

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF LITERATURE

Mondays and Wednesdays, 1:10–2:30, Murray 112

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Office hours: Mondays 2:30–4:30 in Murray 019

<http://soclit14.blogs.rutgers.edu>

OVERVIEW

Where does literature come from? Many discussions about literature proceed as if this question hardly matters: the text, say the teachers and the critics, is *there*, and we only need to read it closely enough to discover its meaning. But who put the text there, who said that it was literature, and who is this “we” who is doing the reading? Once we ask these questions, we have begun to think of “literature” as a social construction, and to enter into literary studies’ debates, from the early twentieth century to present, about the relationship between literature and society. These debates are the subject of the course. Central themes include: literary form and the rejection of social context; literature as socially oppositional force; literature and political power, especially the power of the European empires; the debate over the literary canon and the role of educational institutions; and sociological theories of the literary field. The readings in this course are challenging but highly rewarding. Seminar discussion concentrates on patient engagement with statements by major literary and social theorists from across the twentieth century. We put the theories to work in brief case studies of twentieth-century lyric poetry; modernist narrative fiction; the history of Rutgers course catalogues; and contemporary literary prizes.

COURSE GOALS

1. Understand major themes of the literary-theoretical debate about the relation between literature and society.
2. Become proficient in analytically reading and critically engaging with difficult theoretical texts.
3. Learn to put theoreticians’ conceptual arguments in conversation with literary interpretations in both seminar discussion and formal writing.
4. Develop a reflexive understanding of the way social actors and institutions, including the educational institution we participate in, continually reshape the content and function of “literature.”

REQUIREMENTS

10% PARTICIPATION

Attendance and active, thoughtful participation in discussion are required. The purpose of a seminar is for us to learn by addressing difficult questions together. This requires every student to take the intellectual risk of offering observations, ideas, and arguments in class in response to one another and to me. You aren't supposed to know all the answers in advance, or to talk all the time, but you are required to make your best effort to figure things out as we go along, and to work with your classmates to help them do so as well. Lateness, lack of preparation, or disruptive behavior during seminar will affect the participation mark.

Two absences are allowed without penalty. If you fall ill or miss class for a family emergency, please contact me as soon as possible; you can make up for an excused absence. Students can do work to make up for unexcused absences only at my discretion. The *maximum* participation mark if you have three absences is 3.0; if you have four, 2.0. Missing more than four classes without excuse will normally result in a failing grade for the course (not just a 0 for participation).

5% INFORMAL WRITING

Students are required to contribute to a course blog six times in the semester. Individual entries are graded on a credit/no credit basis; it is not possible to receive credit for a late blog entry. Grading scale: No more than one entry missing, 4.0; two or three entries missing, 2.0; four or more entries missing, 0.

25% PAPER 1

A short paper (6 pp.), on lyric and theories of form, is due October 3.

25% PAPER 2

A second short paper (7 pp.), interpreting multiple theoretical texts, is due November 4.

35% FINAL PAPER

The final paper (11–13 pp.) is a researched interpretive argument engaging substantively with a theoretical problem raised in the course. It must also bring the theoretical argument to bear on one or more primary sources, which will normally be the author's own choice. The specific topic is to be developed over the course of the semester. Both thoughtful analysis of primary texts and meaningful engagement with secondary sources are required. A draft (not separately graded) is due December 2. The paper is due December 15 (one- or two-day extensions possible).

GRADING

Grades will be given on the four-point scale as specified [in the Undergraduate Catalog](#). In converting the final numerical score to a letter, the equivalents in the Catalog are taken as the *maxima* of intervals open on the left and closed on the right. Thus A corresponds to scores strictly greater than 3.5 and less than or equal to 4.0, B+ to scores greater than 3.0 and less than or equal to 3.5, B to scores greater than 2.5 and less than or equal to 3.0, and so on. There are no “minus” grades. The general standards for grades are as follows:

A range (3.5, 4.0]: Outstanding. The student’s work demonstrates thorough mastery of course materials and skills.

B range (2.5, 3.5]: Good. The student’s work demonstrates serious engagement with all aspects of the course but incomplete mastery of course materials and skills.

C range (1.5, 2.5]: Satisfactory. The student’s work satisfies requirements but shows significant problems or major gaps in mastery of course material.

D (0.5, 1.5]: Poor or minimal pass. The student completes the basic course requirements, but the student’s work is frequently unsatisfactory in several major areas.

F [0, 0.5]: Failure. Student has not completed all course requirements or turns in consistently unsatisfactory work.

The final grade will be based on a numerical score but is subject to my discretion. Unsatisfactory work in all areas of the course will result in an F even if the numerical score corresponds to a passing grade. It is not possible to pass the course without completing all three papers.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Students and instructors have a duty to each other and to our community to abide by norms of academic honesty and responsibility. To present something as your own original writing when it is not is plagiarism. Plagiarism and other forms of cheating are serious violations of trust. Academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, will have severe consequences, in accordance with the University Policy on Academic Integrity and the Code of Student Conduct. For details about the University’s academic integrity policies, please see academicintegrity.rutgers.edu.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

All reasonable accommodation will be given to students with disabilities. Students who may require accommodation should speak with me at the start of the semester. You may also contact the Office of Disability Services (disabilityservices.rutgers.edu; 848-445-6800).

SCHEDULE

Blog entries are to be posted by 6 p.m. on the evening *before* the date on which they are listed. Many of the readings are found in Richter, *The Critical Tradition*, hereafter abbreviated *CT*. I have listed original book titles rather than the excerpt titles given by Richter.

THE WHAT WHAT OF WHAT?

Wednesday, September 3.

Williams, “Literature” (distributed in class).

FORM AND SOCIAL OPPOSITION

Monday, September 8. Blogging trial run.

Percy Bysshe Shelley, “A Defence of Poetry,” in *CT*.

Oscar Wilde, “The Decay of Lying: An Observation,” in *CT*.

Wednesday, September 10. Blog post 1 (group A).

Victor Shklovsky, “Art as Technique,” in *CT*.

Cleanth Brooks, “Irony as a Principle of Structure,” in *CT*.

Brooks, “My Credo.”

Ransom, “Criticism, Inc.”

Monday, September 15. Blog post 1 (group B).

Adorno, “On Lyric Poetry and Society.”

From Auden, *Selected Poems*:

19 (“Paysage Moralisé”).

33 (“Lullaby”).

34 “Spain.”

42 “Musée des Beaux Arts.”

43 “Epitaph on a Tyrant.”

44 “In Memory of W.B. Yeats.”

47 “September 1, 1939.”

From Bishop, *The Complete Poems*:

“A Miracle for Breakfast.”

“At the Fishhouses.”

Wednesday, September 17.

Paper 1 assignment distributed.

From McKay, *Harlem Shadows*:

“The Harlem Dancer.”

“If We Must Die.”

“America.”

“The White City.”

“Outcast.”

From Hughes, *Collected Poems*:

“The Negro Speaks of Rivers.”

“I Too.”

“The Weary Blues.”

“The Bitter River.”

“Good Morning Revolution.”

Selections from *Montage of a Dream Deferred*: “Dream Boogie,” “Easy Boogie,” “Movies,” “Tell me,” “Not a Movie,” “Neon Signs,” “Ballad of the Landlord,” “Theme for English B,” “Harlem [2],” “Good Morning,” “Same in Blues,” “Comment on Curb.”

SOCIAL FORCES

Monday, September 22. Blog post 2 (group A).

Karl Marx, *The German Ideology*, in *CT*.

Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, in *CT*.

Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, in *CT*.

Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (excerpt distributed in class).

Wednesday, September 24.

Marx.

Williams.

Piketty.

Monday, September 29.

Joyce, *Dubliners*, through “Grace.”

Foster, *Modern Ireland*, chap. 18.

Wednesday, October 1.

Micro-workshop: arguments.

Joyce, *Dubliners*.

Joyce, *Selected Letters*, 78–9, 81–90, 197–9, 207–9.

(Friday, October 3.) Paper 1 due.

Monday, October 6. Blog post 2 (group B).

Joyce, *Dubliners*.

Georg Lukács, “The Ideology of Modernism,” in *CT*.

Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, in *CT*.

Wednesday, October 8.

Stuart Hall, “Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms,” in *CT*.

Optional: Mullin, “‘Something in the Name of Araby.’”

CULTURAL POWER

Monday, October 13. Blog post 3 (group A).

Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, in *CT*.

Edward Said, *Orientalism*, in *CT*.

Wednesday, October 15.

Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, pts. 1–2.

Chinua Achebe, “An Image of Africa,” in *CT*.

Monday, October 20. Blog post 3 (group B).

Said, *Culture and Imperialism*.

Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*.

Wednesday, October 22.

Macaulay, “Minute on Indian Education.”

Chattopadhyay, “Confessions of a Young Bengal.”

Viswanathan, “Currying Favor.”

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, “Europhonism, Universities, and the Magic Fountain,” in *CT*.

Monday, October 27. Blog post 4 (group A).

Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*, in *CT*.

Wednesday, October 29.

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, in *CT*.
Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics*, in *CT*.

CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS AND CULTURAL VALUE

Monday, November 3.

Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” in *CT*.
Michel Foucault, “What Is an Author?” in *CT*.

Wednesday, November 5. Blog post 4 (group B).

Martin, “Criticism and the Academy.”
Graff, *Professing Literature*, chap. 15.

(Friday, November 7.) Paper 2 due.

Monday, November 10. Blog post 5 (group A).

Visit with University Archivists Tom Frusciano and Erika Gorder.
Research skills workshop with English librarian Kevin Mulcahy (tentative).
Selections from Rutgers course catalogues, almost all included in a single [PDF file on Sakai](#):
Catalogue of Rutgers College, 1869–70, Classical Department, 22–28.
Catalogue of Rutgers College, 1890–91, Classical Department, 22–27.
New Jersey College for Women Catalogue, 1923–24, English, 68–71. These pages are in a separate [PDF file on Sakai](#).
Rutgers University Annual Catalogue, 1930–31, curricula, 59; English, 87–91.
Bulletin of Rutgers University: College of Arts and Sciences Issue, 1950–51, English, 57–63.
Douglass College: Programs of Study..., 1969–70, English Language and Literature, 77–85.
Rutgers College Catalogue, 1970–71 and 1971–72, English, 187–91.
Livingston College Announcement, 1971–72, Literary Studies, 75–81.

All pages of the Rutgers “Department of English History,” <http://english.rutgers.edu/department/history.html>.

The Rutgers Department of English undergraduate goals: <http://english.rutgers.edu/undergraduate-91/department-goals.html>.

(Research suggestion: anthology tables of contents.)

Wednesday, November 12.

Danto, “The Artworld.”
DiMaggio, “Classification in Art.”

Monday, November 17. Blog post 5 (group B).

Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, chap. 1.

Wednesday, November 19.

Bourdieu, *Rules of Art*, 141–46, 166–73, 227–34.

(Friday, November 21.) Final paper proposal due.

Monday, November 24. Blog post 6 (group A).

Lamont and Lareau, “Cultural Capital.”

(Wednesday, November 26.) No class; Friday classes meet.

Monday, December 1. Blog post 6 (group B).

Huggan, “Prizing ‘Otherness.’”

Selected Booker prize journalism.

Wednesday, December 3.

English, *The Economy of Prestige*, 1–14, 297–313.

Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, 146–57.

2014 Nobel prize materials: http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/2014/.

(Saturday, December 6.) Final paper draft due.

STINGER: READERS

Monday, December 8.

Ohmann, “The Shaping of a Canon.”

Moretti, “The Slaughterhouse of Literature.”

Wednesday, December 10.

Griswold, McDonnell, and Wright, “Reading and the Reading Class in the Twenty-First Century.”

Striphas, *The Late Age of Print*.

(Monday, December 15.) Final paper due.

READINGS

- Adorno, Theodor W. "On Lyric Poetry and Society." In *Notes to Literature*, edited by Rolf Tiedemann, translated by Shierry Weber Nicholsen, 1:37–54. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991. On Sakai.
- Auden, W. H. *Selected Poems*. New ed. Edited by Edward Mendelson. New York: Vintage, 1979. Excerpt available on Sakai. If you wish to buy an Auden collection, the *Collected Poems* are a better choice than this or the more recent expanded *Selected Poems*.
- Bishop, Elizabeth. *The Complete Poems: 1927–1979*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1983. Excerpt available on Sakai. If you wish to own Bishop's works, seek out the very fine Library of America *Poems, Prose, and Letters*.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*. Translated by Susan Emanuel. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996. Excerpt on Sakai.
- Brooks, Cleanth. "My Credo." *Kenyon Review* 13, no. 1 (Winter 1951): 72–81. <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/stable/4333214>.
- Casanova, Pascale. *The World Republic of Letters*. Translated by M. B. DeBevoise. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004. Excerpt available on Sakai.
- Chattopadhyay, Bankimchandra. "Confessions of a Young Bengal." In *The Vintage Book of Modern Indian Literature*, edited by Amit Chaudhuri. New York: Vintage, 2004. Available on Sakai.
- Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness and Other Tales*. Rev. ed. Edited by Cedric Watts. Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Danto, Arthur. "The Artworld." *Journal of Philosophy* 61, no. 19 (October 1964): 571–84. <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/stable/2022937>.
- DiMaggio, Paul. "Classification in Art." *American Sociological Review* 52, no. 4 (1987): 440–55. <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/stable/2095290>.
- English, James F. *The Economy of Prestige: Prizes, Awards, and the Circulation of Cultural Value*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005. Excerpt available on Sakai.
- Foster, R.F. *Modern Ireland: 1600–1972*. London: Penguin, 1988. Excerpt on Sakai.
- Graff, Gerald. *Professing Literature: An Institutional History*. 20th anniversary ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007. Excerpt available on Sakai.
- Griswold, Wendy, Terry McDonnell, and Nathan Wright. "Reading and the Reading Class in the Twenty-First Century." *Annual Review of Sociology* 31 (2005): 127–41. <http://www.annualreviews.org.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/doi/abs/10.1146/annurev.soc.31.041304.122312>.
- Guillory, John. *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993. Excerpt available on Sakai.
- Huggan, Graham. "Prizing 'Otherness': A Short History of the Booker." *Studies in the Novel* 29 (1997): 412–33. <https://login.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=hus&AN=509678520&site=ehost-live>.
- Hughes, Langston. *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*. Edited by Arnold Rampersad. New York: Knopf, 1994. Excerpt available on Sakai.

- Joyce, James. *Dubliners*. Edited by Jeri Johnson. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- . *Selected Letters of James Joyce*. Edited by Richard Ellmann. New York: Viking, 1975. Excerpt available on Sakai.
- Lamont, Michèle, and Annette Lareau. "Cultural Capital: Allusions, Gaps and Glissandos in Recent Theoretical Developments." *Sociological Theory* 6 (Fall 1988): 153–68. <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/stable/202113>.
- Macaulay, Thomas Babington. "Minute on Indian Education." In *Sketches of Some Distinguished Anglo-Indians (Second Series)*, edited by W. F. B. Laurie, 170–84. London: W. H. Allen, 1888. HathiTrust, 2008. <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015066038780;view=1up;seq=196>. The Google scan cuts off half the final page. Consult http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealc/pritchett/00generallinks/macaulay/txt_minute_education_1835.html for a transcription.
- Martin, Wallace. "Criticism and the Academy." Chap. 14 in *Modernism and the New Criticism*, vol. 7 of *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, edited by A. Walton Litz, Louis Menand, and Lawrence Rainey. 2000. <http://dx.doi.org.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/10.1017/CHOL9780521300124.016>.
- McKay, Claude. *Harlem Shadows: An Electronic Edition*. Edited by Chris Forster and Roopika Risam. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1922. 2014. <http://harlemshadows.org/>.
- Moretti, Franco. "The Slaughterhouse of Literature." *MLQ* 61, no. 1 (March 2000): 207–27. <http://dx.doi.org.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/10.1215/00267929-61-1-207>.
- Mullin, Katherine. "'Something in the Name of Araby': James Joyce and the Irish Bazaars." *Dublin James Joyce Journal* 4, no. 4 (2011): 31–50. http://muse.jhu.edu.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/journals/dublin_james_joyce_journal/v004/4.mullin.html.
- Ohmann, Richard. "The Shaping of a Canon: U.S. Fiction, 1960–1975." *Critical Inquiry* 10, no. 1 (September 1983): 199–223. <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/stable/1343412>.
- Ransom, John Crowe. "Criticism, Inc." *Virginia Quarterly Review* 13, no. 4 (Fall 1937): 586–602. <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/docview/1291722705/fulltextPDF?accountid=13626>.
- Richter, David H., ed. *The Critical Tradition: Classic Texts and Contemporary Trends*. 3rd ed. Boston: Bedford / St. Martin's, 2007.
- Said, Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Vintage, 1993. Required pages available on Sakai. Buying the book is optional but recommended.
- Striphas, Ted. *The Late Age of Print: Everyday Book Culture from Consumerism to Control*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009. Excerpt available on Sakai.
- Viswanathan, Gauri. "Currying Favor: The Politics of British Educational and Cultural Policy in India, 1813–1854." *Social Text*, nos. 19/20 (Fall 1988): 85–104. <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/stable/466180>.

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