

ENGL 5300-001

Tim Morris

Theory & Practice Fall 2009

1800-2100 Wednesday 310 Preston Hall

office hours: 206 Carlisle Hall 0900-1200 weekdays

tmorris at uta dot edu

office phone: 817.272.2739

office mailbox 203 Carlisle Hall

mailing address Box 19035, UTA 76019

to the schedule of readings and assignments

UTA Libraries' **Course Guide to ENGL 5300** by Rafia Mirza

prerequisites: good standing in MA or PhD program

required texts: How to Talk About Books You Haven't Read (Bayard, trans. Mehlman), The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism (Leitch et al.)

syllabus: This syllabus may be updated as the semester goes on. I may post updated versions that indicate readings, discussion plans, and reference materials. However, every component of your grade is shown here at the beginning. Please refer to the date and time of printing (at the bottom of each page) to see when the version you are holding was printed. For continuous updates look on line at

<http://www.uta.edu/english/tim/courses/5300f09/5300main.html>

I don't want theory. I just want facts. (former student in 5300)

course description: This course introduces beginning graduate students to how knowledge is produced in the discipline of English.

course objectives: Students who successfully complete this course will have some exposure to the institutional and intellectual systems that produce and constitute knowledge in English departments. They will have read some key texts in the theory that informs contemporary scholarship in English, and considered

how that theory might inform their own scholarly writing.

I don't have to practice! I'm real good! (Art Carney, as Ed Norton)

assignments:

grading: The grading system is a little odd, but far from arbitrary, so read (listen) carefully.

You must complete all 13 practical assignments successfully in order to pass the course. If you do not complete all 13, your course grade will be no higher than C. Practical assignments will not be graded in any way.

You must also complete all theoretical assignments successfully in order to pass the course. If you do not complete all 13, your course grade will be no higher than C.

The 13 theoretical assignments will each receive a number grade indicating how strong your work is relative to the number of students who are in the class. The lower the number, the better. (For example, if there are eight students enrolled, 5/8 means that there are four stronger papers in that set and three weaker.)

At the end of the semester, I will sum all of the ranks you get on individual theoretical papers. Each person will receive a class rank relative to the group, with the lowest sum being best in the ranking, plus of course a letter grade for the course. No person will receive a letter grade better than that of someone with a stronger class rank.

You may opt to have your ranking on individual papers concealed.

academic dishonesty policy: It is the philosophy of The University of Texas at Arlington that academic dishonesty is a completely unacceptable mode of conduct and will not be tolerated in any form. All persons involved in academic dishonesty will be disciplined in accordance with University regulations and procedures. Discipline may include suspension or expulsion from the University. "Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts." [Regents' Rules and Regulations, Part One, Chapter Vi, Section 3, Subsection 3.2, Subdivision 3.22]

disability policy: The University of Texas at Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of federal equal opportunity legislation; reference Public Law 93112--The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended. With the passage of new federal legislation entitled Americans with Disabilities Act - (ADA), pursuant to section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, there is renewed focus on providing this population with the same opportunities enjoyed by all citizens. As a faculty member, I am required by law to provide "reasonable accommodation" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the

basis of that disability. Student responsibility primarily rests with informing faculty at the beginning of the semester and in providing authorized documentation through designated administrative channels.

student success: The University of Texas at Arlington supports a variety of student success programs to help you connect with the University and achieve academic success. They include learning assistance, developmental education, advising and mentoring, admission and transition, and federally funded programs. Students requiring assistance academically, personally, or socially should contact the Office of Student Success Programs at 817-272-6107 for more information and appropriate referrals.

In theory there is no difference between theory and practice. In practice there is.
(Yogi Berra)

Note on central texts: each student will choose a "kit" of central texts to use as a touchstone for assignments. This kit of central texts must include: (1) a highly-canonical lyric poem; (2) a highly-canonical novel.

Note on rubrics: I cannot say this loudly enough. The rubrics below are for convenience in grouping, and provide a heuristic for juxtaposing provocative combinations of theoretical texts. They are NOT, NOT, NOT shorthand for "schools" or "isms." They are not arranged chronologically. They are not conventional. There is absolutely no substitute for or shortcut past reading particular texts, whether "primary" or "secondary." Knowing a sound-bite to attach to an author's name will not help. Knowing what "ism" someone represents will not help. You are about to read tiny excerpts from the most prolific and influential theorists of Western criticism, each of them from about 5 to 20 pages long. That is *nothing*. These tiny excerpts do not stand for entire schools of thought, even for their own individual authors, even for the single books they come from. The point in reading each of these excerpts is *to read the excerpt itself* and let *its actual words* work on the way you think about texts.

Note on format: **Every paper you submit** must be in MLA style, or I will return it to you unread and it will drop to the bottom of that week's rankings. All papers must include citations of sources used.

Une œuvre où il y a des théories est comme un objet sur lequel on laisse la marque du prix. (Marcel Proust)

schedule of assignments and readings:

Note: All page numbers in parentheses are from Leitch, Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism.

26 August: Syllabus, introductions

2 September: Bayard, *How to Talk About Books You Haven't Read*. **Theoretical Assignment 1:** Write a 3-5 page paper reflecting on and reacting to *How to Talk About Books You Haven't Read*. In particular, reflect on how the dynamics of the various virtual "books" and "libraries" that Bayard adduces have worked out in your own reading and academic experiences. **Practical Assignment 1:** You will be assigned an American state. Using the World Wide Web, "visit" three English departments in that state: the most prestigious research university offering a PhD in English (whether public or private), a comprehensive state university that offers at least the MA in English, and a small liberal arts college that offers the BA in English (or possibly in some "umbrella" department like Language and Literature). Write briefly on the similarities and differences among these three English departments, in terms of faculty numbers and areas of interest, curriculum, degree program types and structures.

9 September: Aristotle, *Poetics* (90-117) and excerpts from *Rhetoric* (117-121) **Theoretical Assignment 2:** Pick a text from your kit. Is the text poetic or rhetorical? Or both? In what ways does it make sense to combine or to separate the two kinds of texts? Employ Aristotle to help address this question. For the first hour tonight (6-7pm) we will meet in B2O Library with English Librarian Rafia Mirza. **Practical Assignment 2:** Find at least three CVs of faculty members in English -- perhaps from the websites you visited in Practical 1, perhaps from surfing or Googling. Try to find a range of research-oriented, fully-detailed CVs from faculty in different stages of their careers. Write briefly on what English faculty do, how their careers move and advance, what kinds of work counts as professional activity for them.

16 September: **Rubric: The Text:** Poe, "Philosophy of Composition" (742-750); Brooks, "Heresy of Paraphrase" (1353-1366); Wimsatt & Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy" (1374-1387); Barthes, "From Work to Text" (1470-1476) **Theoretical Assignment 3:** And this will be the same for the next eleven assignments. Write a brief exploratory essay, anywhere from four substantial paragraphs to four pages long, that considers how *each of* tonight's readings can be used to investigate the relevant text from your kit, or the scholarship on that text, or indeed how the theoretical reading has caused you to re-evaluate what you've written in previous Theoretical Assignments. For tonight, look at your LYRIC POEM. **Practical Assignment 3:** Locate at least three full-text theses or dissertations (from American universities) on one of your central texts (or a closely related subject): at least one must be an MA thesis and at least one must be a dissertation. Write briefly on the formal features, content, and rhetorical stance of the three items.

23 September: **Rubric: The Author:** Emerson, "The Poet" (724-739); Wilde, "Critic as Artist" (900-913); Eliot, "Tradition & the Individual Talent" (1092-1098); Foucault, "What Is an Author?" (1622-1636) **Theoretical Assignment 4:** LYRIC POEM **Practical Assignment 4:** Locate a recent conference program for an academic meeting on one of your central texts, or its author or period or genre, or some related subject. (Most such programs have only titles of papers;

some include abstracts.) Write briefly on how the conference produces and organizes knowledge. What kind of people present papers at these conferences? What kind of organization sponsors them?

30 September: **Rubric: The Linguistic Turn:** Saussure (960-977); Jakobson, "Metaphor / Metonym" (1265-1269); de Man, "Semiology & Rhetoric" (1514-1527); Derrida, "The Exorbitant" (1824-1830) **Theoretical Assignment 5: LYRIC POEM Practical Assignment 5:** Locate the website of a professional organization – one devoted to the author of one of your central texts, for instance, or another reasonably focussed group on a related subject or field; possibly the organization that sponsored the conference you wrote about last week. Write briefly on the activities, scope, publications, meetings, and other significant features of the organization.

7 October: **Rubric: Interpretation & Evaluation:** Ransom, "Criticism, Inc." (1108-1118); Hirsch, "Objective Interpretation" (1684-1709); Smith, "Contingencies" (1913-1932); Ohmann, "Shaping" (1880-1895) **Theoretical Assignment 6: ANY Practical Assignment 6:** Locate an academic journal on one of your central texts' author, period, genre, or nearby area of study. Write briefly about the most recent issue of that journal: its formal features, contents, approaches, the kinds of knowledge it produces and archives.

14 October: **Rubric: The Reader:** Wimsatt & Beardsley, "The Affective Fallacy" (1387-1403); Iser, "Interaction" (1673-1682); Fish, "Interpreting the Variorum" (2071-2089); Tompkins, "Me and My Shadow" (2129-2143) **Theoretical Assignment 7: ANY Practical Assignment 7:** Locate a website that treats one of your central texts, its author, or a corresponding field. Search for the most useful and informative site, regardless of affiliation or function. Write briefly on the design, content, academic authority, and innovative features of the site.

21 October: **NO CLASS MEETING**

28 October: **Rubric: Narrative:** Lukács, "Realism" (1033-1058); Bakhtin, from *Discourse in the Novel* (1190-1220); White, "Historical Text as Literary Artifact" (1712-1729); Todorov, "Structural Analysis" (2099-2016) **Theoretical Assignment 8: NOVEL Practical Assignment 8:** Locate a print or Web bibliography of secondary sources on one of your central text or its author; locate as well a reference book in the field (or electronic version thereof). Write briefly about the format, features, usefulness, and content of the two items.

4 November: **Rubric: What Are We Doing Here?:** Graff, "Taking Cover in Coverage" (2059-2067); Ngugi et al., "Abolition of English" (2092-2097); Kolodny, "Dancing through the Minefield" (2146-2165); Eagleton, "Rise of English" (2243-2250) **Theoretical Assignment 9: ANY Practical Assignment 9:** Locate the most authoritative biography of the author of one of your central texts; alternatively, locate the most recent revisionist biography

thereof. Write briefly on the content, academic conventions, and interpretive stance of that biography.

11 November: **Rubric: Psychoanalysis:** Freud, "The Dream Work" (923-929); Jung, "Analytical Psychology" (990-1002); Lacan, "Agency of the Letter" (1290-1302); Kristeva, "Semiotic & Symbolic" (2169-2179) **Theoretical Assignment 10:** ANY **Practical Assignment 10:** Locate current catalogs, or catalog sections in the field of one of your central texts, from at least three academic publishers (university presses, or academic divisions of trade publishers). Write briefly on the lists and the trends in current academic work that they indicate.

18 November: **Rubric: The Social Turn:** Achebe, "Image of Africa" (1783-1794); Spivak, "Critique of Postcolonial Reason" (2197-2208); Gates, "Talking Black" (2424-2432); Hebdige, "From Culture to Hegemony" (2448-2458) **Theoretical Assignment 11:** NOVEL **Practical Assignment 11:** Locate a reception history, or study of the reputation of, or alternatively a "longitudinal" collection of essays on, one of your central texts or its author. Write briefly on patterns in the evolution of commentary or scholarship on your text or author.

25 November: **Rubric: Feminism, Queer Theory:** de Beauvoir, "Myth and Reality" (1406-1414); Zimmerman, "What Has Never Been" (2340-2359); Bordo, "The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity" (2362-2377); Sedgwick, "Axiomatic" (2438-2445) **Theoretical Assignment 12:** ANY **Practical Assignment 12:** Prepare an annotated bibliography of the ten most recent secondary works on one of your central texts. Include academic articles, book chapters, or books; do not include shorter reviews or notes.

2 December: **Rubric: Borderlands:** Allen, "Kochinnenako" (2108-2126); Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure" (2181-2193); Anzaldúa, "La conciencia de la mestiza" (2211-2223); Davis, "Visualizing the Disabled Body" (2400-2421) **Theoretical Assignment 13:** ANY **Practical Assignment 13:** Prepare an annotated primary bibliography of important editions of one of your central texts. Comment on textual history and the role of editors. **Course evaluations**

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