Introduction to Textual Analysis and Interpretation

Fall 2006

English 2350-003 Office Hrs: T/TH 2-3:30 or by apt.; 405 Carlisle Hall

Dr. Roemer Please schedule all appointments.

T-TH: 9:30-10:50 Phone: 817-272-2729

Preston Hall 210 roemer@uta.edu (note: I prefer phone messages.)

Be Aware: Classes begin at 9:30. We often have short-answer exams at the beginning of class; *it is important to be on time or a bit early*. *Be sure to bring the relevant texts(s) to class;* check the reading assignments for which texts (typically CTT and a primary text).

Preamble: Although we will be reading and discussing literature, this course differs from many other literature courses: (1) it is specifically designed for English majors; and (2) we will be examining ways of interpreting the literature as much as we will be discussing the literature per se. Most of this course will be a lecture and class-and-group discussion experience. The last two weeks will be more of an independent study (your final paper).

# Goals, Requirements, Assessment

The Departmental goals for this course are to prepare English students to: (1) identify characteristics of literary genres (at least three); (2) recognize and understand critical and literary terms; (3) develop methods and strategies for analyzing and interpreting texts; and (4) demonstrate a command of these methods and strategies in written work.

The basic Departmental written requirements aimed at achieving and demonstrating the goals are: (1) a close reading of a text or a portion of a text; (2) an analyses of a text or portion of a text using an appropriate critical term or critical method; and (3) a research paper that demonstrates a knowledge of criticism on the text and (a) method(s) relevant to the study of that text.

To be more specific, in this course we will address the goals in (1) class and group discussions; (2) assigned readings; (3) short answer exams drawn from terms in the *Bedford Glossary* , *Critical Theory Today,* and course packet;(3) three essay exams; and (4) the three relatively short papers described below.

The selection and pairing of texts addresses the first goal in particular. We examine works of fiction, poetry, and life narrative (autobiography). In each case we begin by discussing a well-known American work that are routinely defined as a novel, poetry, or autobiography. I pair these texts with American Indian texts that can also be defined as novels, poetry, or autobiography, but they challenge typical ways of defining these genres. The pairing should generate discussion about how readers, authors, editors, scholars, and publishers conceive of genres and about literary canon formation

**Required Readings (continued on next page)**

Course Packet (CP)

*The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms,* Murfin and Supryia (BG)

*Critical Theory Today,* (1st Ed.), Tyson (CTT)

*The Great Gatsby,* Fitzgerald

*Ceremony,* Silko

Selections of different versions of Dickinson's poetry (CP)

Translations of American Indian Songs (CP)

*The Autobiography,* Franklin, focus: Part 2 (the other writings are NOT required)

*The Way to Rainy Mountain,* Momaday

*The MLA Handbook* (6th Ed.) Gibaldi

*A Research Guide for Undergraduate Students* (6th Ed.), Baker and Huling.

# Topics, Readings, Exams, Tentative Dates

8/29 Introduction to the Course: Goals, Assignments, Criteria, Assessment, Policies

Reading: syllabus; handouts;see list of terms for the genre exam; begin *Gatsby*

**8/31 Quiz on the Syllabus**

8/31 The Warehouse Experiment: How Genre Categories Make Us Pre-View Literature

Readings: Terms from BG: allegory, autobiography, essay, fiction, genre, novel, poetry; Tyson, from "Overview," 426-29 (CTT); continue *Gatsby*

**9/5 Short Answer Test on Genre Terms (see syllabus, p. 6)**

(CTT chapter readings: read the introductory paragraphs; read the “Some Questions [ ] Critics Ask” section carefully; then read through the rest.)

# Novels (9/5 – 9/26)

The Top of (Almost) Everyone's 100 Best American List and Canonized Beyond a Doubt -- *The Great Gatsby*

9/5,7, Readings: *The Great Gatsby;* CTT: "New Criticism"(117-52); "Marxist Criticism" 12 (49-79); finish *Gatsby* by 9/7

**9/14 SA Test on New Crit., Marxist Crit., and BG Terms (see syllabus, p. 7)**

**9/19** **Short, Close Reading Paper Due**

The Top of an Alternative Canon: An Alternatively Shaped Novel--*Ceremony*

9/14, Readings: *Ceremony;* CTT: "Postcolonial and African American Criticism";

19,21 (363-422)"Psychoanalytic Criticism" (13-47) ; Abraham Maslow's Needs & Self-

Actualization: Humanistic Psychology (CP)

**9/21 SA Test on Post C and Psy Crit. (see syllabus, p. 7)**

**9/26 Novel Essay Exam**

# Poetry (9/28-10/26)

The First Lady of American Canonization: Emily Dickinson (in many versions)

9/28, Readings: versions of Dickinson's poems (CP); CTT: "Reader-Response 10/3, Criticism" (153-95); "Lesbian, Gay, and Queer Criticism” (317-61); Norton

5,10 Poetry Guides (handout); Textual-Bibliographic Criticism (in class)

**10/12 SA Test on T-B, R-R, and L,G,Q Crit. (see syllabus, p. 8) [proctored]**

**(read Am. Indian Translations [CP] & work on Critical Method Paper)**

One of the Least Canonized and Most Misunderstood American Poetries --

American Indian Song and Chant Translations

10/17, Selections of Translations (CP) & film: "By This Song I Walk"; CTT: "New 19,24 Historical and Cultural Criticism" (277-315); Parker, "Text, Lines” (CP)

**10/24 SA Test on New H, Poetic Forms, Parker (see syllabus, p. 8)**

**10/26** **Poetry Essay Exam**

**10/31** **Critical Method Paper Due**

**Note:** You should have begun thinking seriously about the final paper by this point, including **working on the prospectus** (see below).

# Life Narratives (10/31-11/21)

The Known American Life Model -- *The Autobiography*

10/31, Readings: Franklin's *Autobiography* (skim Pt. I, focus on Pt II [Ten years of more 11/2 ….To Thus far written at Passy])*;* CTT: "Feminist Criticism" (81-116);

“Deconstructive Criticism” ( 224-76).

**11/7 SA Test on Feminist and Deconstruct. Crit. (see syllabus, p. 9)**

The Unknown American Process of Self / Community Creation -- *The Way to Rainy Mountain*

11/7, Readings: *The Way to Rainy Mountain;* History of the Book (in class); CTT: 9,14 "Structuralist Criticism" (197-240); Gates, “Ethnic” CP.

**11/16 SA Test on Hist of B, Structuralist, Ethnic Crit. (see syllabus, p. 9)**

**11/16 Re-Discuss Prospectus, Final Paper, *Research Guide*, etc.**

**11/21** **Life Narrative Essay Exam**

11/23 Thanksgiving

# The Research Paper: "Prospected,” and Written (11/23-12/8)

**11/28** Re-re-discuss prospectus. **Prospectus** (which will be graded**) Due** by 5 p.m.

11/30 Conferences to discuss prospectus and paper.

12/5 Discuss MLA Format; “final” paper questions

12/7 Optional Conferences on Paper

**12/8** **Final Draft Due by 5 p.m.**

**12/14 Papers Returned / Discussed**

Examinations / Criteria

As suggested above, there will be two types of exam questions: short answer and essay. Except for the syllabus quiz, the short answer questions will be identifications taken from the lists in this syllabus; the lists are drawn from *The* *Bedford Glossary* (BG), the italicized words in *Critical Theory Today* (CTT), classes, and the course packet (CP). The class before each essay exam I will distribute a study sheet that will indicate the nature of the essay questions. Essay grading criteria: how well you focus on the question, the logic of your arguments, and how well you support your arguments with relevant and specific examples from the readings. I will also consider writing coherence and mechanics, though I will be more demanding on the mechanics when I evaluate the papers.

Papers / Criteria

First: Close Reading (approximately 750 words [three double-spaced pages]); using the "New Criticism" CTT chapter and class discussions as guides, select a portion of *Gatsby* (no longer than a chapter, no shorter than a paragraph). (1) Define the primary themes, questions, and / or issues you discovered "in" the selection. (2) Indicate how two or three relevant elements of the selection (e.g., diction, imagery, narrative voice, tone, setting description, characterization) contribute to and/or detract from that primary theme, question, or issue you defined.

Second: Critical Method (approximately 750-1000 words [three-to-four double-spaced pages]); apply one of the interpretive methodologies we study (except for New Crit.) to one the texts (except *Gatsny,* but you are not limited to the methods and texts studied before the paper due date). (1) Indicate why this particular interpretive orientation is appropriate for studying the text you selected. (2) Using the class discussion and the sample *Gatsby* essays in CTT as guides, demonstrate the effectiveness of using the selected method.

Third: Process for the Research Paper (approximately 1250-1500 words [five-to-six double-spaced pages] plus the "Works Cited" section--a minimum of five critical sources). Select one of the assigned readings; determine a focus/thesis and select one or more of the interpretive methods that will facilitate your analyses; discover relevant parts of the text that define and support your focus/thesis; using the annual *American Literary Scholarship* volumes (in print and online) and other print and electronic bibliographic sources (see *A Research Guide* ), identify articles and chapters that will give your arguments authority and clarify your thoughts on your interpretation; prepare and submit the (graded) prospectus (see guidelines below) ; write and revise drafts; turn in final draft. Use MLA format; see especially sections 4.3-4.6 and chapters 5 and 6 of the *MLA Handbook.* Note: This process is not lock step; e.g., you may prefer to start some of the writing before you prepare a prospectus; you might want to go to the secondary criticism early, though it's best to have some idea of your focus and thesis before reading much criticism. The five-part prospectus format is:

1. Thesis / Significance (one paragraph): indicate the book or poem(s) selected for examination; define the primary argument(s) claim(s), or question(s); indicate the significance of your thesis (i.e., address the "So what question?").

2. Feasibility (short paragraph): Is it possible to address this thesis adequately in a five-to-six-page research paper and during an intense summer semester course? Does our library or do other metroplex libraries have the resources you will need.

3. Method (one paragraph): identify the critical approach(es) to interpretation that you will use (see the CTT chapters). Indicate why these are appropriate for your book or poem(s) and your thesis.

4. Tentative Organization (brief paragraph): In a few sentences justify how you will order the paper.

5. Preliminary Bibliography (list): Remember, the paper requires at least five critical sources in your Works Cited list that will be well integrated into your discussion (i.e., not just tacked on to reach the five minimum).

Paper Grading Criteria: For all three papers, how well you fulfill the specific requirements of each assignment will obviously be important. For the research paper, I will be concerned with how well you integrate your ideas and arguments with the "voices" of the critical articles. We will discuss this at length in class. For all the papers, I will expect coherent, well-organized, and engaging writing and writing mechanics (e.g., spelling, grammar) worthy of an English major. If you have had writing problems in the past, please visit the free Writing Center on the fourth floor of the library.

Approximate Grading Weights

Exams (50%): Combined grade for the short-answer tests (20%); the three essay exams (10% each = total 30%).

Papers (50%): First (10%); Second (15%); Research (25%: prospectus, 5%; final draft, 20%).

Constructive Warnings

Professors are no longer allowed to drop students for excessive absences. If you plan to withdraw from the course, you must follow University procedures. If you do not, you will receive an F for the semester. Excessive unexcused absences (more than FOUR classes) will affect your grade (half grade for each set of FOUR absences), since the group discussions / presentations are a significant part of the class time.

In the past I have had few problems with plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty. An excellent definition of plagiarism is included in the *MLA Handbook* (Chapter 2). Instances of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, will be turned over immediately to the office of the Associate Vice-President for Student Affairs.

Encouragement

If the class consistently keeps up with the readings, attends regularly, and arrives on time, I will drop one or two of the short-answer exams with the lowest grades. Other intangible grading factors: improvement and consistent class participation (especially in the group discussions and presentations) have turned many a C+ into a B- and quite a few B+s into A-s. I am very willing to accommodate disabled students. Early in the semester, they should present their authorized documents from appropriate University offices. Students needing academic or personal counseling should consult the English Undergraduate Advisor and if necessary the Office of Student Success Programs (817-272-6107)

Lists for Short Answer Exams (see the handout for the syllabus quiz guidelines)

First Exam Short Answer / Genre

You will be asked to write brief identifications for TEN of the following terms from the *Bedford Glossary.* (Typically a sensible version of the first two or three sentences of the Bedford definition will suffice.)

1. allegory

2. archetype

3. autobiography

4. bildungsroman

5. biography

6. dystopia

7. epic

8. essay

9. fable

10. fiction

11. genre

12. gothic

13. hymn

14. local color

15. myth

16. naturalism

17. novel

18. parody

19. poetry

20. primitivism

21. surrealism

22. tragedy

23. utopia

Terms Related to the Short Answer Tests on Novels and "New," Marxist, Postcolonial, and Psychoanalytic Criticism. *CTT = Critical Theory Today* (italicized terms).

*Bedford Glossary CTT CTT*

ambiguity (NC) NEW CRITICISM MARXIST CRITICISM

anti-hero "the text itself" socioeconomic class

authorial intention (NC) intentional fallacy material circumstances

canon affective fallacy consumerism

catharsis heresy of the paraphrase commodity

characterization organic unity use value

close reading (NC) paradox exchange value

form irony sign-exchange value

narrator tension commodification

point of view theme imperialism

figurative language colonized consciousness

image alienated labor

symbol bourgeoisie

proletariat

ideology

classism

*CTT CTT CTT*

POSTCOLONIAL PSYCHOANALYTIC I will quote two of the

cultural colonization unconscious questions found on:32-33,

colonialist discourse repression 65, 134, 378-79. You will

othering oedipal conflict identify which of the four

Eurocentrism defenses critical approaches

subalterns denial are associated with the

universalism avoidance questions.

orientalism displacement

colonial subjects projection

diaspora trauma

unhomeliness phallic symbols

hybridity/syncretism female images

white settler colonies death drive/thanatos

new-colonialism ego

cultural imperialism id

libido

Terms Related to the Short Answer Tests on Poetry and Reader Response, Lesbian, Gay, Queer, New Historical, and Cultural Criticism

*Bedford Glossary* *CTT CTT*

alliteration READER RESPONSE (r-r) LESBIAN, GAY, QUEER

blank verse (including Buckingham) a homophobic reading

caesura transactional r-r theory heterosexism

concrete poetry efferent mode biological essentialism

confessional poetry aesthetic mode social constructionism

couplet determinate meaning homoerotic

elegy indeterminate meaning homosocial

enjambment affective stylistics woman-identified woman

half-rhyme symbolization coded lesbian meaning

heroic couplet resymbolization camp

ode experience oriented r-r gay sensibility

onomatopoeia statements queer (see 337)

persona identity theme

sonnet interpretive community NEW HIST & CULTURAL

informed reader impossibility of objective

TEXTUAL/BIB. implied reader analysis

Know the narratee discourse

significant differences totalizing explanations

between Dickinson : master narrative

collections edited by thick descriptions

Higginson, Johnson, cultural work

and Franklin. self-positioning

PARKER (one question) "POETIC FORMS" *Norton CTT*

Know the basic Know the five types I will quote two of the

differences between of poetic feet (2639). questions found on: 175,

Hymes', Tedlock's, Know the seven types of 278,287,295, 297-98,

Mattina's, and Evers' verse lines (2340) 344-45. You will identify

(video taping) approaches stanza which of the three critical

to representing American terza rima approaches in CTT (studied

Indian songs and narratives quatrains for the poetry section) are

in written English. associated with the questions.

Terms Related to the Short Answer Tests on Life Narratives and Feminist, Deconstructive, Structuralist, Ethnic, and History of the Book Criticism

*Bedford Glossary* FEMINIST CRIT. (*CTT* ) DECONSTRUCTIVE CRIT. (*CTT* )

caricature patriarchal woman trace

catharsis patriarchy language is non-referential

classical traditional gender roles différance

connotation biological essentialism the privileged element of a

didactic gender binary opposition

epilogue good girls / bad girls logocentric

hyperbole écriture féminine decentered

intertextuality sisterhood undecidability

memoir ethnic cultural feminism (97)

monologue

motivation

unreliable narrator

STRUCTURALIST (*CTT* ) ETHNIC CRIT. (Gates) HIS. OF THE BOOK

surface phenomena the black arts movement (290)

language understood formalist organicism (291) Indicate a significant

synchronically black women studies (292) change between the

langue center-margin topography (293) designs of different

parole initial uses of "ethnic" (293) editions of WTRM.

a linguistic sign ethnic decent of authors (293) Indicate one implica-

signifier authenticity (294) tion of the change.

myththemes accountable spokesperson (294)

semiotics (205) ideological correctness (294) *CTT*

icon ideology of tradition (295) I will quote two of

symbol privileging the vernacular (295) the questions found on

archetypal criticism representation vs. articulation (296) pages: 102-02; 259,

narratology official marginality (298) 224-25. You will

literary competence black essentialism (299-300) identify which of the

convention of distance three critical

and impersonality approaches from *CTT*

naturalization are associated with the

question.