2913 Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory (F2021)

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Prerequisites 1.0 FCE in English at the first-year level, including English 1115 Method of delivery: Online, asynchronous

Instructor information

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I am very happy to meet with you one-on-one via Zoom at a mutually agreeable time. Please do not hesitate to email me!

🥏 PLEASE NOTE: This syllabus is subject to slight changes. All changes will be noted in the Announcements section of the course D2L site.

Should you require information or documents from our office in another format, please let us know. We are happy to help you. Contact your instructor or our Department of English Administrative Assistant.

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Preamble

In the sciences, theory is an educated explanation of how the world works which can be used to make models that predict the outcome of a study or experiment. A theory of gravity, for instance, will help you predict what happens when you drop a ball. A theory of evolution by natural selection will help explain what biological organisms exhibit certain traits.

But in literary and cultural studies, theory is different. Here, theory is best understood as a **method for asking thoughtful questions** about literary and cultural works of art or, as we'll come to know them, about *texts*.

In this class, you will be introduced to several of the dominant paradigms of theory for analyzing literary and cultural texts and you'll have the opportunity to try them out.

Our theme this year is **ghosts and haunting.** This is a useful theme because, whether you personally believe in ghosts or not, the fact that so many people do believe, and that ghosts play such a large role in literary and popular culture, reveals the **power of the imagination**. The power of the imagination is what we are interested in in literary and cultural studies.

Throughout the term we will be learning about what prevalent theoretical paradigms might have to teach us about ghosts and about literature and culture that focuses on ghosts.

Important things to know about this class

1. **Many students find this course very difficult and frustrating** because we are dealing with abstract concepts that intersect with sociology, philosophy, economics, political science and psychology.

2. Even if you can't see it now, **this course is important for the future of your English degree** because it will give you a strong foundation for literary and cultural analysis.

3. Even though most students find this the hardest or most frustrating course of their undergraduate degree, **the median grade in this class is almost always equivalent to other second-year classes.** So please don't worry.

4. Often, **students do quite poorly on their first assignments** and gradually improve over the term.

Required course materials

All books can be purchased via the Lakehead University bookstore.

(novella) **Henry James (ed. P. Beidler), *The Turn of the Screw* (3d ed.), 2010**

THIS EXACT EDITION *of* The Turn of the Screw *is* ***REQUIRED*** *because it has critical essays essential to this course.*

(novel) **Toni Morrison, *Beloved*, 1987**

You are welcome to read ***any*** *edition of this novel and it is also available as an ebook here: Amazon/Kindle or Google Books*

 (play) **William Shakespeare**, ***Hamlet,* c.1600**

You are welcome to read ***any*** *edition of this play, and many are available for free online*

 (film) ***The Shining*, 1980**

This is a widely available commercial film and available on certain streaming services or for online rental. Here is a link to it on YouTube.

 (film) ***Rhymes for Young Ghouls*, 2013**

This is a widely available commercial film and available on certain streaming services or for online rental. Here is a link to it on YouTube.

 (film) ***The Social Dilemma*, 2020**

This film is available on Netflix. If for any reason you are unable to access it, please contact me.

 **Various short texts** linked throughout the term via our class's D2L platform.

Assignments and Grading

- 30% = MINI-QUIZZES (10 x a maximum of 3 points)
- 10% = QUESTIONS (10x 1 point)
- 60% = MIX-AND-MATCH PROJECTS (3 x 20 each)
    - Individual mini-essays, or
    - Group creative assignments

Quizzes

The purpose of this assignment is to test student's comprehension of course materials.

- Each week there will be a 3-question multiple choice quiz on D2L that will gauge your comprehension of the week's **lecture** and **required texts**.
- The three questions will be **randomly selected** from a pool of questions. It is unlikely that any two students will get the same selection.
- You may start and complete the quiz any time within 14 days of the launch of the module. Once you begin, you will have 10 minutes to complete the quiz, so while it is technically "open book" you should make sure to **work from careful notes**.
- There are eleven quizzes throughout the term. Each question is worth 1 point and the maximum score for any quiz is therefore 3/3. Over the term, you may earn a maximum of 30 points, which is intended to offer you the opportunity to receive full marks even if you miss one quiz, or so that you can make up for low-scoring quizzes later in the term.

Questions

The purpose of this assignment is to encourage students to ask pertinent questions about class material and demonstrate their thorough engagement with it.

- Up until the end of the first Friday after a module has been released you are invited to **contribute a question to the Questions forum on D2L** for a point.
- **I will answer or address some of the questions in a video** released on the second Monday of each module.
- **Questions should focus on the lecture or readings**, not on assignments or course logistics (those are, of course, welcome, but not for points).
- Questions should be 3 sentences long and **demonstrate you have read the lecture and assigned readings carefully** and that you are asking a question that either seeks to

    - (a) clarify confusing concepts,
    - (b) see if your understanding of the concept is correct,
    - (c) test an example of the concept.

- Your question should have the following three-sentence format:
    - First, **summarize the relevant information** from the text to frame your question *(eg. "In this week's lecture, you write that 'imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence.'")*
    - Second, **frame your question** *(eg. "But if that's the case, how do we tell ideology from actual facts about the world?")*
    - Third, **get specific** *(eg. "Is the narrator in The Turn of the Screw suffering from ideology because her grip on reality is so shakey")*

- Students are eligible to receive a single mark for each module, to a maximum of 10 over the whole course (i.e. even if you submit questions for all 11 modules you'll still only get 10 points). This assignment is pass/fail, **evaluated on the depth and thoughtfulness of the question**.

Mix-and-match projects

Throughout the term, students will pursue three reflection projects. These projects can take two forms, chosen by the student:

1. A 1,500-2,000 word **mini-essay** on an assigned module topic, due on the last day of the module in question, to be completed by the student alone.

2. A **creative group assignment** on the assigned module topic, due on the last day of the module in question.

Students can receive a maximum of 20 points for each project and may complete a maximum of three in any combination: three mini-essays, three creative group assignments, or a combination.

Mini-essays

The purpose of this assignment is to allow students to demonstrate they have a firm grasp of the course material and can apply it to literary and cultural texts.

- Mini-essay prompts can be found in the assignments tab of D2L at least one month before they are due.

- Mini-essays should be about 1,500-2,000 words in length and built around a strong thesis statement and a clear outline.

- The primary purpose of this mini-essay is to **demonstrate a complex, in-depth and nuanced grasp of the material covered in the lectures and required readings.**

- Evaluation out of 20 points is as follows:
    - 15pts for accurate and thoughtful reflection of class lectures and readings
    - 5pts for originality and expression of argument
    - Up to -5pts may be deducted for technical errors (spelling, grammar, citation, etc.)

Creative group assignments

The purpose of this assignment is to allow students to demonstrate they can work together to express a firm grasp of the course material and can apply it creatively to literary and cultural texts.

- Creative assignment prompts can be found in the assignments tab of D2L at least one month before they are due.

- The specific outcomes and expectations of each creative group assignments.

- Students MUST use the registration function under the Groups tab of D2L to join a group. Groups may have up to four members.

- All group members will receive the same grade for this assignment. Students are expected to communicate among themselves about the best way to complete the assignment and work together.

- If a member of a group is not doing the work expected of them I will consider removing them from a group at the request of all the other group members, who should email me together.

- Remember that the primary purpose of the creative group assignment is to **demonstrate a complex, in-depth and nuanced grasp of the material covered in the lectures and required readings.**

Assignment Policies

Due dates

All due dates are programmed into D2L. There are absolutely no exception to deadlines set by D2L except where required by university policy (eg. pre-registered accommodations). There is a great deal of flexibility built into the course.

Formats

Unless otherwise specified, all assignments must be submitted.

- Via the D2L platform

- In PDF or Word format

- Formatted for regular 8.5x11 paper with 1” margins, using a basic 12pt font (eg. Times New Roman or Ariel), double-spaced.

- Use MLA format for citations.

Standards

All assignments will be marked in accordance with the English Department Marking Standards except in cases otherwise specified.

Collaboration and plagiarism

Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of someone else's words and/or ideas. Not acknowledging your debt to the ideas of a secondary source, failing to use quotation marks when you are quoting directly, buying essays from essay banks, copying another student's work, or working together on an individual assignment, all constitute plagiarism. Resubmitting material you've submitted to another course is also academic dishonesty. All plagiarized work (in whole or in part) and other forms of academic dishonesty, including collaborating on individual assignments, will be reported and infractions penalized as required by the Student Code of Conduct - Academic Integrity

Modules and required readings/viewing

⚠
This schedule is subject to change. Please keep up-to-date on D2L. If there is a discrepancy, the module subpages on D2L should be taken for the authoritative guide.

All texts listed on the syllabus are **required** and subject to evaluation.

00 - Course introduction (Sept 7-19)

1. [Lecture] "**Lecture 00 - Why study theory with ghosts?**"

2. [News Article] "**Why Some People See Ghosts and Other Apparitions,**" Frank T. McAndrew, from *Psychology Today,* 9 July 2015.

01 - Ghosts of futures past (Sept 13-26)

1. [Lecture] "**Lecture 01 - The ghosts of futures' past**"

2. [film] ***The Shining,*** dir. Stanley Kubrick, 1980. 2h26min

3. [news article] **"The ghosts of our lives," ** Tom Whyman, from *New Statesman*, 31 July 2019.

4. [essay] **"A future with no future," ** Mikkel Krause Frantzen, from *LA Review of Books*, 16 December 2019.

5. [YouTube] **"Hauntology, Lost Futures and 80s Nostalgia," ** 2018. 11min

02 - The uses of ghosts (Sept 20-Oct 3)

1. [Lecture] "**Lecture 02 - The uses of ghosts**"

2. [play] **Hamlet**, *William Shakespeare*, c. 1600

3. [explainer] "**Elizabethan context for Hamlet**," Isabel Smith-Bernstein, 2019.

4. [news article] "***The Lion King* is a fascistic story. No remake can change that**," Dan Hassler-Forest, *Washington Post,* 10 July 2019.

03 - Becoming ghosts (Sept 27-Oct 10)

1. [Lecture] "**Lecture 03- Becoming ghostly**"

2. [short story] "**Newton's Sleep**," Ursula K. Le Guin

3. [academic chapter] "**Becoming Ghost**," Richard Gilman-Opalsky

04 - Ghosts of discourse (Oct 4-Oct 24)

***NB:** This module runs across reading week. As a result, all deadlines that fall in reading week will be postponed by one week.*

1. [Lecture] "**Lecture 04 - Discourse and ideology**"

2. [academic chapter] "**Discourse and Power**" and "**Representing the Other**" (The West and the Rest), Stuart Hall

3. [academic chapter] "**Colonizing knowledges**," Linda Tuhiwai Smith, from *Decolonizing Methodologies* (2nd ed), 2012

4. [short film] *Babakiueria*, dir. Don Featherstone, 1986.

05 - Digital ghosts (Oct 18-31)

1. [Lecture] "**Lecture 05 - Digital Ghosts: Modern and Postmodern**"

2. [short story] "**Smile Dog**," Anonymous, at *CreepyPasta,* 28 April 2010.

3. [academic article] "'**Spread the Word**': Creepypasta, Hauntology, and an Ethics of the Curse," Line Henrikson, in *University of Toronto Quarterly* 87(1), 2018.

4. [film] ***The Social Dilemma**,* 2020. 94min. *this video is available via Netflix*

06 - Reading *The Turn of the Screw* (Oct 25-Nov 7)

1. [Lecture] "**Lecture 06 - Reading and responding to *The Turn of the Screw***"

2. [novella] "**The Turn of the Screw**," Henry James, 1900. [The complete text of the novella is included in the Beidler edition]

3. [book chapter] "**Reader-Response Criticism and The Turn of the Screw**" in Beidler, ed. pp. 271-301.

4. [interview] With **Daniel Hannah**

07 - The uncanny (Nov 1-14)

1. [Lecture] "**Lecture 07 - Freudian dreams and nightmares**"

2. [book chapter] **"Psychoanalytic Criticism and *The Turn of the Screw***" in Beidler, ed. pp. 302-332.

3. [podcast] "**Wishful dreaming: Freud and the discovery of our inner life**" CBC Ideas podcast, 5 November 2019. 54mins.

4. [interview] With **Todd Dufresne**

08 - The Haunted House of Gender (Nov 8-21)

1. [Lecture] "**Lecture 08 - Gender becomes you**"

2. [book chapter] "**Gender Criticism and The Turn of the Screw**" in Beidler, ed. pp.333-359.

3. [Essay] "The Feminist Power of Female Ghosts" Andi Zeisler, *Bitch Magazine*, 12 September 2013.

4. [academic article] "The Death of the Other/Father: A Feminist Reading of Derrida's Hauntology" Nancy Holland, *Hypatia* 16(1), 2001.

5. [interview] With **Monica Flegel**

09 - The Spectres of Marx (Nov 15-28)

1. [Lecture] "**Lecture 09 - Marxism**"

2. [book chapter] "**Marxist Criticism and The Turn of the Screw**" in Beidler, ed. pp. 360-389.

3. [podcast] "**Reclaiming Marxism in an age of meaningless work**" CBC Ideas podcast, 14 June 2019. 54mins.

4. [interview] With **Leigh Claire La Berge**

10 - *Beloved* (Nov 22-Dec 5)

1. [Lecture] "**Lecture 10 - The ghosts of slavery**"

2. [novel] ***Beloved***, Toni Morrison, 1987

3. [academic article] "**Black Feminist Hauntology: Rememory the Ghosts of Abolition?**" Viviane Saleh-Hanna in *Champ Pénal/Penal Field 22*, 2015.

11 - Haunted lands (Nov 29-Dec 12)

1. [Lecture] "**Lecture 11 - Haunted lands**"

2. [film] *Rhymes for Young Ghouls,* dir. Jeff Barnaby, 2014, 88mins.

3. [poem and reading] "Jiibay or Aandizooke," Leanne Simpson

   Video version: https://vimeo.com/166309937

4. [academic article] "Glossary of haunting, " Eve Tuck and C. Ree, in *The Handbook of Autoethnography*, 2013.

Important advice

Stay organized and on-time

The course is designed to balance flexibility with measures to keep you on track with workload. Still, it will be important to manage your time effectively. Lakehead's Student Support Centre's Academic Support Zone has resources to help: https://www.lakeheadu.ca/students/academic-success/student-success-centre/academic-support-zone

Read longer works ahead

Some texts, notably *The Turn of the Screw* and *Beloved* are longer-form. It is advisable to start reading these in the weeks prior to the class where they are assigned so you're not trying to speed through them. There are also excellent audiobook versions of both, though a text copy is important to retain for reference.

Read carefully, and more than once

Theory is difficult and for many students this is the most difficult course of their whole degree. The language and concepts we study can be intimidating. The key is to read carefully, and read more than once. If you find yourself confused, my advice is to highlight the confusing passage and move on to read the rest of the piece. Then come back to the highlighted passage at the end and see if it's clearer.

Read the lectures first

In the lectures I will try and offer a broad overview and contextualization of the theoretical texts we will be reading. This will hopefully help a great deal in giving you a frame within which to read the more difficult theoretical texts.

Take notes

Probably the best way to take notes on reading is to copy down key passages in texts and then annotating those passages in two ways:

1. Put it in your own words as best you can;

2. Make a reflective comment on what the passage, as you understand it, makes you think about, or link it to something else we've read in class.

Ask questions and seek help

I am ready to meet with you one-on-one during scheduled office hours or at another convenient time. It would be my pleasure (and also my job) to work to help you understand difficult materials. There really are no bad or stupid questions, and if you have the question it is almost certain others do as well.

Other information

Objectives

- Develop competency in a close and critical reading of theoretical texts and an ability to apply them to an analysis of literacy and cultural texts, as well as broader societal contexts.

- Develop critical and analytic thinking skills, especially as regards the manifestations of various intersecting forms of power.

- Deepen understandings of and sensitivity to difference, oppression and social justice themes in contemporary theory, literature and culture.

- Develop clear, concise and effective writing skills to summarize and respond to complex texts and approach theoretical ideas in critical and analytic ways.

- Develop the facility to speak and communicate clearly and cogently about complex, abstract and challenging material.

- Develop a historical and contextual understanding of the origins and resonances of theoretical, cultural and literary texts.

Communications

- Due to the number of students and other pressures, I, the professor can only strive to respond to emails and other messages within 48 hours.

- Students are advised to communicate with one another and the professor via Lakehead University's suite of communications platforms, primarily Lakehead (MyInfo) email or D2L's platforms.

- All messages and emails to the professor should be written in professional prose.

- Any and all technical issues with the D2L platform should be reported to the Help Desk.

- Students are strongly advised to post their questions to the D2L discussion board as it may help others who have the same question.

Expectations

All students will:

- Read/view all the required materials

- Submit materials for evaluation on time and in a professional manner (eg. proofread)

- Participate in class with an open, compassionate mind

- Practice respect for the opinions and approaches of others

- Be willing to question and challenge one’s own beliefs and ideas

- Regularly participate in class discussions informed by the required and supplemental readings

- Undertake assignments with enthusiasm and curiosity

University Policies

- Students in this course are expected to conform to the Student Code of Conduct - Academic Integrity.

- **Accommodations:** Lakehead University is committed to achieving full accessibility for persons with disabilities in accordance with the terms of the Ontario Human Rights Code. This occurs through a collaborative process that acknowledges a collective obligation to develop an accessible learning environment that both meets the needs of students and preserves the essential academic requirements of the course. Part of this commitment includes arranging academic accommodations for students with disabilities to ensure they have an equitable opportunity to participate in all of their academic activities. If you think you may need accommodations, you are strongly encouraged to contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) and register as early as possible.

- This course outline is available online through the English Department homepage and/or the Desire2Learn or My Courselink site for the course.

Mental health

As a university student, you may sometimes experience mental health concerns or stressful events that interfere with your academic performance and negatively impact your daily activities.

All of us can benefit from support during times of struggle. If you or anyone you know experiences academic stress, difficult life events or feelings of anxiety or depression, Student Health and Wellness is here to help. Their services are free for Lakehead Students and appointments are available. You can learn more about confidential mental health services available on and off campus at lakeheadu.ca/shw.

Remember that getting help is a smart and courageous thing to do- for yourself, for those you care about, and for those who care about you. Asking for support sooner rather than later is almost always helpful.