

Carleton University
Fall 2023/Winter 2024 Preliminary Course Outline
Department of English

ENGL 3106A: Theories and Critical Practices

Prerequisites: third year standing or permission of the department

Monday 2:35-5:25pm

Format: In-person, not suitable for online students

Instructor: Brian Johnson

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*****This is a preliminary syllabus only—texts and assignments are subject to change.
A complete version will be available closer to the start of the term.*****

This intensive two-term course has a number of aims: (1) to provide a general introduction to the history of literary studies; (2) to familiarize students with a range of critical practices; (3) to explore how “literature” has been theorized as an object of study; (4) to help students deepen their ability to read and respond to both theory and literary criticism; (5) to explore how literary and cultural critics employ and engage with theory in their analyses of texts; (6) to provide students with opportunities to practice engaging meaningfully with theory and criticism in their own critical work; (7) to encourage reflection on the value of the humanities and the reasons we read and analyze literature and popular fiction. To these ends, the first term explores structuralist, narratological, deconstructive, and psychoanalytic approaches to literary study. The second term examines ethical, Marxist, postcolonial, and ecocritical approaches to literary and cultural studies, paying particular attention to the intersection of these approaches with psychoanalysis and with each other. A diverse selection of short stories, novels, poetry, and film will accompany and illuminate our reading of theory and criticism.

Method of Evaluation

Students are expected to attend class in person and participate regularly. In addition to an attendance/participation grade (20%), evaluation will consist of formal writing assignments in both fall and winter (30%), a group presentation on an assigned secondary source (10%), and in-person exams at the end of each term (40%).

Text Books (provisional)

Peter Barry, *Beginning Theory*, 4th Ed. (Manchester)

Mathew R. Martin, *Psychoanalysis and Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Routledge) [available to borrow as library ebook]

Derek Attridge, *The Singularity of Literature* (Routledge) [available to borrow as library ebook]
Barbara Foley, *Marxist Literary Criticism Today* (Pluto) [available to borrow as library ebook]
John Grafton, *Great Ghost Stories* (Dover)
M. R. James, *Collected Ghost Stories* (Oxford)
Claude McKay, *Selected Poems* (Dover)
Virginia Woolf, *Jacob's Room* (Norton Critical Edition)
Joseph Conrad, *Lord Jim* (Norton Critical Edition)
R. K. Narayan, *The Guide* (Penguin)