexities continue to impact much of what we do in and beyond the classroom regardless of our areas of teaching and research focus. As a department, and as a community, we are working to do better, to think better, and to be a better place for faculty, staff, students, and community members to understand the profound power of language and literature to impact our lives and relationships in good as well as harmful ways.

We are committed not to simply acknowledge Musqueam territory, but to realize that acknowledgment in an active dedication to more just, more accountable relations.

We invite all members of our community to review the <u>Musqueam-UBC Memorandum of</u> <u>Affiliation</u> to understand more about this important relationship, and to consider how we can all help realize the commitments in that document and in UBC's renewed <u>Indigenous Strategic</u> <u>Plan.</u>

#### COURSE INFORMATION

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| Official Course Title       | ourse Title Course Code Number |           |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------|
| Seminar for English Honours | ENGL 211                       | 3 credits |

#### PREREQUISITES

### THIS COURSE IS RESTRICTED TO STUDENTS IN YEAR: 2

#### CONTACT INFO

| Course<br>Instructor(s) | Contact Details      | Office<br>Location | Office Hours  |
|-------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|---|
| Prof. Judith Paltin     | judith.paltin@ubc.ca | BUTO 502           | M 12-1, W 11-12, and by<br>appointment, or via video chat<br>in a Zoom meeting room:<br>Meeting ID 646 9499 5765<br>Passcode 644544<br>https://ubc.zoom.us/j/646949957<br>65?pwd=Ylc1OWIxYWFRYIJI<br>RXh1Q05qV3IEdz09 |

#### COURSE STRUCTURE AND VITAL INFORMATION

This course meets MWF from 1:00-1:50 pm Pacific Time (Vancouver's time zone) synchronously online in the course Zoom meeting room supplied on Canvas until UBC resumes full in-person learning, and then in-person in IBLC-461. Supporting and background materials are available to supplement class meetings, and the Canvas discussion forum and zoom meeting room are backup and fully active alternative venues for course learning and participation, especially during any events such as snow days, pandemic recurrence, or other issues that may arise around meeting in person. Class methods are student presentation- and discussion-based, supplemented by brief periods of lecture, when I judge that will be helpful. As this kind of active student learning relies heavily on your collective contributions, I encourage you to prepare to speak at least once in every course meeting, and at least weekly online in the discussion forum.

PLEASE READ THE SYLLABUS. As an experienced university student, you might feel ready to jump to the reading schedule and the assignments section. This type of focused work with theoretical and methodological materials may feel a bit different than your previous experience in English literature courses; please take note of the explanatory material contained here, so that you understand what we will be doing and why.

**Course description**: This problem- and play-based approach to general literary and critical theory studies what counts as knowledge, how we find meaning and where, how humans adapt, respond, and resist in the face of changing conditions in the world, the status of art as expression, and how we have determined communication and interpretation. You might think of critical theory as consisting in the arguments which justify the work of the arts and humanities, and expose the measure of their worth. It asks what function critics and creatively-thinking theorists play in the processes by which societies and cultures reproduce themselves, and thinks about how to advocate most effectively for those in the world who face social and political barriers to thriving and flourishing.

We will read and discuss a rich selection of short fiction and poems in juxtaposition with narrative theory, ecocriticism, theories in media and communication, critical race theory, feminist literary criticism, gender studies, queer theory, old and new materialisms, studies in the workings of the mind and psychoanalysis, decoloniality, post/structuralism, and cultural theory.

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

LO 1. Identify and explain fundamental concepts and arguments of critical and literary theory, focusing (though not exclusively) on writers that reflect anti-capitalist, decolonial,

feminist, environmental, and critical race concerns, among other social, political, and economic issues.

LO 2. Engage with the ways that theories and issues of concern interact with other theories and positions historically and in current scholarly conversations.

LO 3. Identify and integrate into their own research appropriate research frameworks and methods, and critically evaluate the scholarly quality of research sources.

LO 4. Evaluate and participate in lines of argument and critique relating to cultural change and theories about literature as a field by cultural theorists and stakeholders of diverse origins.

LO 5. Recognize and appropriately utilize methods of English studies' disciplinary modes of reading and criticism.

### LEARNING ACTIVITIES

In this course, you will read and analyze a range of writing on theory and criticism which will give you the opportunity to identify, define, compare, explain and discuss various aspects and issues of social, political, economic, and literary criticism, anticolonial praxis, gender/sexuality and cultural theory, and historical materials. Our activities include close readings and analysis, periods of lectures providing contextual and background information, library and media research, theoretical discussions, discussions of controversies and issues, and writing activities.

During class meetings, you should listen to each other carefully, and think about the matter at hand as you take notes, adding your own ideas and connections where you can. I welcome a conversational style during class meetings, with interaction among all of us. If I am talking, feel free to intervene with questions and contributions. Your own curious and imaginative contributions are always welcome in class, as long as you are not talking over other people, failing to share class time fairly, or taking the class too far away from the day's assigned topics for an extended period. Barring that, please explore your venturesome public intellectual self!

### LEARNING MATERIALS

Course materials will be supplied as pdfs under the doctrine of fair dealing or via UBC-paid subscription to students at no charge on Canvas, in the LOCR, and via URL links to online open-access or UBC-subsidized subscription to web-based materials.

### SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

The reading schedule shows you which readings we will be discussing each day. At the beginning of each module, I also assign a brief literary/fictional text, or more than one, to

which we will apply our theory readings for the week. Do your best to read those companion texts the week before, or weekend before, so that we can begin to work with them right away. You are always welcome to bring in other examples, literary, historical, artistic, mediatic, or otherwise, that may shed light on our discussions. The reading schedule may change if in my opinion the class would benefit from slowing down, or readings become unavailable, or for other reasons. Please have the assigned texts available to refer to during class.

Reading critical theory is not intrinsically different from other kinds of reading, although the norms and conventional moves may be unfamiliar. Some of the readings may appear brief, but are dense, and require cogitation (please take your time to chew them over). Some are lengthy—please try to build a reservoir of patience while the author develops their points. If you meet a term you don't know, please ask about it in class, via email, or on the Canvas discussion forum. It is helpful and effective to take notes and to form questions while you are reading and to bring notes and queries to class meetings. <u>How</u> you read is important. Select a quiet place, if possible, and try to read a chosen amount without interruption.

# MODULE 1. INTRODUCTION: CRITICAL THEORY AND FREE THINKING

Literary reading to accompany this module: Adrienne Rich, "Diving Into the Wreck" (poem, *Diving into the Wreck: Poems 1971-1972*, W. W. Norton & Company, 1983, p. 24)

### Mon, Jan 10: Course introductory lecture

Wed, Jan 12: Moses Mendelssohn, "On the Question: What Is Enlightenment?" (*What Is Enlightenment?* : *Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions*, edited and translated by James Schmidt, University of California Press, 1996, pp. 49-52). Immanuel Kant, "What Is Enlightenment?" (Ibid., pp. 53-8). Christine Sharpe, "The Weather" (*The New Inquiry*, Jan. 19, 2017, https://thenewinquiry.com/the-weather/. no pagination, approx.. 2500 words)

### MODULE 2. FORM, THEORY, HISTORY

Literary readings to accompany this module: James Joyce, "The Sisters" (Project Gutenberg ebook 2019 edition, no pagination, approx.. 3100 words; William Shakespeare, Sonnet 98 (poem, 14 lines)

Fri, Jan 14: Plato, excerpts from *Republic* Bks. VII and X (*Republic*, Volume II: Books 6-10, Harvard UP, pp. 107-115, 391- 441, odd numbered pages only (those in English)).

Mon, Jan 17: Sigmund Freud, "The Creative Writer and Daydreaming" (Servulo A Figueira, Ed. *Part One: Creative Writers and Day-dreaming*, Routledge, 2018, pp. 1-13)

Wed, Jan 19: Stuart Hall, "Cultural Studies and Its Theoretical Legacies" (Lawrence Grossberg, Ed., *Cultural Studies*, Routledge, 1991, pp. 277-294).

#### MODULE 3. MAKING AND ORGANIZING KNOWLEDGE

Literary reading to accompany this module: W.B. Yeats, "Sailing to Byzantium" (poem, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43291/sailing-to-byzantium, no pagination)

Fri, Jan 21: Kant, from *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (*Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, Norton, 2010, pp. 430-442).

Mon, Jan 24: Hegel, from *Phenomenology of Spirit* (*Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, Norton, 2010, pp. 541-547).

Wed, Jan 26: Sylvia Wynter, from "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument" (*The New Centennial Review*, Volume 3, Number 3, Fall 2003, pp. 257-283).

### MODULE 4. NARRATIVE THEORY AND CRITICISM

Literary reading to accompany this module: Virginia Woolf, "Kew Gardens" (short story in *Monday or Tuesday*, Project Gutenberg, pp. 83-98).

Fri, Jan 28: Porter Abbott, from *Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (Cambridge UP, 2nd Ed., 2008, pp. 1-12). Tzvetan Todorov, "Structural Analysis of Narrative" (*NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, Autumn, 1969, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Autumn, 1969), pp. 70-76).

Mon, Jan 31: Cleanth Brooks, "The Heresy of Paraphrase" (*The Well Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry*, Harcourt Brace, 1947, pp. 192-214).

Wed, Feb 2: Roland Barthes, from "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative" (*New Literary History*, Winter, 1975, Vol. 6, No. 2, On Narrative and Narratives (Winter, 1975), pp. 237-272). Also, "The Death of the Author" (*Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, pp. 1322- 26).

<u>MODULE 5. DISCOURSE, DECONSTRUCTION, POSTSTRUCTURALISM</u> Literary reading to accompany this module: Gertrude Stein, "Rooms" (from *Tender Buttons*, Project Gutenberg, 2005, no pagination, approx.. 4400 words).

Fri, Feb 4: Jacques Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" (*Writing and Difference*, U of Chicago P, 1978, pp. 278-293).

Mon, Feb 7: Michel Foucault, from *The History of Sexuality, Vol I* (*Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, pp. 1502-13. Also, "What is an Author?" (The Open University:

https://www.open.edu/openlearn/ocw/pluginfile.php/624849/mod\_resource/content/1/a840\_1\_miche I\_foucault.pdf, pp. 1-16).

Wed, Feb 9: Jean Baudrillard, from *The Precession of Simulacra* (*Norton Anthology of T&C*, pp. 1556-66). **First position paper due.** 

#### MODULE 6. MARXISMS, MATERIALISMS

Literary reading to accompany this module: T.S. Eliot, "Gerontion" (poem, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/47254/gerontion, no pagination).

Fri, Feb 11: Karl Marx, "Estranged Labour" (*Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, International Publishers, 1964, pp. 106-119).

Mon, Feb 14: Frederic Jameson, from *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Taylor & Francis, 2002, pp. 60-88).

Wed, Feb 16: Jodi A. Byrd, et al., "Predatory Value: Economies of Dispossession and Disturbed Relationalities" (*Social Text* Vol 36 No 2 (2018), pp. 1-18).

### MODULE 7. PSYCHOANALYSIS AND MIND/BODY

Literary reading to accompany this module: Djuna Barnes, "A Night Among the Horses" (short story, Lawrence Rainey, Ed., *Modernism: An Anthology*, Wiley Blackwell, 2005, pp. 930-934).

Fri, Feb 18: Sigmund Freud, "The Dream-Work" and "The Uncanny" (*Norton Anthology of T&C*, pp. 818-41). Carl Jung, "The Ego" and "The Shadow" (Violet S. de Laszlo, Ed., *Psyche and Symbol*, Doubleday, 1958, pp. 1-9).

### Mon, Feb 21: Reading Week, no class meetings.

Mon, Feb 28: Frantz Fanon, "The Psychopathology of the Black Man" (*Black Skin, White Masks,* Grove P, 1967, pp 60-82).

Wed, Mar 2: Jacques Lacan, "The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious, or Reason Since Freud" (*Écrits: A Selection*, Taylor & Francis, 2012, pp. 161-197).

### MODULE 8. ENVIRONMENTAL CRITICISM AND POSTHUMANITY

Literary reading to accompany this module: Ursula LeGuin, "Vaster Than Empires and More Slow" (short story; The Wind's Twelve Quarters: Short Stories, 1st ed., Harper & Row, 1975, pp. 181-217).

Fri, Mar 4: Aldo Leopold, "Thinking Like a Mountain," "The Land Ethic" (A Sand County Almanac: With Other Essays on Conservation from Round River, Oxford UP, 1966, pp. 129-133, 217-41).

Mon, Mar 7: Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century" (*Simians, cyborgs, and women: the reinvention of nature*, Routledge, 1991, pp. 149-181).

Wed, Mar 9: Rob Nixon, excerpt from *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Harvard UP, 2013, pp. 45-67).

# MODULE 9. DECOLONIZATION, CRITICAL RACE THEORY

Literary reading to accompany this module: Audrey Lorde, "A Litany for Survival" (poem, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/147275/a-litany-for-survival, no pagination).

Fri, Mar 11: bell hooks, "Postmodern Blackness" (*Postmodern Culture*, vol. 1 no. 1, 1990. Project MUSE, doi:10.1353/pmc.1990.0004, no pagination, approx.. 3500 words).

Mon, Mar 14: Paul Gilroy, "Without the Consolation of Tears": Richard Wright, France, and the Ambivalence of Community" (*The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, Verso, 1993, pp. 146-86, 196-201).

Wed, Mar 16: Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts" (Small Axe, vol. 12 no. 2, 2008, p. 1-14).

Fri, Mar 18: Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor" (*Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1(1): 1–40). Second position paper due.

### MODULE 10. FEMINISMS, GENDER AND SEXUALITY STUDIES

Literary reading to accompany this module: Virginia Woolf, from *A Room of One's Own* (Harcourt, 2005, pp. 46-57, 76-77, 96-99). Katherine Mansfield, "Leves Amores" (short story, Margaret Reynolds, Ed., *The Penguin Book of Lesbian Short Stories*, I can't access the volume for pagination right now, but the story is only one or two pages long.)

Mon, Mar 21: Adrienne Rich, "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision" (College English, Oct., 1972, Vol. 34, No. 1, Women, Writing and Teaching (Oct., 1972), pp. 18-30). Sara Ahmed, "Conclusion: A Killjoy Survival Kit" (*Living a Feminist Life*, Duke UP, 2017, pp. 235- 49).

Wed, Mar 23: Chandra Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses" (*Signs* Vol. 28, No. 2 (Winter 2003), pp. 499-535).

Fri, Mar 25: Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "The Country Wife: Anatomies of Male Homosocial Desire" (*Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, Columbia UP, 2015, pp. 49-66). Also, "Queer and Now" (*Tendencies*, Routledge, 1994, pp. 1-20). Mon, Mar 28:: Chandan Reddy, "Race and the Critique of Marriage" (*The South Atlantic Quarterly* 115.2 (2016), pp. 424-432).

Wed, Mar 30: Warner and Berlant, "Sex in Public" (Critical Inquiry, Winter, 1998, Vol. 24, No. 2, Intimacy (Winter, 1998), pp. 547-566). Monique Wittig, "One Is not Born a Woman" (*The Straight Mind and Other Essays*, Beacon P, 1992, pp. 9-20).

#### MODULE 11. ANTITHEORY

Literary reading to accompany this module: Jorge Luis Borges, "The Library of Babel" (short story, trans. Andrew Hurley, *Collected Fictions*. Viking, 1998, pp. 112-18).

Fri, Apr 1: Barbara Christian, 'The Race for Theory" (Norton Anthology of T&C, pp. 2128-37).

Mon, Apr 4: Fredric Jameson, "Symptoms of Theory or Symptoms for Theory?" (*Critical Inquiry* 30.2 (2004), pp. 403-408). Bruno Latour, "Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam?: From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern" (*Critical Inquiry* 30.2 (2004), pp. 225-248).

Wed, Apr 6: Hannah Arendt, "Truth and Politics" (Ed. José MedinaDavid Wood, *Truth: Engagements Across Philosophical Traditions*, Blackwell, 2005, pp. 295-314).

Fri, Apr 8: Course Wrap-up. Analytical essay due.

This seminar course does not write a final exam.

#### ASSESSMENTS OF LEARNING

Requirements consist of participation, a presentation on a reading, two position papers, and an analytical essay.

20% Participation. This is a holistic assessment of your course engagement and activity outside the major assignments, including listening and interacting in class, participating in class learning activities and exercises such as small-group discussions, reading and replying to discussion posts, asking questions or otherwise contributing to class learning on Canvas.

30% Two position papers explaining and applying a critical or theoretical matter or concept of interest (15% each). In each position paper you will choose and incisively explain a single concept, critical position on a specific question, or theoretical matter of interest within a 1000 words (maximum).

20% Presentation on a course-assigned reading. In this assignment, you will present and lead a few minutes of class discussion on an assigned reading of the day. In general, a presentation includes background and contextual information about a work, or some information about its reception and influence; it might offer an original reading, though that is not required. Your

presentation should include a shareable handout or powerpoint which summarizes the issues of your presentation, lists key points, and offers one or two specific examples.

30% An analytical essay of at least 1800 words. This essay assignment includes a library research component (two professional-level secondary sources) and an analysis component. The analysis component includes producing an analytical thesis, close readings, and an insightful interpretation of assigned texts.

A general writing rubric and specific assignment prompts are supplied on Canvas. Your written work for this course will follow the general writing rubric issued on Canvas, and should take up a critical question or issue of concern to the course (in some cases, specific topics may be assigned) and should offer a focused, well-reasoned discussion with reference to primary course-assigned texts. You may also choose to include real-world examples from high-quality journalistic or historical sources around an issue of concern to the course, or some other form of case study, if appropriate.

### UNIVERSITY POLICIES

The following statement is composed by and mandated to appear in the syllabus by the UBC Academic Senate in support of **Senate Policy V-130**.

UBC provides resources to support student learning and to maintain healthy lifestyles but recognizes that sometimes crises arise and so there are additional resources to access including those for survivors of sexual violence. UBC values respect for the person and ideas of all members of the academic community. Harassment and discrimination are not tolerated nor is suppression of academic freedom. UBC provides appropriate accommodation for students with disabilities and for religious observances. UBC values academic honesty and students are expected to acknowledge the ideas generated by others and to uphold the highest academic standards in all of their actions.

Details of the policies and how to access support are available on <u>the UBC Senate</u> <u>website</u>.

### OTHER COURSE POLICIES

Our classroom space, even when virtual, is intended to be warmly welcoming, enriching, and respectful in all its interactions. I request that you kindly self-monitor your own contributions for civility, including off-topic phone or computer use. Your thoughtful and engaged participation affects other people's experience and enhances your own impact and learning.

Readings, discussions, and class materials may reference mature themes, violence, sexual matters, or conflictual ideas (this is a "content warning"). If you feel you do not wish to read one of the assigned texts because it may emotionally distress you, please see me well in

advance of the assigned reading's due date to request a substitute reading assignment; if we cannot agree on an appropriate substitution, you may be obliged to follow the original schedule of readings to complete the course.

If in the course of quoting course texts we should encounter a word which historically or otherwise is a slur, we will follow the advice of Prof. Koritha Mitchell and not "give the slur life with our breath in our learning space." Instead, we will substitute the name of the first letter of the word.

Study at university-level is more than knowing a collection of facts, and class participation is crucial to developing your academic skills at this level. I hope we can cooperate creatively together to find techniques and activities to make this course experience enriching, satisfying, and intellectually profitable to each of you. The Department of English webpage (under "Resources for Students") details the English department's agreed-upon marking and attendance standards for your reference: https://english.ubc.ca/resources/resources-for-students/#attendance.

The course adheres to the university's strict rule against plagiarism. If you represent the words, productions or ideas of anyone else as your own, you become subject to the disciplinary processes of the university concerning plagiarism, and may face a disciplinary process. If you have any questions about what counts as plagiarism, <u>please ask me before you submit the assignment</u>.

Students may record course materials for personal study purposes only, and may not share any portion of their recordings or lecture notes with any other person not currently enrolled in the course nor upload them to any online platform.

### LEARNING ANALYTICS

This course will be using the following learning technologies: Canvas. This tool captures data about your activity and provides information that can be used to improve the quality of teaching and learning. In this course, I plan to use analytics data to:

- View overall class progress
- Track your progress in order to provide you with personalized feedback
- Review statistics on course content being accessed to support improvements in the course
- Track participation in discussion forums
- Assess your participation in the course

There is a student Writing Centre with coaching available in the Chapman Learning Commons in Barber: please see <u>http://learningcommons.ubc.ca/tutoring-studying/writing/</u> for more information. Anyone with a documented disability is gently encouraged to contact the Access and Diversity Office in Brock Hall, 1203- 1874 East Mall (tel. 604.822.5844) for accommodations and support services. Other helpful programs are the academic services described at http://students.ubc.ca/success, and UBC Counselling Services tel. 604.822.3811 or, after hours, for anyone in distress, the Vancouver Crisis Line, tel. 800.784.2433. I am a resource person with UBC's Positive Space Campaign. As its website announces, "the Positive Space Campaign is an initiative intended to help make UBC more receptive to and welcoming of its lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans\* (transgender, transsexual, trans-identified), two-spirit, queer, questioning, intersex and asexual (LGBT\*TQIA+) communities, individuals and issues of sexual and gender diversity on campus." If you would like more information about this campaign, or to be put in touch with campus resources, please feel free to talk to me, or to contact the Office of Equity and Inclusion in Brock Hall, tel. 604-822-6353.

#### COPYRIGHT

All original materials of this course (syllabus, recordings, course handouts, lecture slides, assessments, curation of course readings, etc.) are the intellectual property of the course instructor. Redistribution of these materials by any means without permission of the copyright holder(s) constitutes a breach of copyright and may lead to academic discipline.

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