English 300: Approaches To Literature
Dr. Charles W. MacQuarrie

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Course Description

This course will introduce students to primary sources and critical perspectives that are central to the study of literature. The course will provide students with an understanding of texts of various historical periods and cultural traditions, and the various methods available to scholars for analyzing and understanding such texts: including formalist criticism, biographical criticism, historical criticism, gender criticism, psychological criticism, mythological criticism, sociological criticism, reader-response criticism, structuralist criticism, deconstructionist criticism, and linguistic criticism.

This course will focus on questions which are central to the study of literature, such as
What is literature?
What is an author?
What is a text?
What is context?
What is theory?
What is criticism?

In fact, different “approaches” to literature are more concerned with some of these questions than others, and they sometimes answer even the same questions very differently.

Course Goals and Objectives

This course prepares students to accomplish a portion of Goals/Objectives II and III under the CSUB English department’s “Goals and Objectives for the B.A. in English.”

II) Students should be able to analyze, interpret, and compare literary works in a written argument, demonstrating a high level of understanding of textual form and theme. Student writing should contain a cogent thesis as the core of a well-organized argument.

III) Students should be able to analyze critically, through multiple approaches, a wide range of literary texts.
Required Texts:


Grading Policy
In-Class Essay 1  10%
In-Class Essay 2  10%
In-Class Essay 3  10%
Pop Quizzes  20%
Final Examination  30%
Participation  10%
Annotated Bibliography  10%

(The annotated bibliography with a paragraph of summary and analysis for each text and essay that you read for this class. It should be in MLA format. See the following web page for more details: *http://www.library.cornell.edu/okuref/research/skill28.htm#what*)

Schedule (readings to be finished by date indicated)

Week One (9/9 and 9/11)
  9/9: Course Introduction and Syllabus
  Reading of Oedipus Rex (linguistic, historical, and formalist approaches)
  9/11: Reading of Oedipus Rex (Movie clips)

Week Two (more Oedipus criticism)
  9/16: Passages from Ancient Authors and Religion and Psychology, pp. 35-72.

  9/18:  Aristotle pp 75-81
  Nietzsche pp 135-6
  H.D.F. Kitto pp 187-90
  E.R. Dodds pp 218-28
  Thomas Gould pp 246-9
  In-class paper on Oedipus and critical approaches
Week Three (Dante and Criticism)
  9/23: Read pages Intro and 1-55 in Dante
  9/25: Read pages 55-101 (Historicist criticism)

Week Four (Dante and Criticism)
  10/30: Read 102-154
  11/2: Read 155-209 (Feminist criticism)

Week Five (Dante and Criticism)
  10/7: Read 210-248
  10/9: Read one of the critical essays as assigned in class
    In-class essay on Dante and criticism

Week Six (Henry IV part 1 and Criticism)
  10/14: Read Act 1
  10/16: Read Act 2 (Harold Bloom, anxiety of influence and invention of human)

Week Seven
  10/21: Read Act 3
  10/23: Read Act 4 (“My Own Private Idaho” and queer theory)

Week Eight
  10/28: Read Act 5
  10/30: Read assigned critical essays
    In-class essay on Henry IV part 1 and criticism

Week Nine
  11/4 Frankenstein preface and volume 1 (to page 58 in text and pp. 169-75)
  11/6 Frankenstein volume II (pages 58-101 in text and 175-82)

Week Ten
  11/11 Frankenstein volume II (pages 58-101 in text and 175-82)
    Frankenstein volume III pages 101-156 in text and pp 185-201)
  11/13 Have read one of the critical essays as assigned in class

Week Eleven
  11/18 In-class essay on Frankenstein and criticism
  11/20 Review of various approaches to literature

Final exam
  11/24 Final
**Waiting List Policy:**

On a waiting list, you are eligible for a place in the class
1. if you come to every class and
2. if you turn in the work while you are there

Being on a waiting list does not mean you are guaranteed a place in the class. It simply means you are welcome to wait for an opening in the class if you desire. If no one drops out of the section you’re attending, no students can add.

As a result, you should be aware of the last day to add and have a back-up class chosen if you need another class. This plan is especially important for financial aid recipients, who must carry a full load to receive their financial aid. **Being on a waiting list does not count as a class toward your full load.**

**Instructor-Initiated Drop Policy:**

This course is subject to the policy on instructor initiated drops. If the class is full and has a waiting list, I have the right to have you administratively dropped from the class by the end of the second week of the term if you have missed **three** consecutive class session during the first week of the term and have not contacted me with alternate plans. However, you should not assume that you will be automatically dropped from the course due to non-attendance.

**Grading Criteria as Defined by the English Department, CSUB**

**An “A” paper—unusually competent**
1. Avoids the obvious and thus gains insights on an analytical level that are illuminating and stimulating to an educated reader.
2. Develops ideas effectively and purposefully with appropriate evidence, examples, and illustrations.
3. Progresses by clearly ordered and necessary stages with paragraphs that are coherent and unified.
4. Uses a variety of punctuation conventionally and purposefully.
5. Has sentences which are skillfully constructed, concise, forceful, effective, and varied.
6. Demonstrates a concern with the right words and a willingness to be inventive with words and structures in order to produce a clearly identifiable style, even though at times the efforts may be too deliberate or fall short of the writer’s intentions.

**A “B” paper—demonstrably competent**
1. Usually avoids the obvious and offers interesting interpretations, but lacks the imaginative insights of the A paper.
2. Develops an idea with a clear and effective sense of order.
3. Progresses by ordered stages with paragraphs that are coherent and unified.
4. Uses mechanics and punctuation to help communicate the meaning and effect of the
prose.
5. Has sentences which are correctly constructed with efficient use of coordination and subordination; demonstrates an understanding of variety.
6. Draws upon words adequate to express the writer’s own thoughts and feelings and demonstrates an understanding of alternate ways of expression as a means of making stylistic choices possible.

A “C” paper—competent
1. Functions on the literal level, often depending on the self-evident.
2. Develops ideas minimally, often leaving the reader with unanswered questions.
3. Has a discernible, if mechanical organization.
4. Conforms to conventional grammar, mechanics, and punctuation.
5. Has sentences which are correctly constructed, though perhaps tending toward repetitious patterns with minimal or mechanical use of coordination and subordination.
6. Works with a limited range of words and thus becomes dependent on the cliches and colloquialisms most available; is also generally unaware of choices that affect style and thus is unable to control the effects a writer may seek.

A “D” paper—lacking competence
1. Exploits the obvious either because of a lack of understanding, an inability to read, a failure to grapple with a topic, or, in many cases, a lack of interest.
2. Wanders aimlessly because of a lack of overall conception or, in some instances, has a semblance of form without the development that makes the parts a whole.
3. Has a plan or method that is characterized by irrelevancy, redundancy, or inconsistency.
4. Frequently lacks careful mechanical and grammatical distinctions although some papers contain correct (if simple) sentences.
5. Has sentences which are not correctly constructed or which are monotonous or repetitious.
6. Is characterized by convoluted sentences that are close to the rapid associations of thought or by “safe” words (ones the writer ordinarily speaks or can spell) and by excessively simple sentence structures.

An “F” paper—ineptent
1. Doesn’t fulfill the assignment; is unclear overall.
2. Lacks specific development; tends to wander aimlessly
3. Lacks logical and coherent progression.
4. Consistently lacks conventional grammar and mechanics so that