

ENGL 113 An Introduction to Literature and Cultural Politics

School of English, Film, Theatre, & Media Studies

Trimester 2 2008

18 Points

STAFF

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CLASS TIMES AND ROOMS

Lectures

Mon, Tue, Fri 3.10–4.00 pm New Kirk LT 301

Tutorial times to be arranged

COURSE CONTENT

Since at least the Romantic period, the idea that literary works express and communicate the inner thoughts and feelings of their authors has held sway over most rival theories. This belief has also generated an intense interest in literary biography and in the diaries, letters, memoirs and autobiographies of famous writers. Both the writing and the life have come to be read as clues to be pieced together to help the reader reconstruct a sense of the author's self.

This paper will examine the "cult of the author" through four case studies: **William Wordsworth** and the construction of the Romantic poet; **Sylvia Plath** and the politics of biography; **Oscar Wilde**: Literature and Sexual Scandal; **J.M. Coetzee** and the demands of culture.

Each case study will discuss how particular images of an author are constructed, how (and why) these images change over time, how they affect interpretations of the "work", and what accounts for their continuing appeal and power. The relationship between author, text and society will be considered from a number of angles, in order to suggest that this relationship is neither as simple nor direct as we might think.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Students passing ENGL 113 should:

- be familiar with all the set literary and non-literary texts
- be familiar with the basic conventions of critical writing
- be able to demonstrate an understanding of some of the connections between literature and cultural politics in clear and concise critical writing
- be able to analyse passages from the texts on the paper in detail, paying attention to their form and language, and considering cultural issues which arise in relation to them.

EXPECTED WORKLOAD

You should expect to spend, on average, about **8 hours per week** on work for this paper (*apart* from time in class). **Please note that this is a rough guideline only.** Some students may have to put in more time than others. The time commitment will be greatest in the weeks immediately prior to essay submission dates.

READINGS

ENGL 113 Introduction to Literature and Cultural Politics (Student Notes);

Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar* (Random House);

Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest and other Plays* (World's Classics);

J. M. Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians* (Vintage).

ASSESSMENT

Students are assessed on a combination of final examination (50%) and in-term work (50%). In-term work (mandatory) consists of two written assignments (25% each) totalling approximately 2500 words.

Assessment has been structured to help students meet the objectives of the paper, especially the last two listed, and to ensure that each of the four case studies is studied in some depth.

1. **Term Work: 50%**

Term work consists of two assessed pieces of written work.

- Assignment on "William Wordsworth and the Construction of the Romantic Poet": 25% of final grade. Length: 1200-1500 words.

Due date: **Friday 25 July (5 pm).**

[N.B. See below for the topic set for this first assignment.]

- Assignment on "Sylvia Plath and the Politics of Biography". 25% of final grade. Length: 1200-1500 words. Topics to be announced.

Due date: **Friday 15 August (5 pm).**

2. Final Three Hour Examination: 50%.

- This is a Closed Book examination.
- The examination will consist of three sections.
 - A choice of questions on “Oscar Wilde: Literature and Sexual Scandal” (30% of the exam grade).
 - A choice of questions on “J.M. Coetzee and the Demands of Culture” (30% of the exam grade).
 - A choice of general questions (40% of the exam grade) on critical issues raised in this course, to be discussed with reference to the case studies included in the course.

FIRST ASSIGNMENT TOPIC (due Friday 25 July (5 pm))

Write an essay (1200 words minimum; 1500 words maximum) on the following topic:

Discuss the *idea* of the “Romantic poet” as a critical construction developed in relation to a writer’s historical and social context. Develop your discussion through **close analysis** of **one** of the following options:

- (a) Wordsworth’s prefaces (as in course book)
- (b) Wordsworth’s poetry and/or *Guide through the District of the Lakes* (as in course book)
- (c) Twentieth-century biographies of Wordsworth (as in course book)
- (d) M. H. Abrams’ and/or David Perkins’ headnotes (as in course book)
- (e) Hazlitt’s and/or De Quincey’s writings (as in course book)

PENALTIES

The deadlines for term work must be strictly observed. **Late work submitted without an extension** will be counted, as long as it is received by **10 October 2008**. You will, however, be penalised by a lowering of the grade (e.g., A to A-, C+ to C), and comments will be minimal. If you need an extension beyond the due date for any piece of work, you should apply **before the due date**, in the first instance to your tutor, or to the course co-ordinators, providing supporting documentation (e.g. medical certificate, note from Counselling service, etc) if at all possible. Work submitted with an extension will be graded in the normal way. Make sure you plan your work in advance to deal with competing deadlines.

MANDATORY COURSE REQUIREMENTS

In order to satisfy the paper’s requirements, you must:

- attend **70% of tutorials** (i.e., 8 of the 11 tutorials);

- complete both of the internal assessment pieces by **Friday 10 October** at the very latest (unless you are granted an extension by the Head of School);
- sit the final **examination**.

Failure to satisfy the mandatory requirements will result in a fail grade.

COMMUNICATION OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

All additional information and information on changes will be conveyed to students via Blackboard.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND PLAGIARISM

Academic integrity is about honesty – put simply it means no cheating. All members of the University community are responsible for upholding academic integrity, which means staff and students are expected to behave honestly, fairly and with respect for others at all times.

Plagiarism is a form of cheating which undermines academic integrity. The University defines plagiarism as:

The presentation of the work of another person or other persons as if it were one's own, whether intended or not. This includes published or unpublished work, material on the Internet and the work of other students or staff.

It is still plagiarism even if you re-structure the material or present it in your own style or words.

Note: It is however, perfectly acceptable to include the work of others as long as that is acknowledged by appropriate referencing.

Plagiarism is prohibited at Victoria and is not worth the risk. Any enrolled student found guilty of plagiarism will be subject to disciplinary procedures under the Statute on Student Conduct and may be penalized severely. Consequences of being found guilty of plagiarism can include:

- an oral or written warning
- cancellation of your mark for an assessment or a fail grade for the course
- suspension from the course or the University.

Find out more about plagiarism, and how to avoid it, on the University's website:

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/plagiarism.aspx>

GENERAL UNIVERSITY STATUTES AND POLICIES

A copy of the General University Statutes and Policies can be found on Blackboard.

COURSE PROGRAMME

Week 1	Mon 7 Jul	Introduction	(JM)
	Tue 8 Jul	Wordsworth	(HT)
	Fri 11 Jul	Wordsworth	(HT)
Week 2	Mon 14 Jul	Wordsworth	(HT)
	Tue 15 Jul	Wordsworth	(HT)
	Fri 18 Jul	Wordsworth	(HT)
Week 3	Mon 21 Jul	Wordsworth	(HT)
	Tue 22 Jul	Wordsworth	(HT)
	Fri 25 Jul	The Idea of the Author	(HT)
ASSIGNMENT 1 Due – 25 Jul 5pm			
Week 4	Mon 28 Jul	Poets and Poetry	(Erin Mercer)
	Tue 29 Jul	Plath	(AJ)
	Fri 1 Aug	Plath	(AJ)
Week 5	Mon 8 Aug	Plath	(AJ)
	Tue 8 Aug	Plath	(AJ)
	Fri 11 Aug	Plath	(AJ)
Week 6	Mon 7 July	Plath	(AJ)
	Tue 8 July	Plath	(AJ)
	Fri 11 July	(Un)True Confessions	(JM)
ASSIGNMENT 2 Due – 15 Aug 5pm			
Mid Trimester Break – 18-31 August			
Week 7	Mon 1 Sep	What's in the Text?	(LH)
	Tue 2 Sep	Wilde	(LH)
	Fri 5 Sep	Wilde	(LH)
Week 8	Mon 8 Sep	Wilde	(LH)
	Tue 9 Sep	Wilde	(LH)
	Fri 12 Sep	Wilde	(LH)
Week 9	Mon 15 Sep	Wilde	(LH)
	Tue 16 Sep	Wilde	(LH)
	Fri 19 Sep	Cultural Politics	(JM)
Week 10	Mon 22 Sep	Coetzee	(JM)
	Tue 23 Sep	Coetzee	(JM)
	Fri 26 Sep	Coetzee	(JM)

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ENGLISH COURSE OUTLINE ENGL 113

Week 11	Mon 29 Sep	Coetzee	(JM)
	Tue 30 Sep	Coetzee	(JM)
	Fri 3 Oct	Coetzee	(JM)
Week 12	Mon 6 Oct	Coetzee	(JM)
	Tue 7 Oct	The Death of the Author	(JM)
	Fri 10 Oct	Exam Revision	(All)
Weeks 13-16	13 Oct-8 Nov	Examination Period	