

Theory and Practice of Literary Criticism: Adultery and Marriage 2015/2016 in Nineteenth-Century Fiction

Code: 42303

ECTS Credits: 9

Degree	Type	Year	Semester
4313157 Advanced English Studies	OT	0	A

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Use of languages

Principal working language: english (eng)

Prerequisites

This is an obligatory course.

Objectives and Contextualisation

This course illustrates how literary theory is applied to the nineteenth-century novel.

The approach is basically practical, focussing on how formalism, Marxism, feminism, psychoanalysis (to name a few schools) have studied fiction, and how you, as students, read both fiction and critical material.

The nineteenth-century novel is chosen for two basic reasons: first, for its focus on the modern institutions of life which theory has taken a deep interest in, such as romance, marriage, the family, the nation-state; second, the nineteenth-century novel not only represents the golden age of English literature but it is also the genre and century which all critical schools have arguably felt the need to analyse in great depth.

Skills

- Analyse and synthesise information at an advanced level.
- Analyse the relationship between factors, processes or phenomena in the acquisition of English as a second language, its learning and teaching methods, and its literature, history and culture.
- Apply methodological knowledge of statistical analysis and data generation, treatment and codification of multilingual databases, analysis of literary texts, etc. to research.
- Communicate the knowledge acquired and the contributions of ones research correctly, accurately and clearly both orally and in writing.
- Critically argue, issue judgements and present ideas on the basis of the analysis of information originating from scientific production in these areas.
- Develop autonomous learning skills applicable to the research process.
- Distinguish and contrast between the different methodological and theoretical models applied to the academic study of the acquisition, teaching and use of English as a second language in multilingual and multicultural contexts, literary studies and cultural studies.
- Show respect towards the opinions, values, behaviours and/or practices of others.
- Use the English language for academic and professional purposes related to research into the acquisition, teaching and use of English as a second language in multilingual and multicultural contexts, literary studies and cultural studies.

Learning outcomes

1. Analyse and interpret at an advanced level Nineteenth Century English critical produced texts, extracting relevant citations and making content summaries.
2. Analyse and interpret 19th century narrative texts by applying the advanced techniques of literary criticism.
3. Analyse and synthesise information at an advanced level.
4. Communicate the knowledge acquired and the contributions of ones research correctly, accurately and clearly both orally and in writing.
5. Consider literary and cultural criticism in the English language through reading, debating and analysing texts.
6. Develop autonomous learning skills applicable to the research process.
7. Distinguish and contrast the different theoretical and methodological models applied to literary criticism in the English language.
8. Draft texts defending an idea in relation to a to a literary critical text in English, applying secondary sources to the critical argumentation.
9. Make oral presentations in English on issues and texts related to advanced research of English Literature and literary criticism in this language.
10. Read and analyse the literary and cultural discourse of romantic love in the English language.
11. Show respect towards the opinions, values, behaviours and/or practices of others.

Content

Theory and Practise of Literary Criticism - 2016

The nineteenth century is generally regarded as the golden era of English literature, a perception based primarily on the central role played by the novel in Victorian culture. This course has two basic aims: one, to widen your awareness of its scope; two, to widen your awareness of literary criticism. It is precisely because the novel was so prolific that no literary genre has been studied in such depth and from so many different angles. If you are interested in social class and literature, you will find a huge school of Marxist criticism; if you are interested in women's literature, you will find another huge school of criticism; if you are interested in book production, reading and readership, likewise. In short, the Victorian novel is interesting for the student of literature not just for its content but also for its reception. This is confirmed, surely, by the contemporary industry of mock Victorian books and films, and the unceasing number of television adaptations of canonical fiction.

The course comprises five primary texts/units. Please ensure that you obtain the editions I have indicated. The Norton Critical Editions are a tad more expensive, but represent a good investment as they include material (biographical and critical) that is sometimes difficult to obtain elsewhere.

1. The voice of the adult: Charlotte Brontë - *Villette* (Oxford World Classics, intro. Tim Dolin).
2. The voice of sensation: Mary Elizabeth Braddon - *Aurora Floyd* (Oxford World Classics, ed. P.D. Edwards).
3. The voice of the child: Edmund Gosse - *Father and Son: A Study of Two Temperaments* (I think the only available edition is in Penguin).
4. The voice of the intellect: George Eliot - *The Mill on the Floss* (Norton Critical Edition, ed. Carol T. Christ.)
5. The voice of desire: Thomas Hardy - *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (Norton Critical Edition, ed. Scott Elledge).

I will advise you on secondary reading once classes start.

Methodology

From previous years' experience it is clear that the major problem students face when taking this course is that they are not really accustomed to reading and thinking for themselves. There is a marked tendency to vacillate between, on the one hand, thinking that critical writing is simply a matter of expressing an opinion, and, on the other, the belief that all literary texts will fit a determined literary theory. Neither is true.

What you will be required to do is:

- a) read thoroughly, methodically and critically.
- b) have sufficient knowledge of the major critical schools.
- c) have a grasp of the novels' reception from their date of publication down to the present day.
- d) show that you sufficient knowledge of the social and historical context.
- e) be familiar with the life and works of the authors outside the text we are studying.

This might sound like a lot, but when the course finishes you will be able to appreciate how essential these five rules are and how far you have progressed in a year.

Activities

Title	Hours	ECTS	Learning outcomes
Type: Directed			
See description below	39	1.56	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11
Type: Supervised			
See description below	27.75	1.11	1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10
Type: Autonomous			
See description below	86.25	3.45	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11

Evaluation

1. Term paper. You will be required to write an academic paper following the basic requirements that postgraduate research requires.
2. Short exercises, such as short papers, class presentation and similar.
3. Class attendance is COMPULSORY.

Evaluation activities

Title	Weighting	Hours	ECTS	Learning outcomes
See description below	50%	36	1.44	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11
See description below	50%	36	1.44	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11

Bibliography

It would be ridiculous, at this stage, to provide a bibliography that would cover the major areas and controversies, as these are too many. Instead, I provide a list of ten classics essential for understanding the Victorian novel and context. All items are in the UAB humanities. In addition, a very useful starting point is the Cambridge Companion series, which is available online.

Altick, Richard. *Victorian People and Ideas*.

Elizabeth Gaskell *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*

Flint, Kate. *The Woman Reader 1837-1914*

Gilbert, Sandra and Gubar, Susan. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*.

Kaplan, Fred. *Sacred Tears: Sentimentality in Victorian Literature*.

David Lodge, *Language of Fiction: Essays in Criticism and Verbal Analysis of the English Novel*.

Rivkin, Julie and Ryan, Michael. *Literary Theory: An Anthology*

Parrinder, Patrick. *Nation and Novel: The English Novel from its Origins to the Present Day*.

Strachey, Lytton. *Eminent Victorians*.

Williams, Raymond. *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence*.