

# ENGL 2350: INTRODUCTION TO TEXTUAL ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Fall 2017

ENGL 2350-003 Tuesday/Thursday 9:30 – 10:50 UH 13	ENGL 2350-004 Tuesday/Thursday 11:00 – 12:20 UH 321
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Instructor: Dr. Miller  
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## Course Description and Objectives

In ENGL 2350 students learn how to analyze literary texts using various methods of interpretation. These methods of interpretation include: new criticism, structuralism, poststructuralism/deconstruction, psychoanalysis, feminist studies, queer studies, Marxism, historicism, cultural studies, postcolonial studies, critical race studies, reader response, ecocriticism, and disability studies.

We historicize the emergence of the theoretical schools noted above by studying Robert Dale Parker's survey of literary and cultural studies: *How to Interpret Culture: Critical Theory for Literary and Cultural Studies* (3e). In addition, we study theorists representative of each school of thought introduced in Parker's text. This helps students develop a critical vocabulary and conceptual "toolkit" they can build on as they pursue their degree in English Literature.

In addition to reading and discussing critical theory, we study the Norton Critical Edition of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (3e). The collection includes criticisms of Carroll's work from many of the theoretical perspectives studied in class. This helps students understand the different literary interpretations enabled by the use of different interpretive methods.

Finally, throughout the semester we use the methods studied in class to interpret literary texts ranging from the poetry of William Wordsworth to the Netflix Original *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt*. However, Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* is the primary literary text we explore. Students write three brief analytical papers about the

text from different theoretical perspectives. Additionally, all students write a research paper about the novel.

## **Student Learning Outcomes**

Upon the completion of this course, the students should be able to:

- 1) Articulate an understanding of major approaches to literary criticism and explain the similarities and differences of those approaches as well as their benefits and limitations.
- 2) Define literary terms and use vocabulary appropriate to literary study.
- 3) Apply different and appropriate literary frameworks to the analysis of literary texts.
- 4) Demonstrate independent critical thinking in their analysis of literary texts.
- 5) Perform independent research, using the MLA bibliography and other methods, and synthesize research materials to present original analytical arguments.
- 6) Employ correct MLA documentation of primary and secondary sources.

## **Required Texts**

You are required to purchase the noted editions of these texts:

Robert Dale Parker's *How to Interpret Literature: Critical Theory for Literary and Cultural Studies*

Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (Norton Critical Editions, Third Edition)

Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (any edition)

In addition, you are required to watch:

*As Good As It Gets* (1997)

*The Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt* (S3, E11)

You are required to access several articles, short stories, and poems on Blackboard.

## **Recommended Texts**

I recommend that you purchase an anthology of literary and cultural theory. Excerpts from the following anthologies are available on Blackboard:

Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan's *Literary Theory: An Anthology*

Robert Dale Parker's *Critical Theory: A Reader for Literary and Cultural Studies*

## Assignments and Grading

*Detailed directions for all assignments are available on Blackboard. Additionally, each assignment will be discussed at length in class.*

### **Reading Quizzes 10%**

Several multiple-choice and short-answer reading quizzes are administered throughout the semester. Quizzes help assess student learning.

### **Three Interpretive Essays 45%**

Students write three 3-page analytical essays about Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*. Each paper is worth 15% of the final grade. Students choose one of the following interpretive strategies to anchor each paper: 1) psychoanalysis, 2) feminism/queer studies, 3) Marxism/cultural studies, 4) postcolonial/race studies, 5) reader response, or 6) disability studies. Hardcopies of papers are submitted in class and through SafeAssign on Blackboard. Late papers are not accepted unless there is a documented emergency.

### **Final Project Portfolio 55%**

Students write an 8-page research paper about Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tail* using one or more of the interpretive frameworks explored in class. Students submit a paper proposal, annotated bibliography, and research paper. It is recommended that students expand on one of their three interpretive essays to complete the final assignment.

\* Due Thursday, November 9

#### *Final Research Paper Proposal 5%*

Students submit a 2-page proposal clearly identifying their research question, research plan, interpretive strategies, and a list of likely sources.

\* Due November 11

#### *Final Research Paper Annotated Bibliography 10%*

Students incorporate 5-7 sources beyond those assigned in class to produce their final paper. These sources may include theory as well as criticism of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*. Students produce a detailed annotated bibliography of these sources.

\* Due November 28

#### *Final Research Paper 30%*

Students write an 8-page final paper about Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*. Papers introduce an original argument and incorporate theory and criticism.

\* Due university scheduled exam day

## **Reading Schedule**

### **8/24 Thursday**

Introductions and Syllabus; Begin reading Atwood's *Handmaid's Tale*

### **New Criticism**

### **8/29 Tuesday**

Parker 11-42 and Cleanth Brooks "The Language of Paradox" (on BB)

### **Structuralism and Poststructuralism**

### **8/31 Thursday**

Parker 43 – 57 and Ferdinand de Saussure's "Course in General Linguistics" (on BB)

### **9/5 Tuesday**

Parker 57-83 and Roland Barthes' "Mythologies" and "Wrestling" (on BB)

### **9/7 Thursday**

"Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt and the Sunny Side of Surviving"

<https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2015/03/unbreakable-kimmy-schmidt-enlightened-not-naive/385626/>

"Females are Strong as Hell"

<https://newrepublic.com/article/143365/females-strong-hell>

Watch *The Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt* (S3, E11)

### **9/12 Tuesday**

Parker 85 – 110 and Jean-Francois Lyotard "The Postmodern Condition" (on BB)

### **9/14 Thursday**

Complete Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*

### **Psychoanalysis**

### **9/19 Tuesday**

Parker 111 – 130

**9/21 Thursday**

Parker 130 – 147 and Ernest Hemingway’s “Cat in the Rain” (on BB)

**9/26 Tuesday**

Jacques Lacan’s “The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious or Reason Since Freud” (on BB) and Angela Carter “Flesh and the Mirror” (on BB)

**Feminism and Queer Studies**

**9/28 Thursday**

Parker 148- 169 and Dorothy Parker’s “A Telephone Call” (on BB)

**10/3 Tuesday**

Parker 169 – 184 and Laura Mulvey’s “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (on BB)

**10/5 Thursday**

bell hooks “The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators” (on BB)

**10/10 Tuesday**

Watch *As Good As It Gets* (1997)

**10/12 Thursday**

Parker 185-217

**10/17 Tuesday**

Adrienne Rich “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence” (on BB)

**10/19 Thursday**

Judith Butler “Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity” and Robert McRuer “Compulsory Able-Bodiedness and Queer/Disabled Existence”

**Marxism, Historicism, and Cultural Studies**

**10/24 Tuesday**

Parker 220 -239

**10/26 Thursday**

Walter Benjamin’s “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Mechanical Reproducibility” and Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno’s “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception” (on BB)

**10/31 Tuesday**

Parker 239 – 256

**11/2 Thursday**

Parker 259 – 283 and Raymond Williams' "Dominant, Residual, and Emergent" (on BB)

**Postcolonial and Race Studies**

**11/7 Tuesday**

Parker 285 – 311 and Homi Bhabha's "On Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse" (on BB)

**11/9 Thursday**

Parker 311-327 and Anne Petry's "Like a Winding Sheet" (on BB)  
Final research paper proposal due

**Reader Response**

**11/14 Tuesday**

Parker 330 – 350 and Stanley Fish's "Interpretive Communities" (on BB)

**EcoCriticism and Disability Studies**

**11/16 Thursday**

Parker 354 – 379

**11/21 Tuesday**

Read Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*

**11/23 Thursday**

Thanksgiving – No Class

**Interpreting *Alice in Wonderland***

**11/28 Tuesday**

Read Avery, Auerbach, and Rackin in *Alice in Wonderland* (Norton Critical Edition 3e)  
Annotated Bibliography Due

**11/30 Thursday**

Read Kincaid, Gubar, and Polhemus in *Alice in Wonderland* (Norton Critical Edition 3e)

**12/5 Tuesday**

Last Class (Discuss final research paper – due university scheduled exam day)

## University and Classroom Policies

### Class Participation

Regular attendance is necessary for success in ENGL 2350. Students are expected to attend class regularly and to arrive on time. Excused absences include official university activities, military service, and/or religious holidays. Students must inform the instructor in writing at least one week in advance of an excused absence.

### Attendance

As the instructor of this section, I have elected to take attendance but will not factor attendance into the grade. However, you cannot submit interpretive essays if you are absent, and I will not meet with you to discuss material you miss if your absence is unexcused.

### Submitting Work/Late Assignments

Late assignments are not accepted. Work must be submitted printed and submitted in class AND submitted through SafeAssign on Blackboard.

### Academic Integrity

All students enrolled in this course are expected to adhere to the UT Arlington Honor Code:

*I pledge, on my honor, to uphold UT Arlington's tradition of academic integrity, a tradition that values hard work and honest effort in the pursuit of academic excellence.*

*I promise that I will submit only work that I personally create or contribute to group collaborations, and I will appropriately reference any work from other sources. I will follow the highest standards of integrity and uphold the spirit of the Honor Code.*

*It is the philosophy of The University of Texas at Arlington that academic dishonesty is a completely unacceptable mode of conduct and will not be tolerated in any form. All persons involved in academic dishonesty will be disciplined in accordance with University regulations and procedures. Discipline may include suspension or expulsion from the University. "Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts" (Regents' Rules and Regulations, Series 50101, Section 2.2)*

*You can get in trouble for plagiarism by failing to correctly indicate places where you are making use of the work of another or colluding with another to prepare assignments. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the conventions of citation by which you indicate which ideas are not your own and how your reader can find those sources. Read your textbook and/or handbook for more information on quoting and citing properly to avoid plagiarism. If you still do not understand, ask your instructor. All students caught plagiarizing or cheating will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct.*

### **Disability Accommodations**

UT Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of all federal equal opportunity legislation, including The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), The Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (ADAAA), and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. All instructors at UT Arlington are required by law to provide “reasonable accommodations” to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of disability. Students are responsible for providing the instructor with official notification in the form of a letter certified by the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD). Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. Students experiencing a range of conditions (Physical, Learning, Chronic Health, Mental Health, and Sensory) that may cause diminished academic performance or other barriers to learning may seek services and/or accommodations by contacting:

The Office for Students with Disabilities, (OSD) [www.uta.edu/disability](http://www.uta.edu/disability) or calling 817-272-3364. Information regarding diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining disability-based academic accommodations can be found at [www.uta.edu/disability](http://www.uta.edu/disability).

Counseling and Psychological Services, (CAPS) [www.uta.edu/caps/](http://www.uta.edu/caps/) or calling 817-272-3671 is also available to all students to help increase their understanding of personal issues, address mental and behavioral health problems and make positive changes in their lives.

### **Drop Policy**

Students may drop or swap (adding and dropping a class concurrently) classes through self-service in MyMav from the beginning of the registration period through the late registration period. After the late registration period, students must see their academic advisor to drop a class or withdraw. Undeclared students must see an advisor in the University Advising Center. Drops can continue through a point two-thirds of the way through the term or session. It is the student's responsibility to officially withdraw if they do not plan to attend after registering. Students will not be automatically dropped for non-attendance. Repayment of certain types of financial aid administered through the University may be required as the result of dropping classes or withdrawing. Contact the Financial Aid Office for more information (<http://www.uta.edu/aao/fao/>).

### **Emergency Exit Procedure**

Should we experience an emergency event that requires us to vacate the building, students should exit the room and move toward the nearest exit, which is located \_\_\_\_\_ . When exiting the building during an emergency, one should never take an elevator but should use the stairwells. Faculty members and instructional staff will assist students in selecting the safest route for evacuation and will make arrangements to assist individuals with disabilities.