



Máster en Estudios Textuales y Culturales en Lengua Inglesa 60700 - Approaches to the Study of the Literary Text in English

Course 2010 - 2011

Curso: 1, Semestre: 1, Créditos: 7.5

Basic information

Teachers

- **Constanza Del Río Alvaro** crio@unizar.es

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Recommendations to attend this course

The main aim of this course is to offer the students an introduction to some of the most relevant approaches to the study of the literary text and to analyse a selection of readings in English from the perspective of the various critical and theoretical perspectives. Given its in-depth character, this aim cannot be achieved in the Degree courses. The students should therefore bear in mind the fact that they are expected to be familiar with basic literary concepts and texts in English before taking this course

This course complements the first-term compulsory course, Issues in Film Studies, in that it offers several theoretical approaches to the critical analysis of literary texts and is aimed at developing the students' critical acumen. It also complements the other first-term compulsory course, "How to Write a Research Article in English" in that it teaches how to apply basic critical tools to the comprehension and analysis of texts, thus contributing to the improvement of the use of English in a critical and analytical context. This subject also procures a theoretical basis for the study of the second-term optional subjects "Main Trends in Contemporary English Fiction", "Main Trends in Contemporary U.S. Fiction" and "Alternatives to the English Canon".

Basic knowledge of the workings of literary narratives and of literary analysis is advisable but not indispensable. Students who have never done literary criticism will be provided with a basic bibliography on request.

Course Schedule and Deadlines

Presentation and discussion of the theoretical approaches included in the programme and application of the main tenets of these approaches to the analysis of various types of literary narrative texts (see course planning). 1.30 hours

Group analysis of a selection of literary texts from the perspective of the critical approaches and methods presented in the theory sessions (see course planning). 1.30 hours

Presentation of 3,000 words essay: last day of the first semester.

Home

Learning outcomes that define this course

The student, in order to pass the course, will have to show her/his competence in the following skills:

- 1:**
The student can use the basic critical tools to understand and analyse literary texts in English.
- 2:**
The student is capable of testing the explanatory power of the most relevant critical approaches to literary texts through their application to a corpus of literary texts in English.
- 3:**
The student is capable of developing skills in the use of English in a scholarly and critical environment.
- 4:**
The student can provide a critical response to literary texts.

Introduction

Brief presentation of the course

This course provides an introduction to some of the most relevant approaches to literary texts and close analysis of a selection of literary texts in English from the various theoretical perspectives presented to the students.

Course programme

1. Myth criticism. Introduction. From myth to literature: The classical concepts of mythos and logos and of poesis and mimesis. 1. a) Natural cults: Creation and fertility myths. The dying god. 1. b) Mystery cults: The Holy Grail and the hero's quest. Mythical time and the structure of the quest. The poet/prophet as shaman. Adaptations of the quest myth: the Bildungsroman.
2. Narrative poetics: The structure of fictional narrative: horizontal and vertical levels of analysis (text, story, fabula) and textual figures (textual author/textual reader; narrator/narratee: focaliser/implied spectator; characters). Temporal aspects (order, duration, frequency) and narrative embedding (the mise en abyme).
3. Literature and ideology: Textual politics. Literature as reflection of reality, interpellation of the subject or articulation of political and socio-cultural values. The classical text, the polyphonic text, the writerly text and the subversive text.
4. Literature and identity: The construction of subject positions through textual strategies. Stereotypes and representation. Gender identities, national identities, ethnic identities.
5. Reading against the grain: The text as symptom. The hermeneutics of suspicion. Deconstructing and psychoanalysing the text.

Bibliographical resources

a) Basic readings

Berstein, Stephen. 1999. "'The Question Is the Story Itself': Postmodernism and Intertextuality in Auster's *New York Trilogy*." *Detecting Texts: the Metaphysical Detective Story from Poe to Postmodernism*. P. Merivale and S.E. Sweeny, eds. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P. 134-153.

Bronfen, Elisabeth, 1992. "The Lady is a Portrait". *Over her Dead Body: death, femininity and the aesthetic*. Manchester UP. 110-140.

Felman, Soshana. 1998. "The Scene of Writing: Purloined letters". *The Turn of the Screw and What Maisie Knew*. Contemporary Critical Essays. N. Cornwell and M. Malone, eds. Houndmills and New York: MacMillan/St. Martin's. 42-53.

Freud, Sigmund. 1985. "The Uncanny". *Art and Literature*. Vol 14. Penguin Freud Library. London: Penguin.

- Horner Avril and S. Zlosnik. 2000. 'Daphne du Maurier and Gothic signatures: Rebecca as vamp(ire)' in Avril Horner and Angela Keane, eds. *Body Matters: Feminism, Textuality, Corporeality* Manchester: Manchester UP 209-222.
- Hattenhauer, Darryl. 2003. "Introduction: Sherley Jackson and Proto-Postmodernism." *Shirley Jackson's American Gothic*. 15-27. State University of New York P. Kubitschek, Missy Dehn. 1998. "Beloved". In *Toni Morrison*. Westport: Greenwood P: 115-138.
- Leverenz, David. 2001. "Spanking the Master: Mind-Body Crossings in Poe's Sensationalism. In *A Historical Guide to Edgar Allan Poe*. J. Gerald Kennedy, ed. Oxford: Oxford UP. 95-128.
- Merivale, Patricia. 1999. "Gumshoe Gothics: Poe's 'The Man of the Crowd' and his Followers". *Detecting Texts: the Metaphysical Detective Story from Poe to Postmodernism*. P. Merivale and S.E. Sweeny, eds. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P. 101-116.
- Morrison, Toni and D.K. Taylor-Guthrie. 1994. *Conversations with Toni Morrison*. UP of Mississippi.
- Nadal, Marita. 2004. "Variations on the Grotesque: from Poe's 'The Black Cat' to Oates's 'The White Cat' ". *Mississippi Quarterly*. Vol. LVII. No. 3. 455-471.
- Nealon, Jeffrey T. 1999. "Work of the Detective, Work of the Writer: Auster's *City of Glass*". *Detecting Texts: the Metaphysical Detective Story from Poe to Postmodernism*. P. Merivale and S.E. Sweeny, eds. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P. 117- 133.
- Punter, David. 2006. "Anti-canon theory". *Literary Theory and Criticism*. Patricia Waugh, ed. Oxford and New York: Oxford UP. 519-529.
- Waugh, Patricia. 2006. "Value: criticism, canons, and evaluation". *Literary Theory and Criticism*. Patricia Waugh, ed. Oxford and New York: Oxford UP. 70-81. Werner, James V. "The physiognomy of the Flaneur". *American Flaneur. The Cosmic Physiognomy of Edgar Allan Poe*. New York and London: Routledge. 1-27.

b) Supplementary readings

- Becker, Susanne. 1999. *Gothic Forms of Feminine Fictions*. Manchester: Manchester UP. Briggs, Julia. 2001. "The Ghost Story". In *A Companion to the Gothic*. D. Punter, ed. 122-131. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Byron, Glennis. 2001. "Gothic in the 1890s". In *A Companion to the Gothic*. D. Punter, ed. 132-142.
- Eagleton, Mary, ed. 1996. *Feminist Literary Theory. A Reader*. Blackwell.
- Elmer, Jonathan. 1995. "Terminate or Liquidate? Poe, Sensationalism and the Sentimental Tradition". In *The American Face of Edgar Allan Poe*. S. Rosenheim and S. Rachman, eds. Baltimore: John Hopkins UP. 91-120.
- Loeb, Monica. 2002. *Literary Marriages*. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Lovecraft, H.P. 1973. *Supernatural Horror in Literature*. New York: Dover.
- Lustig, T.J. 1994. "The Turn of the Screw". *Henry James and the Ghostly*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP. 105-189.
- Lloyd-Smith, Allan. 1992. 'The Phantoms of Drood and Rebecca: The Uncanny Re-encountered through Abraham and Torok's Cryptonymy', *Poetics Today* 13:2. 285-308.
- McHale, Brian, 1987. *Postmodernist Fiction* New York and London: Methuen.
- Morrison, Toni. 1990. "The Site of Memory". *Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*. New York: The New Museum of Contemporary Art. 299-305.
- Morrison, Toni. 1993 (1992). *Playing in the Dark. Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. London: Picador
- Murphy, Bernice. 2005. *Shirley Jackson: Essays on the Literary Legacy*. Jefferson and London: McFarland.
- Nadal, Marita. 1996. " 'The Death of a Beautiful Woman Is, Unquestionably, the Most Poetical Topic in the World': Poetic and Parodic Treatment of Women in Poe's Tales". *Gender, Ideology essays on theory, fiction and film*. Eds. C. Cornut-Gentile and J.A. García Landa. Amsterdam/Atlanta: Rodopi. 151-163.
- Nadal, Marita. 2003. "Poe's American Gothic, or the Gap between Reference and Signification". *Nor Shall Diamond Die*:

American Studies in Honor of Javier Coy. Carme Manuel and P. Scott Derrick, eds. Universidad de Valencia: Dpt. Filología Inglesa y Alemana. 355-364.

Oates, Joyce Carol. 1994. "Afterword: Reflections on the Grotesque". *Haunted: Tales of the Grotesque*. New York: Plume. 303-307.

———. 1999. "The Aesthetics of Fear". *Where I've Been, and Where I'm Going*. New York: Plume. 26-35.

Phelan, James. 1998. "Sethe's Choice: Beloved and the Ethics of Reading". *Style* 32: 2. 318-333.

Reynolds, David S. 1988. "Public Poison: Sensationalism and Sexuality". *Beneath the American Renaissance. The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville*. Cambridge and London: Harvard UP. 167-225

Royle, Nicholas. 2003. *The Uncanny*. Manchester: Manchester UP.

Spooner, Catherine. 2004. "Cosmo-Gothic: the double and the single woman" *Fashioning Gothic Bodies*. Manchester: Manchester UP. 128-158.

Varvogli, Alik. 2001. "Legacies". *The World that is the Book: Paul Auster's Fiction*. Liverpool: Liverpool UP. 21-68.

Williams, Linda Ruth. 1995. *Psychoanalysis and the Literary Subject*. London: E. Arnold.

E-learning platform

<http://moodle.unizar.es/>

Competences

General aims of the course

The expected results of the course respond to the following general aims

The main aim of this subject is to provide students with an introduction to some of the most relevant approaches to literary texts and to test their explanatory power through the close analysis of a selection of literary texts in English from the various theoretical perspectives presented. The specific aims of this subject are the following:

- to provide the students with basic critical tools to understand and analyse literary texts in English.
- to familiarise the students with the most relevant critical approaches to literary texts.
- to test the explanatory power of these approaches through their application to a corpus of literary texts in English.
- to improve the students' skills in the use of English in a scholarly and critical environment.
- to reinforce the students' critical response to literary texts.

Context/Importance of the course for the master degree

This subject is the compulsory component of the Literary Studies itinerary and is therefore linked with the three optional courses related to Literary Studies: "Main Trends in Contemporary British Fiction", "Main Trends in Contemporary US Fiction" and "Alternatives to the English Canon".

After completing the course, the student will be competent in the following skills:

- 1:** Developing and applying original ideas in a professional as well as in a research context.
- 2:** Understanding and applying acquired knowledge to solve problems related to professional and social contexts as well as to broader multidisciplinary contexts.

- 3:** Being able to interrelate knowledge from different subjects, handle complex information, apply the proper methodology and frameworks, express informed critical views and provide conclusions in the form of written essays and oral presentations, in clear and appropriate English, aimed at both specialised and non-specialised audiences.
- 4:** After acquiring the required critical and methodological skills, students are expected to possess the ability to carry out a piece of research in an autonomous way.

Relevance of the skills acquired in the course

The proposed aims of this course are crucial to provide students with a sound theoretical and methodological background that will allow them to conduct research in English successfully. Similarly, the specific aims of this subject are essential skills to carry out the research process (i.e. using critical tools for understanding and analysing literary texts in English, applying critical approaches to a corpus of literary texts and developing a critical response to these texts).

The ability to develop and apply original ideas in a professional as well as in a research context is a fundamental skill to conduct successful research in the field of English studies. The same applies to the ability to interrelate knowledge from different subjects, handle complex information, apply the proper methodology and frameworks, express a critical view and provide conclusions in both written essays and oral presentations, in clear and appropriate English, aimed at both specialised and non-specialised audiences, and the ability to conduct work (research) in an autonomous way.

Evaluation

Assessment tasks

The student will prove that he/she has achieved the expected learning results by means of the following assessment tasks:

- 1:** Throughout the course, students will be given a list of **compulsory and recommended readings** for analysis and discussion in the practical sessions. Students may also be required to write a number of short essays as a way to monitor their progress. The aim of the compulsory and recommended readings in the course syllabus, is to provide students with the critical tools they will be expected to use in the analysis of various types of literary narrative texts.

The textual analysis and the critical discussion of the readings will show that the students have achieved learning objectives 1, 2 and 3. These activities will be assessed following the assessment criteria and the established level of exigency. The activities will be graded from 0 to 10 and represent 10% of the final grade of the student in this subject.

The analysis and discussion of textual models should follow the “Guidelines for the analysis and discussion of textual models”.

- 1:** Before the end of the course, students will also be required to write a 3,000 word essay in correct academic English on a specific aspect of the course contents, on a topic previously agreed with one of the teachers. In this essay the students are expected to assimilate the critical approaches to literary texts presented by the teachers and to prove their ability to use those approaches in the analysis of specific texts. The textual analysis and critical discussion of the readings will credit students’ achievement of learning objectives # 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. This essay will be graded from 0 to 10 and this grade represents 90% of the final score of the student in this subject. A pass mark in this essay is a sine qua non condition to pass the subject.

This final essay should follow the “Guidelines for preparing the essay”.

Reference documents

Guidelines for preparing the essay and participating in seminars

The students may find it useful to follow the following guidelines:

"Documento de referencia para la elaboración del ensayo"/"Guidelines for writing the essay"

1. Define appropriate key concepts and apply them appropriately to the field of research.
2. Prepare the literature review (i.e. what other scholars have stated about the topic of the essay, or about related topics).
Make sure that the literature review is sufficient in scope and relevant regarding the topic under investigation.
3. Define a thesis statement / Define the research questions.
4. State and justify the theoretical framework.
5. Define clearly the analytical categories (where appropriate, indicating overlapping or problematisation of those categories).
6. Describe the analytical methodology used for the study of the topic of the essay.
7. Provide an effective argument (factual evidence, exemplification, illustration, citations, etc.) in order to make convincing claims.
8. State a conclusion in accordance with your arguments and relate it to a wider context.
9. Show independence in reading and researching, originality and critical examination.
10. Follow the information and style conventions of the subdisciplinary field (literature, film studies, cultural studies or linguistics).

"Documento de referencia para el desarrollo de los seminarios teóricos y analíticos"/"Guidelines for the development of theoretical and analytical seminars"

1. The theoretical part of the seminar, imparted by the teacher, will provide an active learning environment in which students can develop the ability to read/view/analyze critically and conceptually, and therefore to speak and write in the classroom.
2. The seminar will provide general introductions to theoretical frameworks or an application of a given research methodology/framework to a selection of texts/films.
3. Students should bring to the seminar a draft or notes on the text or film under analysis and participate actively in the classroom discussion.
4. Questions can be posed to improve the quality of discussion.
5. Assignment of formal presentations and critical comment may also be requested for stimulating discussion.

(Adapted from www.oid.ucla.edu/students/cutf/cutfguidelines.doc)

Activities and resources

Course methodology

The learning process that has been designed for this course is based on the following activities:

This course has been specifically designed to train researchers in literary criticism and theory in the field of English Literature. For this reason, the proposed activities (the analysis of literary texts by means of critical tools and the comments on, presentation of, and reflections on these analyses from various theoretical perspectives) are aimed at the application of the fundamental principles of the most relevant critical and theoretical approaches to the analysis of various sorts of representative literary texts in English.

The course is organized in three stages: 1. Learning of the critical approaches and analytical tools; 2. Application of the learnt concepts through the analysis and collective discussion of the selected texts in English; and 3. Writing of an individual critical essay, applying the theoretical approaches and methods learnt, as well as the specific tools employed for the development of the selected topic of research.

Outline of the Programme

The programme offered to the students to help them achieve the learning results includes the following activities :

1:

Seminars on “Approaches to the literary texts” 0.4 credits. Onsite.

Theoretical and analytical seminars aimed at introducing the main theoretical approaches and critical techniques for the analysis of literary texts in English. The seminar will also revise the key concepts of literature studies in English.

These seminars will be conducted following the “guidelines for the development of theoretical and analytical seminars”

2:

Tasks/activities. 3 credits. Onsite.

Classroom activities will provide students with models for textual and critical analysis. In these tasks students will discuss both individually and in group the textual and critical analyses of a selection of literary texts. The aim of the tasks/activities is to learn how to use/apply the critical and textual analytical tools and theoretical approaches dealt with in the course.

These activities will be conducted following the “guidelines for the analysis and discussion of compulsory and recommended readings”.

3:

Individual and group tasks. 5.8 credits. Onsite.

Analysis of a selection of literary texts, which will be later discussed in class from the perspective of the theoretical frameworks proposed.

These activities will be conducted following the “guidelines for activities on the analysis and discussion of compulsory and recommended readings”.

4:

Tutorial activities. 0.6 credits. Onsite and online.

Assessment tasks/activities and self-assessment of classroom work. 0.2 credits.

These activities will be conducted following the “guidelines for activities on the analysis and discussion of compulsory and recommended readings”.

5:

Assessment tasks/activities and self-assessment of classroom work. 0.2 credits. Offsite.

These activities will be conducted following the “Guidelines for preparing the essay”.

Course planning

Calendar of actual sessions and presentation of works

Prof. Susana Onega Jaén

Session 1-session 8: These sessions will be devoted to the approaches of myth criticism and narrative poetics. Coinciding with these sessions, classroom activities will involve discussion of these theoretical approaches and application of the main tenets of these approaches to the analysis of various types of literary narrative texts.

The individual assignments will be presented in sessions 3-4 (Myth Criticism) and 7-8 (Narrative Poetics)

Dr Constanza del Río

Session 9-session 20: These sessions will be devoted to the approaches of textual politics, identity politics (feminism, postfeminism and postcolonialism) and hermeneutics of suspicion (deconstruction and psychoanalysis). Coinciding with these sessions, classroom activities will involve discussion of these theoretical approaches and application of the main tenets of these approaches to the analysis of various types of literary narrative texts.

The individual assignments will be presented in sessions 11-12 (Literature and Ideology 1), 15-16 (Literature and Ideology 2) and 19-20 (Reading against the Grain).

Bibliographic references of the recommended readings