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LIT 300.01: Literary Criticism

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LIT 300 02 Literary Criticism

Spring 2019

"In our era, criticism is not merely a library of secondary aids to the understanding and appreciation of literary texts, but also a rapidly expanding body of knowledge in its own right."

-David Lodge

"The unexamined life is not worth living"-Socrates

LIT #300: 02 /CRN 70334

T/R: 12:30-1:50 LA 303

Instructor: Katie Kane

Assistant Instructor: J.D. Brookbank

Email: katie.kane@mso.umt.edu

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Spring 2019

Office: LA 111

Text #: 406-880-5856

O. Hours: T 2:00-4:00

R 2:00-3:00

& By appointment

Course Description

In this introductory course in literary and cultural theory, we will attempt to explore representative schools of and issues in contemporary criticism (formalism, postmodernism, eco-criticism, postcolonial/colonial criticism, critical race theory, trans-studies, psychoanalytic criticism and others). We will be working, therefore, to build an analytic and critical vocabulary for the activity of reading select number of texts from the canons of literary criticism and from the canons of Anglophone culture.

In addition to this "first-principles" objective, however, we will also attempt to engage with such complexities of the current theoretical debate as "the question of the author," the reconciliation of form and content, the agon of canon formation and canon busting, and, finally, with the crucial issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality.

Throughout the course we will be moving toward our current early twenty-first century moment in which the range and scope of the labor of the literary critic seems – in light of the rise of a host of non-traditional representational and narrative forms – to be both expanding and contracting. Film, video games, the world of the digital, social media, all require the decoding and demystifying work of the engaged critic. A specific focus on Critical Race Theory will involve reading Ta-Nehesi Coates' *Between the World and Me*, and Beyoncé's *Lemonade* (the video and musical version).

Policy Statement

Required Texts:

Richter, David. *Falling Into Theory: Conflicting Views on Reading Literature*. (a.k.a. FiT)

Ryan, Michael. *An Introduction to Criticism: Literature, Film, Culture*. (a.k.a. IC) (REMARKS)

Coates, Ta-Nehesi, *Between the World and Me*.

Beyoncé, *Lemonade* (film)

From *Black Mirror* (Season one, episode two) “Fifteen Million Merits,” Charlie Booker and Konnie Huq, streaming on Netflix: <https://www.netflix.com/>

N.B. Your texts are available in the Bookstore. You **MUST** bring the requisite text with you to class. The responsibility for seeing the films rests with you. Also, a limited number of articles will be available to you on UM Box.

★★★NOTA BENE★★★:

This is a rigorous course; much will be expected of you in the way of reading, preparation, writing, and participation. Do not take this course if you are unprepared for a good deal of reading, underlining, writing and vigorous questioning. If you are not enthusiastic about doing this kind work, this is not the course for you. “I’m sorry, but I did not finish my reading for today,” and/or “there is too much reading to do,” are two expressions that do not, despite my generally congenial attitude, make me happy. The class is, after years of experience, carefully and with thought balanced in terms of workload. Look at the whole syllabus and its various components before making a final commitment to enrollment. If you think that there is too much reading or too much work, please feel free to drop.

Coursework:

Final grades will be determined by your performance in three separate categories of coursework:

1. Participation/Quizzes:	10%
2. Daily Writing:	50%
3. Final Essay:	<u>40%</u>
	100%

I will be happy to discuss grades with you during my office hours. However, please give yourself twenty-four hours after receiving your grade before coming to see me.

Participation:

The success of the course will depend largely on the participation of all of the members of the class in dialogue over issues and texts. To facilitate and ensure the passionate and engaged participation of all the members of our course community, each individual will be asked to participate in the discussion of daily readings. Participation means that you must come to class with a reading of the texts/films assigned for that day. These readings can take many forms – assertions of interpretation or taste, close readings of specific passages, contextual explication, even questions and confusions, etc.

Quizzes:

In the midst of the hurricane that is modern American student life, it can often be hard to find time to read and thoughtfully engage with all of the materials scheduled class. Nevertheless, it is signally important that each and every student come to class having fully read all of the material (understanding it fully is another thing). I will reading quizzes designed to ensure that you have read and thought about the readings for the day, if that

becomes necessary. I will administer these short quizzes at the beginning of the class. There will be no chance for make up quizzes. quizzes.

Written Responses:

Students will respond in writing to the course readings on both Tuesday and Thursday each week.

A. Response Essays:

Students will turn in a two-page response to the reading/s on Tuesday of every week until the writing of the final essay begins.

The two page essays will involve engaging thoughtfully with the assigned text. The Essays will be submitted on UM BOX as Microsoft Word Docs. The essays have two important components: content and form. All essays must be free of grammatical and stylistic errors. *****Essays that do not go the entire two page length or that are submitted in a format other than Microsoft Word Doc will either be graded accordingly (for length) or not graded at all (since I cannot with my software grade ANY other document format.*****

WARNING/ADVICE: The tone of the essay must be respectful and engaged: responding writers would do well to remember that they are engaged with respected and published authors: thoughtful counter-arguments are always appropriate, but ad hominem attacks, personal stories disconnected from the text, counter argument that emerge from the dark side of the moon and not the text will not earn strong assessments.

1. Content of the Essays:

Aspects of student writing that will be assessed in writing assignments:

- quality, originality and/or intellectual rigor/engagement of analysis;
- sound judgments unified by a clear message;
- logical linkage of judgments and evidence;

In the case of responses to the Ryan readings, you should choose one of the literary, filmic, or cultural texts to respond to and to analyze using as a guide, Ryan's handy "Things to Look for in Literary and Cultural Texts," which close out each of the chapters and which contain guiding questions that you may answer in creating a response paper. In the case of those responses that involve other kinds of essays ("Handouts" or essays from FIT) you may determine the nature of your response (close reading, historical response, rebuttal, comparison, etc.), but the model below outlines a delineated structure:

- 1) Summarize either one important or interesting issue or problem that the text explores or a purpose that it serves in a way that explains what precisely what it is that you find important or interesting about the issue, problem, or purpose.
- 2) Define one significant comparison, contrast, or relationship between the text you are analyzing and an earlier work on our syllabus.
- 3) Identify a specific passage of the text (from a phrase to a paragraph in length) that especially piqued, delighted, irritated, challenged, or troubled you and explain in an engaged fashion what it is about the paragraph that effected you in this way.

2. Formal Aspects of the Essay

Aspects of student writing that will be assessed in writing assignments:

- voice that is consistent & appropriate to the audience & purpose;
- correct diction & sentence structure;
- evidence or reasons supporting all judgments: **INCLUDING TEXTUAL CITATION;**
- transitions that connect a series of ideas and evidence;
- strong paragraph structure;
- correct spelling and punctuation;
- proper MLA style documentation.

DO NOT GO UNDER TWO PAGES. THESE ESSAYS WILL BE GRADED ON A 1-5 SCALE WITH COMMENTS. EXAMPLE ESSAYS WILL BE AVAILABLE AND COURSE TIME WILL BE DEVOTED TO WRITING, BUT YOU MUST BE READY TO WRITE ARGUMENTATIVELY CLEAR, TEXTUALLY SUPPORTED, GRAMMATICALLY CLEAN, AND MLA DOCUMENTED ESSAYS (WORKS CITED LIST).

B. Reading Notes: On Thursdays students will turn in a two page handwritten/typed set of questions, observations, research work, close readings in response to the readings.

THESE READING NOTES WILL BE GRADED ON A 4+/ 4/ 4- SCALE WITH NO ATTACHED COMMENTS. EXAMPLE NOTES WILL BE HANDED OUT TO HELP GUIDE YOU. THE NOTES WILL DOCUMENT YOUR RIGOROUS AND THOUGHTFUL ENGAGEMENT WITH THE TEXTS. THE NOTES WILL PROVIDE MATERIAL FOR CLASSROOM DISCUSSION. TAKE THIS ASSIGNMENT SERIOUSLY.

Class Structure:

Class structure is subject to alteration if the material dictates it, but in general classes will proceed the following way:

12:30-12:40: Roll Call, Quizzes (if any) and Discussion of Class Business.

12:40-1:20 Group Discussion of Readings OR Lecture and/or General Discussion.

1:20-1:50: Lecture and/or General Discussion OR Group Discussion of Readings.

There may be days that are more lecture heavy and hence time for discussion may be limited to group conversations and questions. Please feel free to ask questions during my “lectures” about anything: concepts, history, the word I just used that you think is probably made up, and etc. Simply raise your hand and ask.

One note about **General Discussion**: it is hard, even in a smaller class, to accommodate all ideas, questions, comments, etc. Often participants will get stacked up in a discussion line like airplanes. I do my best to fulfill the role of dialogic air-traffic controller, but you should feel free to break in if, in the excitement of discussion, you get passed over.

If you do not enjoy lively, engaged, playful, and every-so-often chaotic discussion, this is not the class for you.

Final Research Essay with Abstracts and Drafts:

You will turn in an abstract and draft of your essay before submitting the final version. This 8-10 page analytic and scholarly essay with attached bibliography represents the principal writing exercise of the semester. The essay will argue for the relevance of a distinctive, personal analysis of a text/set of texts and/or issues surrounding a textual constellation of issues and ideas germane to the class. In addition, you will be responsible for accessing and harnessing the larger debates surrounding the literary artifact, historical phenomenon, and/or interpretive issue. To that end you will use library resources to familiarize yourself with the reading histories of the text(s) you have chosen and you will incorporate those materials in the argument of your essay. **Here you must use AT THE VERY MINIMUM FOUR outside sources** – peer-reviewed, culturally and theoretically oriented sources we have not read in class, but I do encourage you to incorporate more.

Production Schedule:

1. On Tuesday February 26th you will spend time in the library with Professor Jaci Wilkinson who will help you to begin the process of researching for your paper. We will meet at Buckhous Classroom, MLIB 284. At this time you should begin to solidify some choice about the novel/films/video games etc. that interest you. The topic selection procedure solidifies here. Students who miss this class without being excused due to circumstances beyond their control will have one letter grade deducted from their final paper grade.
2. On Thursday, March 14th, Tuesday, March 19th, and on Thursday, March 8th you will turn in an abstract (precis, plan, blueprint, conceptual map) of your final paper to me during class. You will also be asked to provide your fellow students with a brief (three to four minute) verbal overview of your planned project and a copy of your abstract and sources. You will need to include a working **annotated** bibliography of the sources and texts you will be working with. Abstracts without an annotated bibliography will be docked at five (out of ten) points. **Please bring 20 copies with you to class.**
3. Monday April 8th, Tuesday April 9th, and Wednesday the 10th, (depending upon when you schedule your conference) your Rough Draft will be due. You will meet with me in consultation over the rough draft in LA 111 in conference. The Rough Draft must be a minimum of four pages long.
4. The Final Draft of the essay is due on Tuesday April 30th, by 5:00 on **UMBox**.

Attendance:

Attendance is required and will be recorded: three or more unexcused absences are grounds for failure of the course itself. Late arrivals and early departures will, if they occur frequently, count as absences. If you do arrive late you will be responsible for letting me know after class that you were present for the day. Absences due to medical and family emergencies will be excused, provided you come and discuss the situation (**ASAP**) with me. Lengthy crises that require multiple absences may require your reconsideration of enrollment in school this semester.

Disabilities Accommodation:

Students with disabilities will receive reasonable accommodations for coursework. To request accommodations, please contact me as soon as possible in the semester. I will work with you and with Disability Services in the accommodation process. For more

information, visit the Disability Services website at <http://www.umt.edu/dss/>, or call 406.243.2243 (Voice/Text)."

Names/Pronouns:

If you have an alternative name or nickname that you would prefer to be called, please let me know. If you have an alternative pronoun that you would like me to use, please let me know. In both cases, I ask for your patience as I navigate my neurological eccentricities.

Moodle:

Minimal to No Involvement. Unless something unusual happens: like the end of the world.

UM Box:

Yes. PDF Documents will be shared on UM Box and you will upload Response Essays and Final Paper onto the platform, as well.

All Response Essays will be uploaded and returned through UMBox via a folder that only you and I will be able to access. All assessment will be done online. Papers are due before class and UMBox timestamps will let me know when you have uploaded your papers. Papers will be graded on a rolling basis, and you may check to see when the graded papers are uploaded. A one week turn-around time is the usual for response, but depending upon circumstance it may take slightly longer.

PLEASE LABEL ALL FILES WITH YOUR NAME AND THE NAME OF THE ARTICLE (eg. Smith Response 1 Eagleton). **Remember: ALL ESSAYS MUST BE UPLOADED IN MICROSOFT WORD DOC/DOCX FORM.**

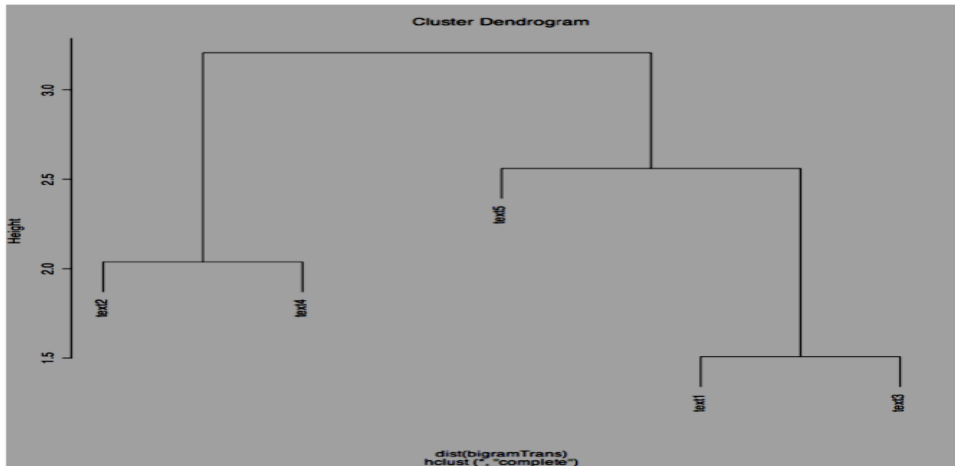
Scholastic Dishonesty:

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty – in as much as they keep the individual student as well as the collective community from learning – will result in an automatic F and may entail a variety of other sanctions up to and including expulsion from the University. [DEFINITION OF PLAGIARISM](#). The Provost's Office has asked all faculty at the University of Montana to attach the following statement on plagiarism to their syllabi: "All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at <http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student.conduct.php>

THE PURCHASED PAPER

"The Internet and email are now the tools of choice for plagiarism. Advertisements in college papers and in the regular press as well as on the Internet announce the availability of student and professional services, sometimes couched in such euphemistic terms as 'editorial assistance,' but often blatantly offering commercially prepared essays, academic papers, and even theses for sale. The easy availability of such assistance from various web

sites has increased student 'cut and paste' activity to the degree that it is now expected and regarded as a common practice (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2000 a)" (31, Source).



"Lack of integrity and unethical behavior within the educational sector is inconsistent with one of the main purposes of education; that is to produce 'good [critical] citizens, respectful of the law [and willing to challenge it when necessary], of human rights and fairness (it is also incompatible with any strategy that considers education as one of the principle means of fighting corruption)" (10, ["Combating Academic Fraud: Towards a Culture of Integrity"](#))

English Department Goals for the Study and Use of Models of Literary Interpretation:

- familiarity with the vocabulary of contemporary literary interpretation;
- working knowledge of schools of literary interpretation;
- overview of recent debates;
- development of skills of logical argument and interpretation;

Goals for Student Writing:

We will work to develop and hone the following skills in all of our writing exercises this semester.

- voice that is consistent & appropriate to the audience & purpose;
- correct diction & sentence structure;
- sound judgments unified by a clear message;
- evidence or reasons supporting all judgments;
- logical linkage of judgments and evidence;
- transitions that connect a series of ideas and evidence;
- correct spelling and punctuation and proper MLA style documentation

Also: Marxism of a very literary kind will be discussed in this class, if you cannot abide the sound of the word "Marxism/Marx/Marxist" you should drop this class. Arguments that Literary Marxism is an analogue to Soviet Russia will not be entertained

unless they are substantially located in fact rather than in mere knee-jerk ideological emotionalism unmoored from analysis.

Course Calendar

January

Week One: Beginnings.

R 10: Introduction to the Course. And Oprah and Franzen Debate. **PDFs** on UMBox.

Week Two: The Nature and History of Literature The History of English.

T 15: Eagleton: What is Literature? **PDF** on UMBox.

R 17: Richter, "English Literature as an Object of Study," FiT, 16-20, Eagleton, "The Rise of English," FiT, 49-59. Also, these articles exist as **PDFs** on UMBox.

Week Three: The Banking Model of Education and Formalism.

T 22: Friere, "The Banking Concept of Education," FiT, 68-78.

R 24: Ryan, "Preface," xi-xii and "Formalism," 1-18, IC.
[The Baryshnikovs of Jookin](#)
[Have you seen this?](#)
[Quentin Robinson](#)

Week Four: Structuralism and Authority/Authors

T 29: Ryan, "Structuralism," 19-31, IC. Read Primo Levi's "A Tranquil Star," ([URL](#) and **PDF**).

R 31: Barthes, "The Death of the Author," FiT, 253-257.

February

Week Five: Marxism and Zadie Smith, "Meet the President."

T 5: Ryan, "Marxism and Political Criticism," 59-74, IC.

R 7: Smith, "Meet the President," PDF.

Week Six: Post Structuralism/Deconstruction and Psychoanalysis

T 12: Ryan, "Post-Structuralism and Deconstruction," 75-86, IC.

R 14: Borges, Jorge Luis, "The Garden of Forking Paths." **PDF.**

Week Seven: Gender/Feminist Criticism and Feminist Film Analysis.

T 19: Ryan, "Gender Criticism," 87-108, IC.

R 21: See from *Black Mirror* (Season one, episode two) "Fifteen Million Merits," Charlie Booker and Konnie Huq, streaming on Netflix:
<https://www.netflix.com/>

Week Eight: Psychoanalysis and Essay Research.

T 26: "Psychoanalysis and Psychology," 44-58, IC.
[Why Freud Survives](#)

R 28: **Essay Production: Step One.** Database and Research Day at The Mansfield Library. Mlib 283 [aka The Student Learning Center].Ryan,

March

Week Nine: The Male Gaze and Gender Studies into Queer Studies

T 5: Mulvey, "Visual Cinema and Narrative Pleasure," **PDF.**

R 7: Sedgwick, "Epistemology of the Closet," FiT, 182-189.

Week Ten: Trans Studies. Workshops on Essays Due

T 12: Halberstam, *Trans: A Quick and Quirky Account of Gender Variability*, xi-155, **PDF.** "

R 14: **Essay Production: Step Two.** In Class Presentations of Abstracts.

Week Eleven: Election Day In Class

T 19: **Essay Production: Step Two.** In Class Presentations of Abstracts.

R 21: **Essay Production: Step Two.** In Class Presentations of Abstracts.

Week Twelve: Spring Break: No Classes

T 26: Spring Break: No Classes

R 28: Spring Break: No Classes

April

Week Thirteen: Critical Race Theory. Postcolonial/Globalization Studies

- T 2: Critical Race Theory: An Introduction” Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, 1-16. **PDF.**
- R 4: Said, “The Politics of Knowledge,” FiT, 188-198.

Week Fourteen: Critical Race Theory. Essay Production: Step Three: Rough Draft Due.

- T 9: Class Cancelled: Rough Drafts Due in Conferences.
- R 11: Morrison, “Black Matters,” FiT, 310-322.

Week Fifteen: Critical Race Theory Continued

- T 16: Coates, Ta-Nehisi, *Between the World and Me*, 5-71.
- R 18: Beyoncé “Lemonade” with special focus on three songs: “Don’t Hurt Yourself,” “Sorry,” and “Formation.”

Week Sixteen: “Scientific” Criticism.

- T 23: Ryan, “Scientific Criticism,” 123-137, IC. Swallow Prior, Karen, “How Reading Makes Us More Human,” *The Atlantic*, June 21, 2013 ([URL](#) and **PDF**) and Oatley, Keith and Maja Djikic “How Reading Transforms Us,” *The New York Times*, December 19 2014 ([URL](#) and **PDF**); “What Does Immersing Yourself in a Book Do To Your Brain? On Neurochemistry, Lucia Berlin, and the Dangers of Empathy Loss,” LitHub, August 8, 2018, [Maryanne Wolf](#)
- R 25: Thacker, Eugene, “After Life: Swarms, Demons, and the Antinomies of Immanence,” **PDF. POSSIBLE CHANGE: *How Forests Think*.**

Week Seventeen: Finals Week

- T 30: **Essay Production: Step Four.** Final Draft of Essay Due. 5:00 uploaded to UMBox.

May

- F 3: **No Final Exam**, although one is listed on the schedule for Friday, May 3rd at 8:00-10:00 in the same room.