

## Literary Theory Survey Classes for Classics Undergraduates

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*Literary Theory in Graduate and Undergraduate Classics Curricula*

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### 1. Three Principles

- Full-unit dedicated theory class
- Cannot be a full survey; choices guided by strengths and weaknesses in curriculum and shape of Classical Studies generally
- Accessible to students with no background in theory

### 2. Dangers

- Tool-kit approach
- Balkanization
- The Triumph of Historicism

### 3. Why teach theory to undergraduate Classicists?

Reed College, Clas/Lit 353

LITERARY THEORY AND CLASSICAL LITERATURE

### Sample Syllabus

*Study of some of the main currents in literary theory in the last fifty years; application of these theories to some different classical works, including, in particular, Catullus's shorter poetry and Longus' prose romance, Daphnis and Chloe. Aims are to (a) introduce students to literary theory, (b) enable students to understand and evaluate articles that use or develop literary theories, (c) enable students to confront a text with a variety of questions, and (d) reorient students' experience of classical literature. The focus will be on the following literary practices: New Criticism, Narratology, Semiotics, Reader-Response Theory, Marxist Literary Theory, New Historicism and Postcolonial Theory, but we will also take detours into Feminism and Posthumanism (the hot theory right now if there is one). All non-English texts will be translated.*

### New Criticism

#### I.1 Introduction

I.2 Cleanth Brooks, *The Well Wrought Urn* (HBJ, 1947) ix-xi, 3-21, 67-79, 105-23, 192-214, 252-66 [280-83]

John Willingham, "The New Criticism: Then and Now," in *Contemporary Literary Theory*, G. Douglas Atkins & Laura Morrow, eds (Amherst, 1989), 24-41

Catullus, poems 1-6

II.1 Wimsatt & Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy" in *The Verbal Icon* (Noonday, 1954), 2-18 (P = Presentation)

Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory* (Minneapolis, 1983), 17-43

Jerome J. McGann, "The Monks and the Giants," in *Beauty of Inflections* (OUP, 1985), 69-89

#### II.2

#### Applied Exercise I Due

Do a New Critical reading (à la Brooks) of a poem. (4-5pp.)

## Structuralism and Semiotics

- III.1 Roman Jakobson, "Linguistics and Poetics," *Style in Language*, ed T. Sebeok (MIT, 1960), 350-59, 367-77 [skim 359-67]  
Robert Scholes, *Structuralism in Literature* (Yale, 1974), 1-40
- III.2 Art Berman, *From the New Criticism to Deconstruction* (Illinois, 1988), 1-6, 114-43  
Robert Scholes, *Structuralism in Literature* (Yale, 1974), 59-91 [skim 91-117]
- IV.1 Michael Riffaterre, *Semiotics of Poetry* (Indiana, 1977), 1-22 (P)  
Roland Barthes, "The Reality Effect," in *The Rustle of Language* (NY, 1989), 141-8  
Don Fowler, "On the Shoulders of Giants: Intertextuality and Classical Studies," *Materiali e Discussioni* 39 (1997): 13-34  
Catullus, poems 1, 2, 4; *Iliad* bk. 13.526-673
- IV.2 Rawdon Wilson, "The Bright Chimera: Character as a Literary Term," *Critical Inquiry* 5 (1979): 725-49  
Joel Weinscheimer, "Theory of Character: Emma," *Poetics Today* 1 (1979-80): 185-211  
Hélène Cixous, "The Character of 'Character,'" *New Literary History* 5 (1974): 383-402
- V.1 Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, tr. R. Miller (Noonday, 1974), [221-54], 3-42, 65-71, 78-81, 88-98, 101-2, 106-8, 151-2, 178-9, 190-2  
Robert Scholes, *Structuralism in Literature* (Yale, 1974), 148-57
- V.2

### Applied Exercise II Due

Following the methodology of one or more of Barthes, Riffaterre and Weinscheimer, do a semiotic study of some part of one of our works. (4-5pp.)

## Narratology & Reader-Response

- VI.1 Meike Bal, *Narratology*, trans C. Van Boheemen (Toronto, 2009), 3-13, 15-35, 48-62  
Robert Scholes, *Structuralism in Literature* (Yale, 1974), 157-67  
*Iliad* bk. 1.
- VI.2 Meike Bal, *Narratology*, trans C. Van Boheemen (Toronto, 2009), 62-71, 75-112 (P), 145-65
- VII.1 Peter Rabinowitz, "Whirl without End: Audience-Oriented Criticism," in *Contemporary Literary Theory*, 81-100  
Judith Fetterley, *The Resisting Reader* (Indiana, 1978), xi-xxiv, 22-33 (P)  
Ralph Cohen, "History and Genre," *New Literary History* 17 (1986): 203-21 (JSTOR)  
Catullus, poems 10, 70, 76
- VII.2 Ralph Cohen, "History and Genre," *New Literary History* 17 (1986): 203-21

### Applied Exercise III Due

Using Bal's terminology, do a narratological analysis of suitably interesting passage; alternatively, analyze a suitably interesting passage using reader-response theory. (4-5pp.)

## Marxist Literary Theory

- VIII.1 Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford, 1977), 1-20, 55-71  
Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (Verso, 1991), 1-31  
*Iliad* bk. 2
- VIII.2 Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford, 1977), 75-100, 108-27, 136-41  
Michèle Barrett, "Ideology and the Cultural Production of Gender," 65-85, *Feminist Criticism and Social Change*, ed. J. Newton & D. Rosenfelt (Methuen, 1985)
- IX.1 Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, tr. B. Brewster (NLB, 1971), 121-73 and 203-8 (P)  
Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution," 270-82, *Performing Feminisms*, ed. S. Case (JHU, 1990)
- IX.2 Mikhail Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. M. Holquist & C. Emerson (Texas, 1981), 259-300 (P)  
Peter Stallybrass & Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca, 1986), 1-26  
Catullus, poems 7-10
- X.1 Peter Rose, "Marxism and the Classics," in *Sons of the Gods, Children of Earth* (Cornell, 1992), 1-42  
Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, tr. G. Wall (Routledge, 1978), 258-98 (P)
- X.2

### Applied Exercise IV Due

Do a Marxist interpretation of a given text. (4-5pp.) You might wish to use some reader response tools (or you might not). If you are doing Catullus, Oliver Lyne, "The Life of Love," *Latin Erotic Elegy: An Anthology and Reader*, ed. Paul Allen Miller (Routledge, 2002), 348-65, might be helpful; if you are doing the *Iliad*, try Louis Gernet, "The Nobility in Ancient Greece," *The Anthropology of Ancient Greece*, tr. Hamilton & Nagy (JHU, 1981), 279-88. Be sure to use these sources critically!

## Postcolonialism, New Historicism and Posthumanism

- XI.1 Edward Said, *Orientalism* (Vintage, 1978), 1-25, 149-66 (P)  
Carol Dougherty, *The Poetics of Colonization: From City to Text in Archaic Greece* (Oxford, 1993), 3-11, 61-80  
Catullus, poems 9-12
- XI.2 Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (Vintage, 1994), x-xxvii, 62-97, 191-209  
Louis Montrose, "Professing the Renaissance: The Poetics and Politics of Culture," *The New Historicism*, ed. H. Aram Veveser (Routledge, 1989), 15-36  
Catullus, poems 11-12
- XII.1 Michael Herzfeld, *The Poetics of Manhood* (Princeton, 1985), 1-50  
Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests* (Routledge, 1992), 1-17  
Cynthia Dessen, "The Figure of the Eunuch in Terence's *Eunuchus*," *Helios* 22.2 (1995): 123-39  
Catullus, poem 63; *Iliad* 20.156-352.

- XII.2 Laurie Shannon, "The Eight Animals in Shakespeare; or, Before the Human," *PMLA* 124.2 (2009): 472-9 (MLA Journals)  
Page DuBois, "Humans and Animals," *Centaur and Amazons* (Michigan, 1982), 95-109  
Bruce Boehrer, "Animal Studies and the Deconstruction of Character," *PMLA* 124.2 (2009): 542-7 (MLA Journals)  
Cary Wolfe, "Human, All Too Human: 'Animal Studies' and the Humanities," *PMLA* 124.2 (2009): 564-75 (MLA Journals)  
Catullus, poems 2-3; *Iliad* 19.349-424

XIII.1

Applied Exercise V Due

Examine either the way in which a text represents a foreign subject, whether colonized or not, or the way in which a text constitutes the identity of an imperial or colonizing subject through his or her interaction with foreign places, peoples or objects. (4-5pp.)

- XIII.2 Tilottama Rajan, "In the Wake of Cultural Studies: Globalization, Theory, and the University," *Diacritics* 31.1 (2001): 67-88  
Milman Parry, *The Making of Homeric Verse* (Oxford, 1971), 1-23

EXAM PERIOD

Oral Examination

A 20-minute oral examination on the various literary theories we cover, requiring you to summarize, synthesize, compare and evaluate them.