

ENGL 431 Literary Criticism

Trimesters 1 and 2 2009
(Monday 2 March – Saturday 14 November 2009)

30 Points

STAFF

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CLASS TIMES AND ROOMS

Friday	9-11 am	VZ 808
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COURSE CONTENT

Narrative – telling stories – is fundamental to our interactions in and with the world. Yet narrative, like language, is no neutral medium, nor are its rules and methods fixed. This course introduces some influential accounts of what narrative is and how it works. What kinds of logic do we use to shape and to understand stories? How do narratives order, disrupt and transform our understanding of the world?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

To introduce students of literature to some of the theoretical writing that has informed, challenged and reshaped the discipline of literary studies in the course of the last century. The course is focussed around the theme of narrative and aims to give students a survey of a number of critical approaches while directing the scope of this examination. The main emphasis of the course is on understanding, articulating and comparing different conceptions of narrative as well as examining the nature and purpose of critical reading and writing. The course will cover various aspects of narrative form and process, before moving to a consideration of postmodern narrative in the second trimester. Students passing the course should be able to develop cogent, detailed and critical reflections on some of the issues the course raises, according to their own particular interests, and to demonstrate a basic comprehension of all the topics studied.

COURSE DELIVERY

The course will be delivered through a weekly two hour seminar. Seminar discussions are based on the readings detailed in the seminar programme below.

There are two sessions on each seminar topic. The first, or primary, session will be led by the course convenors, while the following, or secondary, session will be introduced and led by class members. Students are asked to give a short (15-20 min) presentation to introduce one of the “secondary” seminars. These presentations may be informal or scripted; you will be expected to identify for further discussion one or two particular issues raised by the assigned readings, and to comment briefly on them. Neither the presentations

nor the discussions will be formally assessed, but they may be taken into account when the final Honours grade is being considered. You should examine the seminar schedule and nominate a topic which you will be prepared to introduce as soon as possible.

The supplementary texts assigned for each seminar – other than the chapters from *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* and *Postmodern Narrative Theory* – are available on Blackboard. Students are expected to be well-prepared for classes, particularly in their reading, and to be ready to lead discussion.

EXPECTED WORKLOAD

The university advises that you should be able to devote at least 12 hours per week to a full year paper in a 4-paper graduate programme. (This estimate includes seminar attendance and preparation for seminars and essays.) Individual students will of course need to make their own judgements about the amount of time they must give to the course in order to maintain satisfactory progress. You are not required to read any texts for this course other than those assigned for each seminar and prescribed for the course. Nevertheless, you may wish to extend your reading in an aspect of the course which particularly interests you, especially when you come to write your second essay. We'll be happy to discuss this with you, should you need specific suggestions for extra reading. Some of the set and recommended texts listed above also contain bibliographies and/or suggestions for further reading on particular topics which you may find helpful.

READINGS

H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*, 2nd edition (London: Routledge, 2002); Mark Currie, *Postmodern Narrative Theory* (New York: Palgrave, 1998).

Other preliminary and supplementary reading

Tony Thwaites, Lloyd Davis, and Warwick Mules, *Tools for Cultural Studies: An Introduction* (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1994); Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin (eds.) *Critical Terms for Literary Study* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2nd edition, 1995); Wayne Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961); Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (New York: Knopf, 1984); David Lodge, *After Bakhtin: Essays on Fiction and Criticism* (London: Routledge, 1990); Suzanne Keen, *Narrative Form* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Martin McQuillan (ed.), *The Narrative Reader*, (London: Routledge, 2000)

ASSESSMENT

The assessment for this course is designed to give students practice in handling abstract concepts and arguments, and to encourage continual engagement with critical readings, as well as integrate theoretical reflection with close reading of particular texts.

Reading reports (5 x 500 word reports worth 6% each i.e. altogether, 30% of your final grade)

You will be required to produce five short (no more than 500 words each) reading reports over the duration of the course. Reading report due dates are included in the course programme below.

An essay (approximately 2,500 words; 20% of your final grade)

The essay is due on or before **Friday September 18**. This essay is your major piece of in-term writing for the course, and will require you to explore a particular critical topic or issue. Suggested topics will be distributed after the mid-year break, but you may also devise your own topic in consultation with one of the course coordinators. You should expect to begin thinking about this essay during the mid year break, although it is not formally due until September 18.

Submission of written work: the essay and reading reports should be submitted electronically direct to james.meffan@vuw.ac.nz as an email attachment in MS Word format (.doc). Please name the file as in the following examples:

- For a reading report: smith1.doc
- For an essay: smithessay.doc

(i.e last name followed by report number or "essay", with no spaces).

Examination (3 hours; 50% of your final grade)

The three-hour final examination is **an open book exam** allowing you to bring any books or papers set for or provided during the course into the examination room and will be scheduled some time during the official end of year exam period (27 October– 14 November 2009). When finalised, the exam timetable will be posted at <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/timetables/exam-timetable.aspx>

You'll be asked to write on TWO essay topics in the exam. There will be a wide range of topics to choose from. All topics will be related to or drawn from the readings assigned for the seminars. All questions will be of equal value. The 2009 exam format will closely follow the format of ENGL 431 exams of recent years. Previous exams can be accessed through the university library website (see Quick Links on the Library home page).

Note: grades gained in individual Honours papers are always subordinate to the overall assessment made by the full group of examiners for the Honours programme as a whole.

ASSIGNMENT COVER SHEETS

Assignment cover sheets and extension forms can be found on Blackboard. Please copy and paste the wording supplied in the Cover Sheet document at the beginning of each assignment.

PENALTIES AND EXTENSIONS

If work is handed in late, then one grade is subtracted and no comments are offered.

Extensions

If you require an extension, you must complete an extension request form (available on your course Blackboard site) prior to the assignment due date. This must be accompanied by relevant documentation (e.g. a doctor's certificate) where appropriate. Extension requests must be submitted to the Course Co-ordinator.

MANDATORY COURSE REQUIREMENTS

You are expected to attend all seminars; attendance at a minimum of twenty seminars is mandatory. It is also a mandatory requirement that all written work must be completed and submitted, and the three-hour final examination must be completed at the end of the course. Failure to complete a mandatory requirement

does not prevent you from completing other pieces of assessment, including the examination. However, please note: "A student who has obtained an overall mark of 50% or more, but failed to satisfy a mandatory requirement for a course, will receive a K grade for that course, while a course mark less than 50% will result in the appropriate fail grade (D, E, or F)" (2007 Calendar, Assessment Statute, 4.3(b), p. 2).

PRESENTATION OF WORK

All written work should follow MLA conventions for style and citation. Full details of the MLA style are provided in *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (6th edition) and the *MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing* (2nd edition), both of which are available in the library. A basic outline of MLA conventions is available on Blackboard. Purdue University Online Writing Lab (OWL) offers an excellent Internet resource on MLA style. It can be accessed at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/01/>.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND PLAGIARISM

Academic integrity means that university staff and students, in their teaching and learning are expected to treat others honestly, fairly and with respect at all times. It is not acceptable to mistreat academic, intellectual or creative work that has been done by other people by representing it as your own original work.

Academic integrity is important because it is the core value on which the University's learning, teaching and research activities are based. Victoria University's reputation for academic integrity adds value to your qualification.

The University defines plagiarism as presenting someone else's work as if it were your own, whether you mean to or not. 'Someone else's work' means anything that is not your own idea. Even if it is presented in your own style, you must acknowledge your sources fully and appropriately. This includes:

- Material from books, journals or any other printed source
- The work of other students or staff
- Information from the internet
- Software programs and other electronic material
- Designs and ideas
- The organisation or structuring of any such MATERIAL.

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

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

COMMUNICATION OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

All additional information or information on changes will be conveyed to students via Blackboard, or by email to all class members, as well as in seminars.

GENERAL UNIVERSITY STATUTES AND POLICIES

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

COURSE PROGRAMME: TRIMESTER 1

Week 1	06/03/09	What is Narrative?	Abbott, Ch. 1 "Narrative and Life" Abbott, Ch. 2 "Defining Narrative"
Week 2	13/03/09		Rimmon-Kenan, Ch. 1 "Introduction" Ryan, "Toward a Definition of Narrative" [tbs] Abbott, Ch. 3 "The Borders of Narrative" Plato, "The Allegory of the Cave" [tbs] Aristotle, "Plot" [tbs]
Week 3	20/03/09	Mimesis and Diegesis	Abbott, Ch. 4 "The Rhetoric of Narrative" Abbott, Ch. 6 "Narration"
Week 4	27/03/09		Rimmon-Kenan, Ch 7 "Narration: Levels and Voices" Rimmon-Kenan, Ch 8 "Narration: Speech Representation" Lodge, "Mimesis and Diegesis in Modern Fiction" [tbs] (Reading Report 1 due 20/03/09 by 5 pm)
Week 5	03/04/09	Time and Narrative	Rimmon-Kenan, <i>Narrative Fiction</i> , Ch. 4 "Text: Time" Keen, "Timing: How Long and How Often?" [tbs]
Week 6	(no second seminar)		(Reading Report 2 due 03/04/09 by 5 pm)
Mid Trimester Break: (Good) Friday 10 April – Friday 24 April 2009			
Week 7	01/05/09	Story and Discourse	Rimmon-Kenan, Ch. 2, "Story: Events" Culler, "Story and Discourse in the Analysis of Narrative" [tbs]
Week 8	08/05/09		(Reading Report 3 due 01/05/09 by 5 pm)
Week 9	15/05/09	Narrative Versions and Adaptations	Abbott: Ch 9 "Adaptation Across Media" Mittell, "Film and Television Narrative" [tbs]
Week 10	22/05/09		Smith, "Narrative Versions, Narrative Theories" [tbs] (Reading Report 4 due 15/05/09 by 5 pm)
Week 11	31/05/09	Interpretation and meaning	Abbott, Ch 7, "Interpreting Narrative" Abbott, Ch 8 "Three Ways to Interpret Narrative"
Week 12	05/06/09		Abbott, Ch 12 "Narrative Negotiation" (Reading Report 5 due 31/05/09 by 5 pm)

Mid-Year Break: Monday 8 June – Sunday 12 July 2009

COURSE PROGRAMME: TRIMESTER 2

Week 13	17/07/09	Closure	Abbott, Ch. 5 "Closure" Graff, "Determinacy/Indeterminacy" [tbs]
Week 14	24/07/09		Brooks, "An Unreadable Report" [tbs]
Week 15	31/07/09	Sign and Structure	<i>Tools for Cultural Studies</i> Ch. 2 "Signs and Systems" [tbs]
Week 16	07/08/09		
Week 17	14/08/09	The linguistic model and the question of reference (1)	Abbott, Ch. 11 "Narrative and Truth" Abbott, Ch. 12 "Narrative Worlds"
Week 18	21/08/09		Rimmon-Kenan, Ch 11 "Towards..." Currie, Ch 2 "Terminologisation" Roland Barthes, "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives" [extract; tbs]

Mid Trimester Break: Monday 24 August – Sunday 6 September 2009

Week 19	11/09/09	The linguistic model and the question of reference (2)	Barthes, "Textual Analysis of Poe's 'Valdemar'." [tbs] Culler, <i>Deconstruction</i> , Chapter 2.1 "Writing and Logocentrism" [tbs]
Week 20	18/09/09		(Essay due 18/09/09 by 5 pm)
Week 21	25/09/09	The Reader	Rimmon-Kenan, Ch 9 "The Text and its Reading" Booth, from <i>The Rhetoric of Fiction</i> (on <i>Emma</i>) [extract; tbs]
Week 22	02/10/09		Currie, Ch 1 "The Manufacture of Identities"
Week 23	09/10/09	Narrative, Politics and History	Currie, Ch 4 "Narrative, Politics and History" Currie, Ch 7 "The Dark Clouds of Enlightenment"
Week 24	16/09/09		Greenblatt and Gallagher, from <i>Introducing New Historicism</i> [extract; tbs]

Examination Period: Tuesday 27 October – Saturday 14 November 2009