

Introduction to Literary Criticism

Avila University

A Communication Intensive Course

EN 449C

Three Credit Hours

TEXTS

Texts and Contexts: Writing About Literature with Critical Theory, Steven Lynn, 4th Ed.

Everyday Theory: A Contemporary Reader, Becky McLaughlin & Bob Coleman, Eds.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course surveys the history of literary criticism, beginning with Plato's *Republic* and ending with Post-Feminism and Queer Theory. The main focus will be reading about literature--its evolution, purpose, and effects. Rather than utilizing one method of interpretation, students will investigate a variety of approaches including Reader Response, Deconstruction, New Historicism, and Marxism.

Because criticism is the primary focus and content of the course, students will see and discuss literature from various points of view. And, they will position literature and literary studies within the broader context of the arts and the history of ideas and formulate and refine their own method of interpretation and analysis.

OUTCOMES

Students will

- 1) become acquainted with many of the principal ideas regarding the purpose, value, and effects of literature (reading and class discussions).
- 2) enhance critical skills in reading, discussing, analyzing, and writing about literature (oral presentations, papers, and exams).
- 3) develop group discussion skills in focused discussions of the readings (group work).
- 4) employ skeptical, evaluative, and logical approaches in processing information and drawing conclusions (class discussions, papers and exams).
- 5) generate new images, concepts, possibilities and/or interpretations, and connect apparently disparate ideas (class discussions / group work and papers).
- 6) deal more confidently with commentary and criticism about literature, and by extension, commentary and criticism about music, art, drama, and film (class discussions, oral presentations, and papers).
- 7) Write a clear, well-organized paper (papers)
- 8) Gain knowledge of philosophers, writers, artists and other great thinker and their influence upon the development of civilization (readings, class discussions and oral presentations).

METHODS

Classroom activities include small group work, general discussion, and oral presentations. Lectures will provide background information and some interpretations, although the interpretations will be illustrative rather than definitive. *In order to participate, you will have to read each assignment carefully before coming to class.* There will be unannounced quizzes of varying types and a final exam.

ATTENDANCE

Students are expected to attend all classes. No more than 2 classes may be missed without penalty. Each further absence will lower the final grade by two points. Please try to be on time for class.

SENSITIVE MATERIAL

There will be times this semester when we will need to discuss sensitive topics and issues. We will present these topics and issues in a professional manner, making every effort possible to not offend. You need to be aware, however, that avoiding these issues entirely is not only undesirable, but also wholly inconsistent with the notion of a higher education experience.

PARTICIPATION

Please plan to contribute to class discussion each day and demonstrate that you have done the work to prepare for class, even if you do not understand everything you have read. If you do this, by the end of the semester you will have a greater appreciation for the theories and perspectives that we will discuss. We all come from different cultures and backgrounds and bring with us different social, political and life experiences. If you are not in class, your perspective is not represented.

QUIZZES

The quizzes are the most important ingredient of the course, constituting 40% of your total grade. Please make sure you read the material on time, and that you have read it carefully (it will be impossible to have meaningful class discussions otherwise). There can be no make-up quizzes. However, you may drop your lowest quiz score.

PLAGIARISM

The policy of Avila University concerning cheating and plagiarism will be strictly followed in this class.

PAPERS & PRESENTATIONS

Detailed information regarding the presentation and papers will be given in class. When you prepare for the presentation, please plan to distribute an outline with important names, dates, and definitions to class members, and I encourage you to use other handouts and visual aids that might clarify and enhance your presentation.

GRADING

Quizzes	40
Paper #1	15
Paper #2	15
Paper #3	15
Final Exam	15
TOTAL	100

Points will be awarded according to the following scale:

90-100	A
80-89	B
70-79	C
60-69	D
0 -60	F

Students must earn a minimum grade of "C" to satisfy the communication-intensive requirement with this course.