

# Literary Criticism

ENGL 795 | Eisenhower Hall 219 | Tue & Thu 9:30 | Spring 2006

Course Website: [www.ksu.edu/english/eiselei/engl795/](http://www.ksu.edu/english/eiselei/engl795/)

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Office Hours: Tue and Thu 11:00-12:00, Thu 3:00-4:00 plus many more by appointment



Martin Heidegger

## Course Description

Literary Criticism is a survey of Western literary theory and criticism with an emphasis on the most prominent theorists, texts, schools, and ideas. It is a course in the history of ideas—specifically, ideas related to the theory and criticism of literary texts.

The course begins with a survey of major figures in the development of a critical theory of literature. The emphasis will be on the careful reading of primary theoretical texts, with attention as well to historical and social contexts. This survey will include Plato, Aristotle, Longinus, Augustine, Maimonides, Sidney, Corneille, Vico, Kant, Coleridge, Emerson, Pater, Arnold, Marx, Freud, Nietzsche, and more. This survey should provide a basic frame of reference from which to understand and assess the contemporary theoretical and critical scene.

The second half of the course covers developments in the twentieth century, including feminism, Marxism, psychoanalysis, formalism, structuralism and deconstruction, phenomenology and hermeneutics, queer theory, postcolonialism, new historicism, ethnicity and race studies, and postmodernism.

## Course Goals

When you finish ENGL 795, you should be able to do the following:

- Demonstrate familiarity with the history of literary theory in the West, including prominent theorists and critics, important schools and movements, and the historical and cultural contexts important to those theories.
- Demonstrate an understanding of key concepts in literary theory.
- Explain to others the meaning, significance, and value of specific literary theoretical works.
- Use literary theoretical concepts to develop your own interpretations of literary texts.
- Analyze specific literary theories in order to distinguish them from other theories and to identify the structure and logic of their arguments.
- Think critically about a range of literary theories.
- Write in an insightful and informed way about specific literary theoretical works.

This course also aims to intensify students' proficiency in the skills at the heart of a liberal education: the ability to reason, think critically, communicate effectively, and appreciate excellent writing and thinking.

## Course Requirements

**In-Class Work.** Because one of our course goals is learning how to discuss these texts critically, attendance and class participation are vital to the work in this course. You will also take part in some in-class activities and writing exercises. I will not assign letter grades to this in-class work, but I will factor attendance, class participation, and in-class writing into your final grade.

**Written Work.** The writing in the course will consist of four papers ranging in length from four to seven pages: Paper #1: Summary and Response Essay (4 pages), Paper #2: Historical Analysis (4 pages), Paper #3: Comparative Analysis (7 pages), and Paper #4: Deconstructive Analysis (5 pages). During the semester, I will distribute handouts describing these four assignments in detail.

**Examinations.** There will be a midterm examination on Tuesday, March 7th and an in-class comprehensive final examination on Monday, May 8th, from 2:00 to 3:50.

**Grades.** In determining final grades, each course requirement carries the following relative weight:

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| • Attendance, Participation, and In-Class Work | 20% |
| • Paper #1: Summary and Response Essay         | 10% |
| • Paper #2: Historical Analysis                | 10% |
| • Paper #3: Comparative Analysis               | 15% |
| • Paper #4: Deconstructive Analysis            | 15% |
| • Midterm Examination                          | 10% |
| • Final Examination                            | 20% |

## Course Policies

**Late Papers.** I do not typically accept late papers, but in certain, limited circumstances I will accept papers after the due date. Assignments will lose a letter grade for every class period that they are late. I collect papers at the beginning of class on the due date.

**Revisions.** You may choose to revise *one* of your four papers for a higher grade. If you would like to revise a paper, the revision would be due exactly one week after the papers have been returned. A revision will not automatically receive a better grade. The revision must be substantially improved to merit a grade change. To submit a revision, please write a one-paragraph summary explaining why and how you revised and hand it in with both the revised version and the old version with my comments.

**The Honor Code.** Kansas State University has an Honor Code, which stipulates that you should do all your academic work at the university individually. Do not collaborate on any academic work unless approved by your instructor. On all of your assignments, exams, and other course work, the following pledge is implied, whether or not it is explicitly stated: "On my honor, as a student, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this academic work." Perhaps the most serious violation of the Honor Code in an English course is plagiarism—taking or copying someone else's words or ideas as if they were your own. Plagiarism and cheating are serious offenses and may be punished by failure on the exam, paper, or project; the truly gnarly XF grade for the course; and/or expulsion from the university. Complete copies of the academic dishonesty policy are available in the Office of Student Activities and Services in the Union, or you may visit the Honor System web page at [www.ksu.edu/honor](http://www.ksu.edu/honor).

**Students with Disabilities.** If you need special accommodation for a learning or physical disability, please contact Disabled Student Services in Holton Hall 202 (532-6441), so that they may assist us in making arrangements.

## Course Resources

**Course Website.** The URL for the course website is [www.ksu.edu/english/eiselei/eng1795](http://www.ksu.edu/english/eiselei/eng1795). You may find there a online resources related to the course, assignments and handouts, as well as basic information about the class.

**Course Listserv.** You have also all been subscribed to a course listserv, and we can all post comments, information, and queries by sending messages to [littercriticism@k-state.edu](mailto:littercriticism@k-state.edu). The purpose of this listserv is to try out ideas and facilitate communication among class participants outside of class. Posting to this listserv is not required; it is here for our convenience. The only rule is this: all postings to the list should be related to our class in some way or another. If you have your K-State e-mail forwarded to another address, the University will subscribe you to that address also so that you can send messages to this list from either address.



**Texts.** There is just one *required* text for the course, which is available for purchase from the K-State Union Bookstore or Varney's: *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. Vincent B. Leitch.

You might also find it handy to own a dictionary of literary theoretical terms, such as *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms*, 2nd edition, ed. Ross Murfin and Supryia M. Ray, for example.