

EL 592.01 Literary Theory II / Syllabus / Spring 2018

Instructor: Ethan Guagliardo

Mondays, 2:00-4:50

Introduction. The second half of a two semester survey of the history of literary theory and criticism in the West. The work of writers such as Darwin, Marx, Nietzsche and Freud made available new approaches to literature in the 21st century that elevated texts above authors and in general “de-centered” the “liberal humanist subject.” Yet the subject never really went away, as new critical theories—including psychoanalytic theory, feminism, critical race studies, queer theory, and post-colonial theory--revised and reinterpreted it as a cultural and historical artifact. Most recently, however, the fate of the subject has undergone a new turn under the banner of new critical idioms such as affect theory, ecocriticism, animal studies, thing theory, actor-network theory, and new materialism. With the fate of the “humanist subject” at its thematic core, this course will survey these movements. But throughout we will return again and again to the question of theory’s value for literary studies, theory’s relationship to the self-definition of the profession, and how it enables better and more sophisticated practices of reading. Hence we begin with Heidegger’s seminal critique of humanism, paired alongside Rita Felski’s recent critique of critique itself. From there we survey literary theory’s major movements, alongside readings of *King Lear* that put these movements into practice. Each student will offer a class presentation on one of these readings; here, the goal is not to present on the content of the article or ins and outs of its specific interpretation of *King Lear*, but on how the theoretical material is applied to the literary subject matter. We are interested in *kinds* of readings, their rhetorical form and function.

Course Materials. The third edition of Blackwell’s *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, ed. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan (2017) and Rita Felski’s *The Limits of Critique* are available at the bookstore. Students are responsible for acquiring and reading a copy of *King Lear* by the start of week three. Additional readings (web) available here: <https://ethanguagliardo.com/el-592-readings/>

Grading. Presentation 20%; Class Performance 20%; Final Paper 60%

Reading Schedule.

Week 1 (10 Feb)

Martin Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism” (web); James Hankins, “How Not to Defend the Humanities” (web); Rita Felski, *The Limits of Critique*, Introduction and chapters 1-3

Week 2 (17 Feb)

Felski, finish.

Week 3 (24 Feb)

The Linguistic Turn and Post-structuralism: The Deaths of Man

Beardsley and Wimsatt, “The Intentional Fallacy”; Rivkin and Ryan, “Introduction” (131-3); Culler, “The Linguistic Foundation”; Foucault, “What is an Author?”; Hans Blumenberg, “An Anthropological Approach to the Contemporary Significance of Rhetoric” (web).

Theory in Practice Presentation: Lyons, “The Subplot as Simplification in *King Lear*”.

Week 4

The Linguistic Turn and Post-structuralism, continued.

Rivkin and Ryan, "Introduction" (445-465); Deleuze, "What is Becoming?"; Derrida, "Differance"; Barthes, "The Death of the Author"; "From Work to Text"; Bourdieu, "Distinction."

Theory in Practice Presentation: John Joughin, "Lear's After-Life".

Week 5 (2 March)

Critical Theory, Marxism, Materialism

Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses"; Bourdieu, "Structures and the Habitus"; Williams, "Marxism and Literature" (web);

Theory in Practice Presentation: Rosalie Colie, "Reason and Need: King Lear and the Crisis of the Aristocracy"

Week 6 (9 March)

Critical Theory, Marxism, Historicism

Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History"; Jameson, from *The Political Unconscious* (web); Louis Montrose, "New Historicism";

Theory in Practice Presentation: Stephen Greenblatt, "Shakespeare and the Exorcists" (AR)

Week 7 (16 March)

Theorizing Modernity: Frankfurt School and Cultural Criticism

Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (NA 1745-48); "Modernity - An Incomplete Project" (NA 1748-59); Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (web); Peter Sloterdijk, *Critique of Cynical Reason*

Week 8 (23 March)

Postcolonial and Critical Race Theories

Fanon, "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness" (web); Said, from *Orientalism*; Spivak, "Critique of Imperialism"; Morrison, "Playing in the Dark"

Theory in Practice Presentation: Jaecheol Kim, "National Messianism"

Week 9 (30 March)

Psychoanalytic, Feminist, Queer Theories

Lacan, "The Mirror Stage"; Winnicott, "Transitional Objects"; Rubin, "The Traffic in Women"; Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination"; Foucault, *History of Sexuality* (web)

Theory in Practice Presentation: Janet Adelman, "Suffocating Mothers in *King Lear*" (web)

Week 10 (6 April)

Psychoanalytic, Feminist, Queer Theories, continued

Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence"; Sedgwick, "Epistemology of the Closet"; Wittig, "One Is Not Born a Woman" (web); Puar, "I would rather be a Cyborg than a Goddess"; Hird "Naturally Queer"

Theory in Practice Presentation: Michael Ryan, "Queer Lear: A Gender Reading of *King Lear*"

Week 11 (13 April)

Biopolitics and Sovereignty

Schmitt, from *Political Theology* (web); Foucault, “Right of Death and Power over Life”; Agamben, from *Homo Sacer*

Theory in Practice Presentation: Andreas Høfele, “‘I’ll see their trial first:’ Law and Disorder in Lear’s Animal Kingdom” (web).

18-22 April: Spring Break

Week 12 (27 April)

Affective Turns: Animals, Passions and Things

Rivkin and Ryan, “Introduction” (1255-64); Hart, “Embodied Literature”; Keane, “Narrative Empathy”; Ahmed, “Affective Economies”; Carroll, “Human Nature and Literary Meaning”; Ruth Leys, “The Turn to Affect: A Critique” (web).

Theory in Practice Presentation: Amanda Bailey, “Speak What We Feel: Sympathy and Statecraft” (web).

Week 13 (4 May)

Affective Turns: Animals, Passions and Things, continued

Rivkin and Ryan, “Introduction,” (1419-22); Thrift, “Non-Representational Theory”; Latour, “On Actor-Network Theory”; Jane Bennett, from *Vibrant Matter* (web); McDonnell, “The Animal Turn”; Sibbers, “The Aesthetics of Human Disqualification”; Marland, “Ecocriticism”

Theory in Practice Presentation: Laurie Shannon, “Poor, Bare, and Forked: Animal Sovereignty, Human Negative Exceptionalism, and the Natural History of *King Lear*” (web)