

## LITR319

### Course Summary

Course: LITR319 Title: Literary Theory

Length of Course: 8

Prerequisites: [leave blank]. CreditHours:3

### Course Description:

This course focuses on the major literary theories of the 20th and 21st centuries. The course includes application of theory and the examination of the role of theory in textual interpretation and analysis. The course emphasizes the work of major theorists, the interconnections of theory, and the political and social movements both created by and influenced by theory. Course readings include primary theoretical texts and secondary readings that apply those theories or reflect on their influence.

### Course Scope:

This course focuses on the major literary theories of the 20th and 21st centuries. The course includes application of theory and the examination of the role of theory in textual interpretation and analysis. The course emphasizes the work of major theorists, the interconnections of theory, and the political and social movements both created by and influenced by theory. Course readings include primary theoretical texts and secondary readings that apply those theories or reflect on their influence.

### Objectives 1.

By the end of this course, the learner will be able to:

1. Identify the major critical theories and their leading theorists.
2. Apply a theoretical school of thought to the analysis of a literary text.
3. Explain the role of theory in literary analysis and interpretation.
4. Define key critical terms from each theoretical school of thought.
5. Explain the difference between constructivism and essentialism as related to social construction of identity.

6. Demonstrate critical theories' contribution to major social and cultural movements and the influence of such movements on the development of critical theories.

## **Week 1: Literary Theory**

Learning Objectives. Students will be able to:

- Explain the complex definition of literature.
- Distinguish canon and non-canonical works.
- Define literary theory.
- Describe theory's role in the study and analysis of literature.

## **Readings and Resources**

[\*The Pocket Essential: Literary Theory\* by David Carter](#)

- Chapter 1: Introduction

[\*Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction\* by Jonathan Culler](#)

- Chapter 1: What Is Theory?
- Chapter 2: What Is Literature, and Does It Matter?
- Appendix: Theoretical Schools and Movements

[\*Literary Theory: An Introduction\* by Terry Eagleton](#)

- Introduction: What Is Literature?

## **Additional Resources**

- [Critical Terms for Literary Study](#)
- [Key Terms in Literary Theory](#)

## **Introduction to Theory of Literature with Paul H. Fry**

[Transcript](#)

## **Assignment(s)**

The following activities and assessments need to be completed this week:

- Reading (as outlined in the Reading & Resources section)
- Introductions and Thoughts about Literature, Week 1 Forum

## **Week 2: Formalism and Close Reading**

Learning Objectives. Students will be able to:

- Describe the focus of traditional literary theory on imitation of real truths.
- Articulate fallacies and heresies of interpretation according to New Criticism.
- Explain why Formalism rejects any interpretation of literature that does not focus on how literary devices are used to craft a text.

## **Readings and Resources**

[\*The Pocket Essential: Literary Theory by David Carter\*](#)

- Chapter 2: The Literary Canon and New Criticism
- Chapter 3: Russian Formalism

## **Videos**

The New Criticism and Other Western Formalisms by Paul H. Fry  
[Transcript](#)

Russian Formalism by Paul H. Fry

[Transcript](#)

Traditional Literary Theory

## **Assignment(s)**

The following activities and assessments need to be completed this week:

- Reading (as outlined in the Reading & Resources section)
- How Not to Be a New Critic, Week 2 Forum

## **Week 3: Structuralism**

### **Learning Objectives. Students will be able to:**

- Interpret signs using signifiers and signified concepts as part of Semiotic study of language.
- Demonstrate how personal experience is used in recognizing meaning.
- Apply a literary theory to the understanding of a specific text.

### **Readings and Resources**

#### [The Pocket Essential: Literary Theory by David Carter](#)

- Chapter 4: Structuralism
- Chapter 7: Hermeneutics and Reception Theory

#### [Literary Theory: An Introduction by Terry Eagleton](#)

- Chapter 2: Phenomenology, Hermeneutics, and Reception Theory
- Chapter 3: Structuralism and Semiotics

#### [Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction by Jonathan Culler](#)

- Chapter 4: Language, Meaning, and Interpretation

"[Course in General Linguistics](#)" by Ferdinand de Saussure

"Death of the Author" by Roland Barthes

### **Videos**

<https://youtu.be/VsMfaIOsT3M?list=PLD00D35CBC75941BD>

<https://youtu.be/iWnA7nZO4EY?list=PLD00D35CBC75941BD>

<https://youtu.be/YtK18ImMkp8?list=PLD00D35CBC75941BD>

### **Assignment(s)**

The following activities and assessments need to be completed this week:

- Reading (as outlined in the Reading & Resources section)
- The Personal Aspect of Literary Theory, Week 3 Forum

- Week 3 Assignment, Applying Theory

## **Week 4: Postmodernism and Deconstruction**

Learning Objectives. Students will be able to:

1. Identify the major critical theories and their leading theorists.
2. Apply a theoretical school of thought to the analysis of a literary text.
3. Explain the role of theory in literary analysis and interpretation.
4. Define key critical terms from each theoretical school of thought.
5. Explain the difference between constructivism and essentialism as related to social construction of identity.
6. Demonstrate critical theories' contribution to major social and cultural movements and the influence of such movements on the development of critical theories.

## **Readings and Resources**

### [The Pocket Essential: Literary Theory by David Carter](#)

- Chapter 6: Psychoanalysis
- Chapter 9: Poststructuralism
- Chapter 10: Deconstruction
- Chapter 12: Postmodernism

### [Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction by Jonathan Culler](#)

- Chapter 8: Identity, Identification, and the Subject

### [Literary Theory: An Introduction by Terry Eagleton](#)

- Chapter 4: Post-structuralism
- Chapter 5: Psychoanalysis

### [Foucault: A Very Short Introduction by Gary Gutting](#)

- Chapter 2: Literature

### [Michel Foucault: Key Concepts by Diana Taylor](#)

- Introduction: Power, Freedom, and Subjectivity

"[The Subject and Power](#)" by Michel Foucault

"[Structures, Signs, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences](#)" by Jacques Derrida

"[A Reading Guide to 'Structures, Signs, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences'](#)" by Mary Klages

## Videos

<https://youtu.be/Np72VPguqeI?list=PLD00D35CBC75941BD>

<https://youtu.be/GnnWbVvnYIs?list=PLD00D35CBC75941BD>

<https://youtu.be/lkAXsR5WINc?list=PLD00D35CBC75941BD>

## Assignment(s)

The following activities and assessments need to be completed this week:

- Reading (as outlined in the Reading & Resources section)
- How Do You Feel about That? Week 4 Forum

## Week 5: Marx and Postcolonialism

Learning Objectives. Students will be able to:

- Demonstrate the role of Marxism as a political theory in relation to interpreting literature.
- Explain the influence of colonialism on the creation of literature and the role of literature in continuing a form of cultural colonialism, particularly in the establishment of literary canon.

## Readings and Resources

[\*The Pocket Essential: Literary Theory\* by David Carter](#)

- Chapter 4: Structuralism
- Chapter 7: Hermeneutics and Reception Theory

### *Literary Theory: An Introduction by Terry Eagleton*

- Chapter 2: Phenomenology, Hermeneutics, and Reception Theory
- Chapter 3: Structuralism and Semiotics

### *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction by Jonathan Culler*

- Chapter 4: Language, Meaning, and Interpretation

"[Course in General Linguistics](#)" by Ferdinand de Saussure

"[Death of the Author](#)" by Roland Barthes

### **Videos**

<https://youtu.be/VsMfaIOsT3M?list=PLD00D35CBC75941BD>

<https://youtu.be/iWnA7nZO4EY?list=PLD00D35CBC75941BD>

<https://youtu.be/YtK18ImMkp8?list=PLD00D35CBC75941BD>

### **Assignment(s)**

The following activities and assessments need to be completed this week:

- Reading (as outlined in the Reading & Resources section)
- What Should Be Literary Canon? Week 5 Forum

### **Week 6: New Historicism and Cultural Studies**

Learning Objectives. Students will be able to:

- Recognize the way texts shape the meaning of historical events.
- Analyze the effect and products of the "culture industry."
- Justify the study of cultural products as texts.
- Apply New Historicism or Cultural Studies to a specific product of pop or mass culture.
- Distinguish the similarities and differences of literary theories and their approaches to texts.

### **Readings and Resources**

### [Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction by Jonathan Culler](#)

- Chapter 3: Literature and Cultural Studies

["Women Read the Romance: The Interaction of Text and Content"](#) by Janie A. Radway

["The Human Sciences: History"](#) from *The Order of Things* by Michel Foucault

### **Videos**

New Historicism by Paul H. Fry (video)

<https://youtu.be/FZjHEk0FmLw?list=PLD00D35CBC75941BD>

### [Transcript](#)

### **Assignment(s)**

The following activities and assessments need to be completed this week:

- Reading (as outlined in the Reading & Resources section)
- Cultural Studies in Practice, Week 6 Forum
- Week 6 Assignment, Comparing Theories

### **Week 7: Identify Theories**

Learning Objectives. Students will be able to:

- Define the three waves of feminism.
- Explain the difference between constructivism and essentialism and how identity is a social construct.
- Analyze the connections and disconnections between feminist, queer, and ethnic theories.
- Demonstrate the influential publications, events, and people of specific theories or theorists.



## Readings and Resources:

### [The Pocket Essential: Literary Theory by David Carter](#)

- Chapter 8: Feminist Theory
- Chapter 13: Sexual Orientation Theories
- Chapter 14: Ethnic Theory

### [Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction by Jonathan Culler](#)

- Chapter 7: Performative Language
- Chapter 8: Identity, Identification, and the Subject

### [Undoing Gender by Judith Butler](#)

- Chapter 2: Gender Regulations

### [Critical Race Theory: An Introduction by Richard Delgado, Jean Stefancic and Ernesto Liendo](#)

- Chapter 1: Introduction
- Chapter 2: Hallmark Critical Race Theory Themes

["Toward a Feminist Poetics"](#) by Elaine Showalter

["What Does Queer Theory Teach Us about X?"](#) by Michael Warner and Lauren Berlant

## Videos

The Classic Feminist Tradition by Paul H. Fry (video)

<https://youtu.be/wxZDA3M2IOM?list=PLD00D35CBC75941BD>

[Transcript](#)

Queer Theory and Gender Performativity by Paul H. Fry (video)

<https://youtu.be/7bkFIJfxyF0?list=PLD00D35CBC75941BD>

[Transcript](#)

African-American Criticism by Paul H. Fry (video)

<https://youtu.be/wiCWji4cX8s?list=PLD00D35CBC75941BD>

[Transcript](#)

Judith Butler: Your Behavior Creates Your Gender (video)

<https://youtu.be/Bo7o2LYATDc>

[Transcript](#)

## **Assignment(s)**

The following activities and assessments need to be completed this week:

- Reading (as outlined in the Reading & Resources section)
- Identity Theories and the World, Week 7 Forum
- Week 7 Assignment, Timeline

## **Week 8: The Future of Theory**

Learning Objectives. Students will be able to:

- Assess the current political and academic status of theory.
- Analyze the need (or not) for theory in the 21st Century.
- Debate the role of literary theories in the 21st Century.

## **Readings and Resources**

[The Pocket Essential: Literary Theory by David Carter](#)

- Chapter 15: Recent Trends
- Chapter 16: Theory and After
- "Ecocriticism: A Study of Environmental Issues in Literature" by [Sandip Kumar Mishra](#)

## **Videos**

The End of Theory? Neo-Pragmatism by Paul H. Fry (video)

<https://youtu.be/rVOTdheq5eU?list=PLD00D35CBC75941BD>

[Transcript](#)

Reflections: Who Doesn't Hate Theory Now? by Paul H. Fry (video)

<https://youtu.be/FH7wsG1hdKw?list=PLD00D35CBC75941BD>

[Transcript](#)

## Assignment(s)

The following activities and assessments need to be completed this week:

- Reading (as outlined in the Reading & Resources section)
- The Evolution and Future of Theory, Week 8 Forum
- Week 8 Assignment, Final Project

## Evaluation

Grade Instruments	Percentage
Weeks 3, 6, and 7 Assignments	30%
Week 8 Final Project	20%
Final Exam	15%
Weekly Forums	35%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Materials

Reading & Resources:

[\*The Pocket Essential: Literary Theory\* by David Carter](#)

[\*Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction\* by Jonathan Culler](#)

[\*Literary Theory: An Introduction\* by Terry Eagleton](#)

## Additional Resources

[Critical Terms for Literary Study](#)

[Key Terms in Literary Theory](#)

"[Course in General Linguistics](#)" by Ferdinand de Saussure

"[Death of the Author](#)" by Roland Barthes

[Foucault: A Very Short Introduction by Gary Gutting](#)

- Chapter 2: Literature

[Michel Foucault: Key Concepts by Diana Taylor](#)

- Introduction: Power, Freedom, and Subjectivity

["The Subject and Power"](#) by Michel Foucault

["Structures, Signs, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences"](#) by Jacques Derrida

["A Reading Guide to 'Structures, Signs, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences'"](#) by Mary Klages

["Marxism and Literary Theory"](#) by Terry Eagleton

["Introduction to \*Orientalism\*"](#) by Edward Said

- Leon Trotsky's [Literature and Revolution](#)
- Karl Marx and Friedrich Engel's [Collected Works](#)

["Women Read the Romance: The Interaction of Text and Content"](#) by Janice A. Radway

["The Human Sciences: History"](#) from *The Order of Things* by Michel Foucault

[Undoing Gender by Judith Butler](#)

- Chapter 2: Gender Regulations

[Critical Race Theory: An Introduction by Richard Delgado, Jean Stefancic and Ernesto Liendo](#)

- Chapter 1: Introduction
- Chapter 2: Hallmark Critical Race Theory Themes

["Toward a Feminist Poetics"](#) by Elaine Showalter

["What Does Queer Theory Teach Us about X?"](#) by Michael Warner and Lauren Berlant

["Ecocriticism: A Study of Environmental Issues in Literature"](#) by Sandip Kumar Mishra

**Course Guidelines**

[Leave this section blank. It is a standard script used for all courses in our department listing the citation style, late policy, DSA and other APUS links, etc.]