

English 4356  
Literary Criticism and Theory II  
Fall, 2009

Dr. Luanne Frank  
English Dept (203 Carlisle: 817- 272-2692)  
Office: 522 Carlisle. Hrs. TTh 8:30-& appt.

### TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

August	25	Hume
	27	Burke
September	01	Paper #1 (Burke)
	03	Kant
	08	Kant
	10	Kant
	15	Paper #2 (Kant)
	17	Hegel
	22	Hegel
	24	Hegel
October	29	Paper #3 (Hegel)
	01	Gautier
	06	Marx
	08	Marx
	13	Marx
	15	Heidegger
	20	Paper #4 (Marx)
	22	[Gadamer] Palmer <i>Hermeneutics</i> 162-171, 181-84, 194-217, 223-227.
	27	[Gadamer] Palmer
	29	[Gadamer] Palmer
November	03	Paper #5 (Heidegger, [Gadamer] Palmer)
	05	Foucault <i>The Order of Things</i>
	10	Foucault
	12	Foucault
	17	Paper # 6 (Foucault)
	19	Bourdieu
December	24	Paper #7 (Bourdieu)
	26	Tompkins, Christian
	01	Lentricchia, Eagleton
	03	Paper #8 (Choice)

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### THUMBNAIL COURSE DESCRIPTION

#### “The Theory Behind the Theory.”

The present course is the second half of a required two-semester introduction to the sector of literary studies falling under the rubric of criticism and theory. This part of the field became increasingly important in the twentieth century, to the point that, from being but perfunctorily acknowledged and even scorned since it seemed to displace literature itself as the chief focus of literary interest, it became required, first of graduate students only, then of undergraduates--initially in the form of a single course, then in the form of two.

The first half of the present version of the two-semester requirement moved relatively chronologically, focusing on a selection of the best-known of the methodologies (either in theory or at work) that had largely defined literary criticism at the very end of the nineteenth and through the first two-thirds to three-fourths of the twentieth century, such as impressionism at work, Freudian psychoanalysis as theory, mythopoeic (Jungian psychoanalytic) criticism as theory, explication of the text at work, Marxist theory at work, history of ideas in the form of theory, and phenomenology at work, to name a few, purposely omitting New Criticism, semiotics, and structuralism as such, and, of course, poststructuralism as such (with the exception of the phenomenological example), since it, beginning to blossom in the United States only in 1968, characterizes the last quarter of the twentieth century (though its roots go much farther back).

The present half of the requirement moves more strictly chronologically and, rather than view some methodologies in their theoretical form and some at work, will focus all but exclusively on what one might best call “the theories behind the theories,” or the thinking that informs a wide range of earlier and contemporary literary-critical practice. The theory behind the theory is almost inevitably philosophy, as the anthology for the course emphasizes with its inclusion of large-sized examples of the thinkers whose work is key to different streams of what comes after them. Hume, for example, will, for our purposes at least, inaugurate a certain skepticism that will startle Kant and weave its way along underneath idealism to emerge in poststructuralism in the twentieth century; Burke will influence Kant and everyone thereafter who is interested in the beautiful as it relates to the sublime; Kant will enable phenomenology (Husserl) and thus the New Criticism, structuralism, and semiotics; Hegel (leaning on Herder) will inspire all later historicist thinkers whether spiritually or materially inclined, the most influential of them being Marx, as Marx will not fail to influence everyone after him concerned with the political meaning of literature, and so on down the line. Heidegger will enable Foucault, and Foucault everyone after him who takes the time to read him. So numerous are the influences and interconnections between and among the theorists named and others that a merely linear account of their relations to one another inevitably falls short of adequacy. A subway routing chart, showing different lines connecting to different stations is somewhat more helpful, but only somewhat. We will be leaving out some names here that are very large, perhaps the most notable being Nietzsche, who makes the Heidegger of *Being and Time* and much else in Heidegger possible, as he does volumes of Foucault, and is readily apprehendable without assistance, and Derrida, whose thought becomes apprehendable only after more preparatory reading in the thinkers who make *him* possible than we do here.

It is essential, if the student of literature does not read whole volumes of these thinkers, and live inside them, that she or he be closely familiar at the very least, with key aspects of certain of their key texts (living inside *them*), to the extent that the time at our disposal permits. This is what we aim at in this course.

The fact, though, that the focus here is on theory, and theory of theory, is not the same as to say that there are not those readers of literature, some of them prominent, who object to the direction literary studies have taken in emphasizing theory over the literary work of art. We shall read the most prominent and influential of these midway through the course, and several more at course's end.

The way learning will take place in the course (assuming it will!) will be for us to read the assigned theorist at home before the day his or her name appears on the syllabus, then read as much as possible of the assigned material together in class, clarifying as much of it as possible, then summarize it briefly in our own words, at home, and use it to understand, in a one-page paper to be read aloud, an aspect of a literary work to which it is applicable.

**Text:** *Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. Vincent Leitch. New York: W.W. Norton, 2001.