

**Carleton University
Fall 2016
Department of English**

ENGL 3105A: *History of Literary Theory*

*Precludes additional credit for ENGL 3000, and ENGL 3001 (no longer offered)
Prerequisite(s): 1.0 credit in ENGL at the 1000 level and third-year standing*

Wednesday/Friday: 8:35 - 9:55 a.m.
Location: 313SA
Please confirm location on Carleton Central

Instructor: Prof Janne Cleveland
Email: *janne.cleveland@carleton.ca*
Office: 1913 DT
Phone:
Office Hours: TBD

Course Outline:

What is literary theory, and what might a history of it look like? Further, how can an exploration of this history benefit us as we read contemporary literature? Literary theory, broadly defined, presents a set of analytic tools for interpreting the narratives that enable us to better understand the worlds we inhabit, worlds that can produce many challenges through which we must navigate in our daily lives. Drawing upon philosophy, sociology, cultural studies, and political theory, literary theory (or theories) help us to trace the historical trajectory of our struggles to define our humanity. This course might be more accurately titled *The Evolution of Literary Theory*, and as such the aim of it is to connect a selection of 21st century literature with theoretical essays across history, prior to the 20th century. We will explore what philosophers, and political and social theorists from the Greeks to the 19th century have to say about ideas like nation, war, religion, belonging, and community that continue to preoccupy the human imagination. In effect, we will explore how the ideas thinkers of past and ancient periods continue to be relevant to understanding and interpreting the narratives of our own contemporary moment.

Course Objectives:

1. To provide the skills for critical analysis through reading literatures and theory.
2. To create awareness of the historical trajectory of the development of ideas and ideologies embedded in literature.
3. To develop writing skills necessary to adequately express a critical viewpoint.

4. To understand the role of literature in negotiating the challenges of what it means to be human in the 21st century.

Required Reading:

Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close (2005), Jonathan Safran Foer
What We All Long For (2005) Dionne Brand
All My Puny Sorrows (2014) Miriam Toews
Half a Yellow Sun (2006) Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
Fifteen Dogs (2015) André Alexis
The Life of Pi (2001) Yann Martel

Course Pack of theoretical essays

All materials will be available from **Haven Books** (at Sunnyside & Seneca)

Evaluation:

Attendance/Participation 10%

It is important to attend all classes, prepared to discuss materials assigned. Students must read the assigned materials prior to class in order to gain the most benefit. This is a class where students' ideas are valued, and class is a forum in which to explore and expand our perspectives.

Portfolio Responses 30%

Students will be required to submit responses to 3 out of the 6 novels across the term on cuPortfolio, on **October 7th**, **November 9th**, and **December 7th** respectively. Prompt questions will be provided. These exercises require students to engage deeply with ideas presented in the novels, and provide a written response. While there is an expectation to present your ideas in formal writing, no research is required. You may choose to include your thoughts on any of the essays studied during the term in relation to the novels you choose to consider in these responses. **NOTE:** These responses may become the basis for developing your final research paper, so keep this in mind when engaging with this exercise.

Annotated Bibliography with Thesis 30% **Due November 4 (5 - 7 double-spaced pages)**

This assignment is the foundation of your final paper. From the list of essay topics provided, using **5 - 7 secondary scholarly sources**, you will present a proposal for your final research paper that includes a thesis statement (argument), and a list of citations that you will use as evidence to support your argument. Each citation will be properly annotated in **MLA format***, and will contain a **brief** summary of each article used (no more than 2 sentences), and a careful explanation of how each resource supports your position,

along with how you will use it in your paper. We will go over how to do an annotated bibliography in class, but here is also a very good resource to help you:

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/614/1/>
<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

Research Paper 30%
Due November 30th (8 - 10 double-spaced pages, in proper MLA format)

This is a formal writing assignment. Using feedback from the thesis/outline assignment, students will present a polished, carefully crafted final paper of **8 – 10** pages (excluding Works Cited page) in **MLA format** with a coherent, arguable thesis, supported by evidence from the text and scholarly sources, a conclusion that responds to and resolves the argument. The most important aspect of your paper is **critical analysis**; in other words, not just what happens in the novel you are examining, but most importantly, why. Keep in mind that this research presents your literary interpretation of the novel, so while there may be anthropological/psychological (or other) elements to be considered, you will be expected to maintain a literary focus that includes a discussion of the historical/philosophical ideas embedded in the narrative. As well, elements of writing such as rich vocabulary, proper use of citation style, correct punctuation and grammar, and sentence structure (syntax) will be taken into account. Further, structural elements, such as the logical progression of ideas that form the basis of your argument, will be expected. This assignment is your opportunity to demonstrate what you have learned in the course. Don't be afraid to demonstrate your excitement about your discoveries!

Choose **one** of the novels we will read this term to explore in detail. You **must** include at least **two** examples of the excerpted essays studied among your research sources to construct a careful argument (thesis), which will be considered at depth. You may choose to use any of the excerpted essays to make connection the novel you choose, not necessarily just those studied in conjunction with the reading schedule. Your thesis should focus on **one** narrowly defined argument that will be developed throughout your paper. You may choose one of the following topics, but you are also encouraged to develop your own topic relative to your interests in the novel you choose to examine.

- 1) Explore the themes of civil war and nation building in *Half of a Yellow Sun* through an examination of the history of colonialism in Nigeria.
- 2) Construct an argument that answers what is referred to in *What We All Long For*. You should consider who the 'we' is that is referenced, as well as what exactly is longed for in the novel.
- 3) Consider how the notion of 'democracy' is interrogated in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*. For example, what does the main character, Oscar, discover about this concept through his experiences of meeting all the people he seeks throughout the narrative?

4) Comment on how the topic of death is explored in *Fifteen Dogs*. You may wish to compare the attitudes of Atticus and Prince in relation to their approach to having consciousness of the inevitability of death.

5) Discuss how the attitude of the ancient Greeks (especially Plato) toward suicide informs the contemporary moral debate on this topic that emerges in *All My Puny Sorrows*.

6) In an interview in 2013, Yann Martel notes that his novel, *The Life of Pi*, can be understood in the following way: "Life is a story... You can choose your story... A story with God is the better story." Considering this idea of 'faith', and drawing upon Medievalist notions of what faith entails, prepare a commentary on the necessity of belief that the novel seems to suggest.

Late Policy: Assignments must be submitted online through cuLearn on the due date by the beginning of class to receive full marks. There will be **no extensions** granted unless discussed prior to the due date with the instructor. In the case where illness prevents a student from submitting an assignment on time, a doctor's note will be accepted. All other late assignments will be penalized **1 mark** per day up to seven days, including weekends. No assignments will be accepted if they are more than 7 days late, with the exception of those stated above. **NOTE: It is your responsibility to insure that all assignments are submitted on time. Keep a backup copy that can be submitted upon request in the event of a lost or misplaced assignment.**

All assignments will be submitted electronically on cuLearn

NOTE: All assignments must be completed in order to be eligible to pass the course.

Failure to hand in all assignments may result in a grade of "F".

REQUEST FOR ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION:

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

Pregnancy obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details see the [Student Guide](#).

Religious obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details see the [Student Guide](#).

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

(ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally scheduled exam (if applicable).

Plagiarism

The University Senate defines plagiarism as “*presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own*”. This can include:

- Reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source
- Using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgement in any academic assignment
- Failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s works and/or failing to use quotation marks

Plagiarism is a serious offence. When an instructor suspects plagiarism the Associate Deans of the Faculty conduct a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student. Penalties can include a final grade of “F”, which will appear on the student’s transcript. The Academic Integrity Policy can be accessed at <http://www2.carleton.ca/studentaffairs/academic-integrity>.

Reading Schedule*

Week 1 September 7/9

Introduction: Why a *history* of literary theory? Linking past and present

Week 2 September 14/16

Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close

Week 3 September 21/23

from *The Social Contract* (Jean-Jacques Rousseau); from *Democracy in America* (Alexis de Tocqueville)

Week 4 September 28/30

What We All Long For

Week 5 October 5/7

from *The Art of War* (Sun Tzu); from *The Wealth of Nations* (Smith)

***First portfolio due October 7th**

Week 6 October 12/14

All My Puny Sorrows

Week 7 October 19/21

from *Consolation of Philosophy* (Boethius); from *Phaedo* (Plato)

Week 8 October 26/28

Fall Reading Week: no class

Week 9 November 2/4

Half of a Yellow Sun

***Annotated Bibliography due November 4th**

Week 10 November 9/11

from *Resistance to Civil Government* (Thoreau); from *The Prince* (Machiavelli)

***Second portfolio due November 9th**

Week 11 November 16/18

Fifteen Dogs

Week 12 November 23/25

from *Allegory of the Cave* (Plato); from *The German Ideology* (Marx)

Week 13 November 30/December 2

Life of Pi

***Research paper due November 30th**

Week 14 December 7

from *Leviathan* (Hobbes);
from *City of God* (St. Augustine)
***Final portfolio due December
7th**

***May be subject to change. Please check cuLearn regularly for announcements**