Purpose:

512 is designed to introduce you to and build upon your knowledge of some of the literary critical approaches and major issues in the field of English studies. In addition, this course includes information on scholarly resources and research strategies you need to know in order to enter critical conversations about literary works. You will write a carefully argued 15-20 page paper as your individual contribution to the conversation. The course also requires collaborative and interactive work characteristic of the profession: work on a glossary, choosing and discussion of issues and scholarly articles, presentation of a critical approach, sharing your writing and commenting on other writers’ papers.

Outcomes:

Students will

–gain an introductory knowledge of some of the major theoretical approaches currently informing literary studies
–build knowledge of specialized terminology used in the field of literary studies
–gain awareness of some of the issues surrounding literary controversies
–formulate questions appropriate to literary studies
–build knowledge of scholarly research tools and skills necessary to explore and respond to questions in literary criticism and theory
–articulate and synthesize the arguments of literary critics and theorists whose work informs literary studies
–write at least one paper that advances a scholarly thesis, shows evidence of a conscious theoretical approach or approaches, and integrates and responds to relevant criticism
–cite and document scholarly research according to MLA conventions.

Texts:

* A Practical Introduction to Literary Criticism and Theory, M. Keith Booker.
* The Norton Anthology of Literary Criticism and Theory, 2nd ed., Vincent B. Leitch
* After Theory, Terry Eagleton
* MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 8th ed.

Articles and other materials in course packet at bookstore.
Recommended reference works and introductions:
(Note that this list is not in MLA works cited format because I wanted to group works according to type and emphasize the title, rather than citing the author in a text and making it easy to find that author in a list of works. For examples of MLA citation format, see the MLA Handbook. Purdue Owl is a generally reliable on-line source for MLA format.)

An up-to-date dictionary (print or on-line)

*A Handbook to Literature*, Holman and Harmon, 8th ed. (or any up-to-date literary handbook).
H and H will have some “theory” terms, but will be most helpful for literary terms and movements, such as “metonymy” and “Romanticism.”

Hawthorn includes some literary terms but is most helpful with theoretical terms and approaches, such as “hegemony,” “gaze,” and “postcolonialism.”


*Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction*, Robert Young (CWU library / I have a copy.)

*Postmodernism: A Very Short Introduction*, Christopher Butler (CWU library / I have a copy.)

*Poststructuralism: A Very Short Introduction*, Catherine Belsey (CWU library / I have a copy.)

Oxford’s *Very Short Introductions* cover a variety of subjects and cost 11.95 each.

*English in Practice: In Pursuit of English Studies*, Peter Barry (CWU library / I have a copy.)
Designed for undergraduates, this is a useful and readable text for graduates and teachers as well. The distinctions Barry makes between commentary, discussion, and analysis in Chapter 12 may be especially helpful for evaluating your own writing and that of others.

*Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*, Peter Barry, 3rd ed. (CWU Library)
This work purports to be the “best introduction for students encountering literary and cultural theory for the first time.” I’ve only browsed this new (2009) edition, but it looks useful. Like many introductions to theory written in English, it has a British point of view (the author is at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth). It provides a brief history of English studies.

*Critical Theory Today: A User Friendly Guide*, Lois Tyson, 2nd ed. (I have a copy.)
Tyson’s book takes students through eleven types of literary criticism, all of which she uses to interpret F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*. This new edition (2006) includes
“clarifications wherever my own students have had repeated difficulty, over the years, in understanding a particular concept” (xi).


This is the newest edition of the MLA’s introduction to scholarship with all new essays. (The two essays in our packet are from the second edition; I’ve included them because they are still useful for introducing fundamental concepts and terms.)


*MLA Bibliography* (on-line under data bases on the library’s home page) - This is your most essential source for up-to-date work in English studies. Some full-text items can be found in *Project Muse* and *JSTOR*, but remember that these data bases include relatively few titles in literature. Other data bases that may be useful are *Academic Search Complete*, *Literature Criticism Online* and *Literary Reference Center*.


If you need a review of how arguments with sources are constructed, look at the suggestions in this book. Graff and Birkenstein take you through the conventions of setting up a controversy based on what sources have said and then situating yourself in the conversation.

**Assignments:**

1) One informal discussion essay that explores the ways you have learned to read literature (3-4 pages): What do you notice when you read a literary work – a novel, a poem or a group of poems, a play, an essay? How did you learn to notice such things? What expectations and assumptions do you bring to your reading? Where/how did you learn what to expect? Can you think of an example of your reading changing over time? For example, have you ever read a novel, story, poem, etc., and loved it, then returned to it later and wondered what you saw in it? What had changed? Or have you ever read something which you considered boring or unintelligible, which you thought interesting and clear years later? You do not need to answer all of these questions in your essay. Focus on questions that allow you to become more conscious of the way you read.

2) Contributions to the course glossary: Contemporary literary criticism has a large and growing vocabulary. I'll ask you to collaborate with your classmates on choosing words to go into the glossary and writing clear definitions, with examples.

3) Creating a presentation on a critical approach: The presentation will involve assigning reading for the class—including 1) an introduction to the approach from Booker, or in the case of queer theory, the packet article by Kathy Rudy; 2) introduction and selected essays from Leitch; and 3) an example of literary criticism (critical article or book chapter) using the approach you
are discussing to interpret a specific literary work or works. The presentation includes explaining key principles/assumptions of the approach and discussing problematic elements with the class. Keep in mind when you choose your example of criticism that critics often combine approaches; you need to be concerned only that the example of criticism you’re discussing is a major part of the writer’s approach. Also keep in mind that no piece of literary criticism can be truly representative of a particular approach. You are choosing an example, not the quintessential Marxist or feminist or postcolonial criticism essay (such essays do not exist). As a rule, don’t choose an essay from a casebook because they are often formulaic, but if you have a casebook essay you think is a good example, discuss it with me.

4) Choosing a critical article to assign to and discuss with the class: These are articles that you find particularly useful or about which you have some major question that you think the class may be able to clarify through discussion.

5) A proposal and an annotated bibliography: The 250-300 word proposal explains what your critical essay will be about. You’ll hand in the proposal for feedback, then turn in a revised version, followed by an annotated bibliography of twenty items: Annotations should be between 90-110 words in length and should be both descriptive and evaluative. “Evaluative” means that you have evaluated them for your purposes. You might find that an article is well argued, scholarly, and enlightening but not of much help to you for reasons which you briefly explain. Use complete sentences. Some inequities may exist in this assignment given that some people might read twenty 30-page works and some might read twenty 10-page works. Most scholarly articles, however, are at least 20 pages. Although length of critical works may depend somewhat on what you choose to write about – vast numbers of long articles on Wordsworth, for example, fewer long articles on Erdrich – try to include substantial works in the bibliography. You do not need to read an entire book to annotate it: reading the introduction and/or selected chapters should tell you whether it’s likely to be useful to you. Examples of student bibliographies are in the packet.

6) One 15 to 20 page critical essay with notes and works cited:

This project includes: --formulating some questions at issue about a work or subject in which you are interested and thinking about which critical approaches would be most useful for addressing these questions
--conducting research to see what others have said about the issue(s)/work(s)
--compiling an annotated bibliography
--focusing and reformulating questions and/or critical approaches based on research
--deciding how you can enter the conversation (your audience comprising both critics and our class)
--writing your paper with notes and bibliography carefully arguing a thesis of your own
--reading and discussing others' papers; having your paper read and discussed
--revising your paper
Avoid Plagiarism: Be sure that any direct quotes you use are enclosed in quotation marks and accurately cited. If you paraphrase other writers’ ideas, you still need to cite their work.

Revision policy: Usually, given the length of the quarter, there is little time for revision of graded work. If you receive a grade of C+ or lower on the “ways of reading” essay or glossary assignment, contact me to discuss your options. If you decide to rewrite, the revision can receive a grade no higher than B- (80-83%) in order to be fair to people who did not have this option. You do have a chance to rewrite the proposal (see schedule). Presentations cannot be revised because that would require more in-class time. The annotated bibliography and the final paper are due near the end of the quarter and so cannot be revised.

If you need disability related educational accommodations, contact Disability Services at 2102 or DS@cwu.edu. Please let me know about any accommodations made through DS.

Grades:

“Ways of reading” essay ----------------------------- 25pts.
Glossary ------------------------------------------35 pts.
Critical approach presentation ------------------50 pts.
Choosing critical article for class discussion ----40 pts.
Annotated bibliography --------------------------50 pts.
Final paper ---------------------------------------100 pts.
Attendance/participation ------------------------40 pts.

Total: 340 pts.
Schedule

Once we begin glossary and approach studies, the schedule will largely depend on how many people are in the class.

Wed., Sept. 21  
Course introduction
Discuss ideas for “ways of reading” essay
As you read, collect glossary terms to assign to members of the class on Oct 1.

Outside of class: **Look over various kinds of criticism/theory in the textbooks; think about which you might want to work on.** Decisions need to be made by **Wed., Oct. 1.**

Mon., Sept. 26  
*Brief* (3-page) essay on ways of reading due
“Literary Interpretation” and “Literary Theory”
Critical conversations: Judith Fetterley - from *The Resisting Reader*
Note how Fetterley is entering a critical conversation about “Rip Van Winkle” and *The Bostonians*.
(All readings are in the course packet.)

Wed., Oct. 28  
Critical conversations: Susan Lanser on “The Yellow Wallpaper”
Chinua Achebe and Frances B. Singh on *Heart of Darkness*
Gayatry Spivak on *Jane Eyre, Wide Sargasso Sea, and Frankenstein*
(all in packet)
Decisions about critical approaches on which you’ll lead class discussion
Decisions about who will be responsible for which glossary terms on Wed., Oct. 8.

Mon., Oct. 3  
Library resources with reference librarian - Lib. 154

Wed., Oct. 5  
Glossary presentations

Mon., Oct. 10  
Glossary presentations

Wed., Oct. 12  
Faculty development/student study day

Mon., Oct. 17  
First critical approach

Wed., Oct. 19  
Second approach

Mon., Oct. 24  
Third approach

Wed., Oct. 26  
Fourth approach
Mon., Oct. 31  Fifth approach

Wed., Nov. 2  Sixth approach / or other approaches/issues you want to discuss / or section of *After Theory*, Chapters 1 and 3
**Assignments of critical articles, chapters, or book introductions you’ve chosen for the class to read**

**Thurs., Nov. 3**  Hand in proposal for final paper for feedback. Proposals due by 1:00 at my office.

Mon., Nov. 7  Examples of interesting criticism you’ve found in your research / discussion

Wed., Nov. 9  Examples of interesting criticism you’ve found in your research / discussion

**Thurs., Nov. 10**  Revised proposals and annotated bibliographies due at my office by 1:00 - no late assignments.

Mon., Nov. 14  Examples of interesting criticism you’ve found in your research / discussion

Wed., Nov. 16  Examples of interesting criticism you’ve found in your research / discussion

Mon., Nov. 21  Ten minute presentations of thesis and approach for final paper

Wed., Nov. 23  Thanksgiving break

Mon., Nov. 28  **Workshop** on revised drafts

Wed., Nov. 30  Discussion of section in *After Theory* - Chapters 1 and 3 if not discussed before; Chapters 5 and 6 if we’ve already discussed earlier chapters
Please fill out on-line course evaluations.

Papers due Wed., Dec. 7 at 1:00.