

ENG 400: ENGLISH DEPARTMENT SENIOR SEMINAR

3 semester hours

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Please contact me by email when you register and when you sign in to Canvas

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS

Students will progress through assigned readings and group discussions into independent research and writing, culminating in a final research project.

All students must have purchased and read the Tyson textbook **before the course begins**. It's vital that the theoretical approaches be familiar before the discussion begins.

Students will re-familiarize themselves with and discuss the different theoretical approaches to literature and learn how to integrate those bodies of knowledge with close readings of primary literary texts. They will, at the beginning of the course, have identified a potential research problem or question in primary literary texts of their choosing, and over the semester will explore that problem or question by applying relevant theoretical approaches and entering a conversation with scholarship in the area through reading books, articles and other research sources.

All students will produce a research paper of between 5,000 and 6,000 words, and will present their work formally to a panel of two or three faculty members at a final oral defense.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will

- develop their basic knowledge of important theoretical concepts.
- apply those theoretical concepts to readings of primary literary texts.
- become familiar with standard research resources and procedures in the study of literature in English.
- refine their choices, if necessary, of primary literary texts that are appropriate to an extended research topic.
- develop the ability to identify a focused topic for research about the selected primary literary texts.
- develop oral competencies through discussions and presentations.

- understand the role of process and revision in creating a written, research-based argument.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness*. NY. Dover Thrift, 1990. ISBN 0-486-26464-5. Or any decent edition.

Rossetti, Christina, “Goblin Market,” text available on Canvas.

Tyson, Lois. *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide*. 3rd ed. New York: Routledge, 2015. ISBN: 978-0-415-50675-5. This is our core reader and **all students MUST purchase it and read it before the course begins.**

Grade Percentages:

Discussion Responses to Theory Presentations:	30%
Working Abstract with Annotated Bibliography:	10%
Timely Drafts	20%
Final Paper	25%
Presentation & Defense:	15%

Discussion Responses: Theory Chapters

These are due in Weeks One through Six (see schedule below). Each response should be at least 500 words and should contain direct, cited quotations from the text. In these responses, you will describe and outline the theoretical model, noting any particular problems and posing questions that you may have. Then, you will discuss how you might use this approach to interpret one of the core literary texts (“Goblin Market” or *Heart of Darkness*). You must quote both the theory text and the primary literary text in these responses. You may also ask questions and/or answer questions in these responses.

PLEASE NOTE: the theory Discussions are due in the weeks listed on the syllabus. If you fail to complete a response in the week that it is due, you will receive a 0 for that response. No extensions for these weeks will be available.

Other Discussion Sites

I will ask you to post questions and drafts over the course of the semester. Please feel free to ask questions, of your professor and/or other students in the class. Do not delay in posting drafts as they are required over the semester, and do not skip any of the Discussion sites.

Please note that all Discussion postings can be completed any time during the weeks that they are due to accommodate all students. All students have the entire week to complete these assignments.

Advising

Students will work closely with the professor and should liaise by email when questions arise. They must have at least e-mail conversation with the professor between Week 3 and Week 7, and the professor may require a further e-mail conversation (on top of regular communication) if significant revision of the draft is required after Week 7.

PROVISIONAL SCHEDULE

DUE BY THE END OF WEEK FIVE (Sunday at midnight): Drafts (five pages minimum) of introductory ideas and outline of the whole paper/portfolio. Note that this is not a draft of the paper itself but of your ideas and thoughts to date.

DUE BY THE END OF WEEK EIGHT (Sunday at midnight): Annotated Bibliography (13 entries maximum, with a descriptive paragraph for each) and Abstract (one page overview of paper with working thesis)

DUE BY THE END OF WEEK TWELVE (Sunday at midnight): FINAL VERSION OF PAPER

Please note that this deadline is particularly tight if we are to have time to read your work carefully before the oral defense. Try to submit your work **BEFORE** this deadline if possible!

WEEK THIRTEEN OR FOURTEEN: Presentation and Oral Defense

Drafts & Final Paper

You must follow MLA conventions for research papers, which should be between 5,000 and 6,000 words long.

Presentation and Oral Defense

This will be conducted on campus at Mary Baldwin University or electronically, dependent upon the student's location and schedule, as well as health and safety risk assessments.

ETs: Extended Time will be granted to students who have completed at least half of the work for the semester. Please communicate with me if you are falling behind.

PROVISIONAL SCHEDULE

Week One (Aug 24-30):

General introduction to the course and to theory

Chapter 1 Tyson – “Everything You Wanted to Know About Critical Theory but Were Afraid to Ask”

and

Chapter 5 Tyson – “New Criticism”

Week Two (Aug 31-Sep 6):

Chapter 2 Tyson – “Psychoanalytic Criticism”

and

Chapter 3 Tyson – “Marxist Criticism”

Week Three (Sep 7-13):

Chapter 9 Tyson – “New Historical and Cultural Criticism”

and

Chapter 4 Tyson—“Feminist Criticism”

Week Four (Sep 14-20):

Chapter 10 Tyson – “Lesbian, Gay, and Queer Criticism”

and

Chapter 11 Tyson – “African American Criticism”

Week Five (Sep 21-27):

Chapter 12 Tyson – “Postcolonial Criticism”

and

Chapter 6 Tyson – “Reader-Response Criticism”

FIRST IDEAS AND OUTLINE OF YOUR PROPOSED PAPER DUE SUNDAY AT
MIDNIGHT

Week Six (Sep 28-Oct 4):

Chapter 7 Tyson – “Structuralist Criticism”

and

Chapter 8 Tyson – “Deconstructive Criticism”

Week Seven (Oct 5-11):

Canvas discussion of theoretical approaches for your research projects: please post a list of points for group discussion about your ideas. Do this as early in the week as possible, so that you can get plenty of feedback.

Week Eight (Oct 12-18):

Canvas discussion of positioning yourself in relation to existing critical discourse, and producing a working abstract or proposal.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHIES AND ABSTRACTS DUE BY SUNDAY AT MIDNIGHT

Week Nine (Oct 19-25):

POST at least 6-8 pages of draft – the “core” of your project – for discussion by SUNDAY at midnight.

Week Ten (Oct 26-Nov 1):

By Monday at midnight:

Post a draft of your introduction – be sure you have a strong thesis statement!—for discussion

By Wednesday at midnight:

Post a draft of your conclusion for discussion.

Week Eleven (Nov 2-8):

Upload full draft of your thesis to Canvas by midnight on Sunday for feedback.

Week Twelve (Nov 9-15):

Make final revisions and turn in final copy of completed thesis (5,000-6,000 words, not including Works Cited page) by midnight on Sunday.

Weeks Thirteen & Fourteen and Exam Week (Nov 16-Dec 4):

Oral presentations and defenses will be scheduled.