

**Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Humanities, Razi University**

**A Course Syllabus for History of Literary Theory and Criticism**

**Fall Semester, September 2019- January 2020.**

**Class Time: Mondays/Tuesdays, 8:00-9:30**

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**Part 1: Course Overview**

Literary theory and criticism are sibling branches that go hand in hand with literature. With no doubt, they both are also as old as literature herself. It is certain that ancient poets, say Homer, had their critics. Homer, as many other ancient and modern poets tend to, invokes the muses. This act in itself is a theory of poetry. The muses are invoked at the beginnings epics of Homer or the likes of him. This is a theory that posits poetry as an artistic utterance inspired by the divine. Plato calls the same notion divine madness. Aristotle later challenged this; emphasizing the sophistication and necessity of verbal art. Later, he brought forth the most famous and most efficient theory of poetics and tragedy. We are going to discuss critics, philosophers, and poets that contributed significant efforts to answer the following queries: “What is good literature? What is literature good for? How are we to interpret literature? What is the relationship between author, text, reader, and world?” Texts from classical, neoclassical, Romantic, Victorian and Modernist traditions will be introduced and perused. In choosing these texts two criteria have been taken into consideration: First, they are pivotal texts of their respective literary traditions; in some cases they inaugurated or influenced certain traditions significantly. In several historical discourses they are the high points. The second reason is that some of these texts are still shaping the discourse of literary criticism/theory.

**Part 2: Course Objectives/Outcomes**

The quality of performance in this course is highly dependent on two pivotal factors. First, instructor’s competence, strategy and choice of reading materials. Second, student’s comprehensive close reading of the given materials. If these two are achieved, the course will be able to approximate the following outcomes:

* Student will be able to grasp a clear understanding of important texts in the history of theory and criticism.
* Students’ faculty of critical thinking will grow to reach a certain level of sophistication so as to peruse and read texts of literature critically. But reading and analyzing texts is the eventual outcome of this course not the immediate one.
* We will have an understanding of historical attitudes toward literature. This is important for comprehending current issues in literary theory, and for use in the classroom/research. How theory and criticism has shaped the field of literature and other related fields is another objective.

**Part 3: Required Texts**

*Major Sources:*

1. *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism* (Volumes One to Seven), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

2. *The History of Literary Criticism from Plato to the Present*, M. A. R. Habib, Oxford: Blackwell, 2005.

3. *An Introduction to Literary Criticism*. Richard Dutton. Longman, 1984.

***Book Required:***

*A Short History of Literary Criticism*. Vernon Hall. The Merlin Press, 1963.

**Suggestions for Further Readings:**

Eagleton, Terry. *Literary Theory an Introduction*. University of Minnesota Press, 2008.

Leitch, Vincent B. *Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. Norton & Company Limited, W. W., 2018.

⃰indeed more books, papers, and other materials will be mentioned during the course. Yet, these two are primary for every literature student. There will be some parts of these two’s content delivered during the course, and only a small portion of these parts are going to be on your final exam.

**Part 4: Students’ Responsibilities and Required Assignments:**

* **Attendance:** Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes and to have completed the assigned reading before arriving in class. Two absences will be permitted. Each additional absence will result in a reduction of the final course grade.
* **Participation:** Students are expected to take part in class discussions and raise questions, if they have any, regarding the subject matter and content of each session. Moreover, they will be asked to give their opinion on certain matters during the class time.
* **Individual Writing Assignments:** Two critical essays (1000 words each) on each of are required from the students. First of these essays is due by Azar 1st; the second one you will deliver on the day of your final exam. You will be asked two sets of questions. These essays will be your responses to them.
* **Plagiarism:** All written essays submitted in this course must be your own and written exclusively for this course. Cite every sources you use in your essay to avoid violating academic and scholarly ethics. Sources must be properly documented in MLA citation style. The rules for MLA citation will be easily found on the internet. Plus you can use the following websites:

<http://www.citationmachine.net>

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/24/>

Please do not refrain from asking me questions if you have any regarding use of sources and citations.

* **Policies**

Attendance and participation are mandatory. Students must have the required texts under discussion on them during the sessions (electronic editions and hardcopies are both acceptable as long as one doesn’t disturb the order of the class). For the use of electronic editions look at classroom rules section. Students must read the texts in their entirety.

The class is open to any reasonable criticism or suggestion. Moreover, any objections that the assignments are too much or the sources are too lengthy or difficult for the class’s level are also welcome on the instructor’s part, but they are also to be met with meticulous scrutiny before being accepted into the lesson plan. Therefore, if you have any objections regarding this particular issue, please do think it thoroughly.

First and foremost, this course and our energy and time are to be employed to make sure that learning will occur, and you will finish this course with relative satisfaction having achieved a minimum though sufficient amount of understanding regarding literary theory and criticism in accordance to your needs and interests. Hence, please share your concerns with the class or the instructor anytime the necessity arises.

**Part 5: Makeup Sessions Rules:**

If necessity dictates (it will probably), and based on past experiences it sure will, extra sessions will be added to our course. Time and date for extra sessions will be discussed with the students to ensure maximum rate of attendance and minimum amount of inconvenience. Decisions taken regarding this matter will be announced one week prior to the extra sessions.

**Part 6: Classroom Rules and Standards of Online Behavior**

* All electronic gadgets must be off or set to silent mode. If you use them for reading PDFs and other class related files, make sure they will not distract you or others so as to prevent the class from digressions.
* Punctuality is a non-negotiable must.
* 3 sessions of absence mean reducing your chance of passing the course greatly not to mention increasing the possibility of being dropped out of the course. Don’t try it, ever!
* Class activities are expected of the students.
* Last but not least, respect the class. Do not leave the class in groups during the breaks. You absolutely must not extend breaks’ duration on your own authority. For each session, a 10 minute break is already scheduled.
* Should the students have any questions, concerns, or requests for meeting and materials, they will contact me **only and solely** via my email address. Other forms of communications are absolutely not recommended.

You all have my thanks and appreciation since you have always observed these rules and regulations. Bringing them here again is only a matter of formality and academic regulations.

**Part 7: Grading Policy and Final Exam Structure**

| **Points** | **Description** |
| --- | --- |
| 30 | Each individual essay will determine 15 per cent of your final grade |
| 15 | 5 per cent of your final grade will be decided based on your attendance and the other 10 per cent on your participation. |
| 55 | Final exam will determine 55 per cent of your final grade⃰. |
| 100 | Total Points Possible |

**⃰** the final exam will be an essay exam. On your exam, you will answer essay questions that are structured around the issues discussed in the class. You must respond to them properly and to the point in a reasonable length with maximum awareness of the texts themselves and critical subject matters that have been presented in the class. It goes needless to say that those who show genuine analytical insights in their answers will receive extra points. And there will be at least one bonus question on your exam which is much more difficult than the regular questions and needs a great deal of critical insight and mastery over the sources. Don’t forget: **everything I say will be on the exam!**

**Letter Grade Table:**

| **Letter Grade** | **Percentage** | **Description** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| A | 93-100% | Excellent Work |
| A- | 90-92% | Nearly Excellent Work |
| B+ | 87-89% | Very Good Work |
| B | 83-86% | Good Work |
| B- | 80-82% | Mostly Good Work |
| C+ | 77-79% | Above Average Work |
| C | 73-76% | Average Work |
| C- | 70-72% | Mostly Average Work |
| D+ | 67-69% | Below Average Work |
| D | 60-66% | Poor Work |
| F | 0-59% | Failing Work |

**Part 8: Schedule**

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| --- | --- |
| **\*The contents of these sessions are susceptible to minor to substantial changes.** | **Session 1:** Course Introduction, Classical Criticism |
| **Session 2:** Classical Criticism | **Session 3:** Classical Criticism |
| Plato, from *Republic*, *Ion*, and *Phaedrus* | Aristotle, from *Poetics* |
| **Session 4:** Classical Criticism | **Session 5:** Medieval and Renaissance |
| Horace, *The Art of Poetry* | Dante, from *Letter to Can Grande della Scala* |
| Longinus, from *On the Sublime* | Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry* |
| **Session 6:** Eighteenth Century | **Session 7:** Romantic |
| Samuel Johnson, | Kant, from *Critique of Judgement* |
| Hume, *Of the Standard of Taste* + Barbara Herrnstein Smith | Schiller, from *On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry* |
| **Session 8:** Romantic | **Session 9:** Romantic |
| Wordsworth, *Preface* | Shelley, *Defence of Poetry +*Raymond William*s* |
| S. T. Coleridge | Wollstonecraft, from *Vindication* |
| **Session 10:** Nineteenth Century | **Session 11:** Modernism |
| Hegel, *Introduction to the Philosophy of Art* | Eliot, *Tradition and the Individual Talent* |
| Arnold, *Function of Criticism* | Woolf, all Auerbach, *Odysseus' Scar* |
| **Session 12:** Formalisms | **Session 13:** Structuralism and Deconstruction |
| Shklovsky, *Art as Technique* | Barthes, *Death of the Author* |
| Bakhtin; Cleanth Brooks | Derrida, *Structure, Sign, and Play; The Father of Logos* |