English 2913: Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory  Fall 2020

Course Location: Zoom, via Mycourselink
Class Times: Monday and Wednesday 2:30-4:00

Prerequisites: One FCE in English at the first-year level, including English 1115, or permission of the Chair of the Department

Notes: Besides being required for HBA, HBASc, or BA English majors, English 2913 counts as a second-year Methods course for students in the HBASc or BASc Interdisciplinary Studies programs. Students who have received previous credit in English 2903 may not take English 2913 for credit.

To Our Students: This course outline is available online through the English Department homepage and the Desire2Learn site for the course. Should you require information or documents 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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Instructor Information:
Instructor: Dr. Alice den Otter
Telephone: I am happy to consult by phone or zoom, as arranged by email.
Email: adenotte@lakeheadu.ca
Office Hours: Drop by for a Zoom chat MW 4-5 or by appointment.

Graduate Assistant: Melanie Larson
Email: melarson@lakeheadu.ca

Calendar Description
An introduction to key concepts informing critical thought and practice in literary and cultural studies with a focus on theories of language, ideology, and identity.

Course Overview
The word “theory” comes from the root “theo,” meaning “I see.” What we see in literature and culture depends on our ways of seeing, which are shaped by our theoretical lenses, whether we are aware of them or not. This course provides various lenses, permitting us to see literary and cultural texts in many ways, thus enriching our knowledge and experience, not only of the texts but also of human nature, culture, politics, and the environment. Rather than just applying the theories generally, we will be reading key theoretical texts themselves, following the thought process of various writers who shifted the ways that people have viewed the world. We will engage with these theories, exploring ways in which language, identity, and ideology continue to shift, and applying their insights to our own critical thought and practice.

Part of our exploration will be reflective, questioning and pondering ways in which the theories resonate or clash with our own experiences of literature and the world. We will be communicating our thoughts in oral group and written discussions that will require active engagement with the theories. The other part of our exploration will be practical, discerning the methods associated with each of these theories, clarifying the concepts and terminology used, and applying them to literary and cultural texts. By the end of the course, we will be able to identify and explain basic theoretical concepts, understand their relationship to relevant schools of theory, and use them to interpret literary and social texts.

Course Objectives and/or Learner Outcomes
The goal of this course is to enable you to become familiar with various literary theories and critical practices (methods) and know how and when to use them. Your experience in subsequent English courses will be greatly enhanced by the skills learned in this class for thinking critically about literature and culture using literary theory.

By the end of this course you will be able to:

1. Know & Understand Literary Theory
   - Explain a theorist’s key concept or cluster of concepts;
   - Demonstrate that you can read difficult theoretical texts by including relevant quotations and paraphrases in your assignments;
• Discuss key concepts and define terms employed by a range of theorists and theoretical approaches;
• Express critical reflections about language, identity, and ideology using literary theory;

2. **Apply theoretical concepts in the analysis of literature and other cultural texts**
• Demonstrate how a theoretical concept illuminates or critiques a particular literary or cultural text;
• Explain how a particular literary or cultural text validates or destabilizes a particular theory;
• Formulate and support a logical argument in a written paper, providing evidence for your claims;
• Organize and structure an academic paper, beyond the three-paragraph essay format;
• Use MLA format effectively in written papers.

3. **Synthesize & Transform using literary and cultural theories**
• Articulate critical perspectives using literary and cultural theories;
• Compare two or more theoretical approaches;
• Evaluate language, identity, and ideology in everyday culture in terms of responsibility and accountability to friends, family, community, and society in general;
• Discuss issues of social justice and transformation in relation to literature and culture;
• Engage complex theoretical concepts and ideas with respect to literature, current issues and events, the environment, and the global community.

**Course Resources:**

**Required Course Texts**


Rivkin, Julie and Michael Ryan. *Literary Theory: An Anthology*. 3rd ed. Wiley Blackwell, 2017. (Required. Note that the 2nd edition is also acceptable, but a few articles in the 3rd edition are missing in the 2nd edition, which you will need to acquire.)

**Required Online Articles** (consider downloading at beginning of course for easy access later)


Course Website: Mycourselink

Library: https://libguides.lakeheadu.ca/find/online-guides-tutorials

Course Schedule (subject to change if necessary – check “News” in Mycourselink for occasional updates). Note that “RR3” refers to third edition, which is the required text for this course. “RR2” refers to second edition of Rivkin and Ryan textbook, which is acceptable but lacks some articles that you will need to acquire.

Sept. 9 1. What Is Literary and Cultural Theory?  
Introduction to the course. Attend zoom meeting at 2:30, then watch videos posted on Mycourselink.

14 2. How Does Theory affect Critical Practice?  
Before class read “A Short History of Theory” RR3: xi-xxxii. Attend zoom meeting at 2:30, then watch video posted on Mycourselink.

16 3. Language: What Do Formalists think is “Literary” about a Text?  

21 4. Language: How does Formalist Theory Help Us Read?  
Before class read Maracle, Ravensong Chapter 1. Attend zoom meeting at 2:30, then watch video posted on Mycourselink.
23 5. Language: How Does the Structure of Language Work?  
Before class read Saussure, “Course in General Linguistics” RR3: 137-141, RR2: 59-64; Atwood, “You Fit into Me” (online). Attend zoom meeting at 2:30, then watch video posted on Mycourselink.

Before class read Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel” RR3 205-210, RR2 674-79; Ravensong Chapter 2. Attend zoom meeting at 2:30, then watch video posted on Mycourselink.

30 7. Language: What is Double-voiced Narration?  
Before class read Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel” RR3 210-216, RR2 679-85; Ravensong Chapter 3. Attend zoom meeting at 2:30, then watch video posted on Mycourselink.

Oct. 5 8. Language: How Does Dialogism Work in Ravensong?  
Before class read Dadey, “Dialogue with Raven: Bakhtinian Theory and Lee Maracle’s Ravensong” (online). Attend zoom meeting at 2:30, then watch video posted on Mycourselink.

7 9. Language: How Therapeutic Are Our Words?  
Before class read Freud, “The Uncanny” RR3: 592-596; RR2: 418-421. Attend zoom meeting at 2:30, then watch video posted on Mycourselink. Reflective Notebook is due at end of day.

12-14 No Classes. Reading Week  
Read Ravensong Chapters 5-end. Research for Essay proposal.

19 10. Identity: Why Are We Frightened by the Uncanny?  
Before class read Freud, “The Uncanny” RR3: 597-604; RR2: 421-429. Attend zoom meeting at 2:30, then watch video posted on Mycourselink. Essay proposal is due at end of day.

21 11. Identity: What Are We Educated to Repress?  
Before class read Ravensong Chapter 4. Attend zoom meeting at 2:30, then watch video posted on Mycourselink. A-K first discussion post due.

26 12. Identity: How Does Mirroring Construct the Self?  

28 13. Identity: How Does One Write the Body?  
Before class read Cixous, “The Laugh of the Medusa” RR3: 940-948; Fee
and Gunew, “From Discomfort to Enlightenment: An Interview with Lee Maracle” (online). Attend zoom meeting at 2:30, then watch video posted on Mycourselink. L-Z first discussion post due at end of day.


4 **15. Identity: How Does Colonization Affect Subject Positions?** Before class read Said, “Orientalism” RR3: 1107-1122; Ravensong Chapter 7. Attend zoom meeting at 2:30, then watch video posted on Mycourselink. Note: November 6 is last date to withdraw from course without academic penalty. Talk to your instructor if you are struggling. A-K second discussion post due at end of day.


11 **17. Identity & Ideology: How Are Opportunities Shaped by Culture?** Before class read Ravensong Chapter 8. Attend zoom meeting at 2:30, then watch video posted on Mycourselink. L-M second discussion post due at end of day.


25 **21. Ideology: How Does Ideological Interpellation Create Subjects?**

30 22. Ideology: How Do Subjects Respond to the Environment?
Before class read Marland, “Ecocriticism” RR3: 1507-1528; Ravensong Chapter 14. Attend zoom meeting at 2:30, then watch video posted on Mycourselink.

Dec. 2 23. Ideology: How Does Literature Reconceive Ecological Balance?
Before class read Ravensong Chapter 15; Leggatt, “Raven's Plague: Pollution and Disease in Lee Maracle’s Ravensong.” Attend zoom meeting at 2:30, then watch video posted on Mycourselink.

Before class read Ravensong “Epilogue.” Prep for Exam. Attend zoom meeting at 2:30.

Assignments and Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Length</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zoom participation</td>
<td>Throughout term</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Regular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoom group work</td>
<td>Throughout term</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Regular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective Notebook (4 entries)</td>
<td>October 7, 2020</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>2000 words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Posts (3-4 entries)</td>
<td>See schedule, Oct 21-Nov 25.</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>200-350 words each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay Proposal</td>
<td>October 19</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>4 pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay</td>
<td>November 23</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>1800-2000 words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>TBA by Registrar (Dec.10-20)</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>3 hours</td>
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</tbody>
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Assignment Policies

- Submission for grades must always represent independent work prepared for this course. Highly similar (or identical) assignments will receive a grade of zero. An assignment or substantial portions of your own writing may not be submitted for credit in more than one course without the written permission of all instructors involved. Collaboration on assignments is only allowed with prior permission of the instructor.
Assignments are due in the Assignments section of Mycourseslink by 11:59 p.m. (ET) on the dates indicated. If for some reason you have difficulty submitting to the website, send it as an email attachment to adenotte@lakeheadu.ca so as to meet the completion deadline and then try to submit it later. Save regularly, perhaps in separate files, to avoid losing key material at the last minute.

If you require an extension, you must ask for one by email BEFORE the due date. Without an extension, late assignments will be marked down half a letter grade each day they are late without permission; that is, an "A" quality paper due on Tuesday will receive an "A-" on Wednesday, a "B+" on Thursday, etc. Plan ahead, and let your instructor know if time conflicts arise so that we can negotiate a more workable deadline.

All assignments must be in MLA format, which is the standard documentation used for English courses. Assignments should be double spaced, with 1” margins, and in 12 point font.

If you use internet sources, they should be from academic journals or academic books (listed in academic databases, such as MLA Bibliography or JSTOR). Do not consult internet sources that lack a bibliography, works cited, or references at the end. If in doubt, please ask your instructor for assistance. For background information to help you read a particular theory or understand a theoretical term, you may find it useful (but not required) to consult the Glossary of Terms at the back of the Rivkin and Ryan textbook. Also consider checking Mary Klage’s Literary Theory: A Guide, which is available free of charge at https://www.perlego.com/book/394395/literary-theory-the-complete-guide-pdf or J.A. Cuddon’s A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory, available here: file:///C:/Users/Owner/AppData/Local/Temp/J.A.Cuddon.ADictionaryofLiteraryTerms andLiteraryTheory2013.pdf.

To avoid plagiarism, make sure that you give credit to ALL sources (including lecture notes, notes from other classes, or internet sources) that you use for an assignment (including notebook entries and exams), even if you paraphrase them. All direct material quoted from a text, even a single sentence or phrase, MUST be placed in quotation marks, followed by the source reference in parentheses. This is especially important for literary theory. You must cite the use of specific words or phraseologies from theorists the first time you use them, especially when they have coined a term or phrase and/or imbued it with new meaning(s) specific to literary theory. Paraphrases should be followed with parenthetical references. See the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, which is well summarized in grammar handbooks or online at http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/

Failure to properly document sources constitutes plagiarism and is an extremely serious academic offense (see Collaboration/ Plagiarism Rules below). Please see your instructor for help if you are uncertain as to whether or not you are giving credit to sources properly.
• The final exam must be written in three consecutive hours on the date scheduled, so do not make plans for the exam periods until the exam schedule is posted. Let your instructor know if the timing of the exam is an issue.

• Exceptions to these policies are allowed only with a doctor’s note or other appropriate documentation.

Assignment Details

Zoom Discussions 5%
Although this is an online course, your full involvement is requested, including active listening, questioning, and engaged discussion on Zoom. Naturally, simply talking or writing a lot or dominating the discussion does not necessarily constitute quality participation. Discussion needs to be on topic, thoughtful, and responsive to others in the class. Moreover, stimulating questions can be as valuable as knowledgeable answers. For each Zoom class, marks will be awarded as follows:

Absence = 0/5
Being Present and joining in polls, chats, and group work = 3.5/5
Being Present, joining in polls and chats, raising your hand, and speaking = 4/5
Being Present, joining in polls and chats, raising your hand, and speaking particularly well = 5/5

After the lowest 3 marks are dropped, marks for each class will be averaged to yield a mark out of 5. If you miss a class due to an issue out of your own control, please send the instructor an email as soon as possible to find out about alternative ways to earn Zoom discussion marks.

Group work 5%
Various theory readings are more accessible when talking about them or applying them in groups with other students. Zoom breakout rooms will be set up to enable such discussions and groups will be assigned randomly to each room. Each group will report their discoveries or perspectives in written format (and, if time permits, in oral format), which will be marked as follows:

Weak – you’ve completely missed the point, or didn’t complete the assignment = 2/5
Okay – you’ve done the bare minimum but seem to be struggling with the material = 3/5
Good – you understand the material but your notes are too scanty, rely too heavily on quotations, or lack quotations altogether. =3.5/5
Very Good – you understand the material and are able to paraphrase in your own words and include direct quotations to support your views = 4/5
Excellent – you show perceptive insight into the material and are able to paraphrase and include direct quotations to support your views =4.5/5 (or 5/5 in rare cases)
Every person in the group will receive the same mark for the assignment. After the lowest 3 marks are dropped, the marks you receive for group mark throughout the course will be averaged to yield your final mark out of 5.

**Reflective Notebook (on Language) 20%**
For each week until Reading Week, beginning September 14, you will be responsible to write two pages of reflections on one of the theory readings assigned for that week. An ideal entry will dialogue perceptively with the reading, differentiate your ideas (using first person singular: “I” as subject, “me” as object of action) from those of other writers and speakers, and show some progression in theoretical awareness. Each entry will have a distinct focus, engaging a specific issue raised by the text, perhaps in response to class discussion or suggested prompts. Your claims must include quotations from the reading (using parenthetical citation) and should be supported by examples from your own experience of literature and/or culture. The idea is to show YOUR active ponderings, questionings, and confrontations with the theories. Do not simply paraphrase what you have read. And please do not try to write what you think your instructor wants you to think. This is a conversation not a recital. Feel free to disagree with the readings. Entries will be evaluated for relevance, specific (and appropriate) use of theory quotations and of examples, clarity, and perception. Write the reflections in a continuous word file (separated only by dates and reading titles), include your name, course number, and date and then paste the collection (of 4 entries) into the Assignment box on Mycourseslink. Due as a collection (total 1900-2000 words) on or before October 7. Worth 5% per entry x 4 = 20%.

**Online Discussion Posts (on Identity and Ideology) 15%**
After Reading Week, your reflections will change into shared discussions, posted in the online Discussion area of Mycourseslink website once every other week (total: 3 entries). Each entry will be 2-3 typed, double-spaced (12 point font) paragraphs long. Like the Reflective Notebook entries, these discussions will be relatively informal reflections on the reading material for that week, making connections between the theory and literary texts you have read or are reading (even in other classes), or between the theory and linguistic/social practices in everyday life. **At least one entry must be a response to someone else’s posting.** More particularly, each entry must include at least one quote from one of the theory articles studied that week plus at least one example from a relevant literary or cultural “text.” Sometimes the online discussion will be a continuation of class discussion. At other times we will be commenting on or clarifying issues in class that were raised online. Try to keep focused, without rehashing the same point over and over. Sometimes it is good to remain in disagreement and move on. Ad hominem attacks are not permitted. Overlaps are inevitable, but try to distinguish your own voice from others through specific details. Posts will be evaluated for relevance (including responses to others), specificity, clarity, and perception. Each discussion is worth 5% (x3 = 15%).

- If your last name begins with the letters A-K, your discussion posts will be due no later than the following dates: 1) October 21, November 4, November 18, with an option to replace the lowest discussion mark with a fourth entry by December 4.
• If your last name begins with the letters L-Z, your discussion posts will be due no later than the following dates: October 28, November 11, November 25, with an option to replace the lowest discussion mark with a fourth entry by December 4.

**Research Proposal (10%) and Essay (20%)**

In this course, you will research, propose, and write an essay, applying one of the theoretical terms studied in this course to a poem, short story, or film of your choosing. If the text has been thoroughly discussed by critics from many angles, pick a theoretical angle that has not yet been discussed or apply it to a character or detail that has not yet been discussed so as to yield a new insight into the text.

For your **proposal**, please include the following aspects:

1. Write a 150-250 word paragraph explaining which text (poem, short story, novel, film, etc.) you would like to focus on for your essay and why you like it. Be as specific as you can.
2. List in full MLA format two academic journal articles specifically discussing this text. If the text is recent, you may have difficulty finding articles, so consider focusing on a text that is at least 10 years old. To find academic articles, consult the MLA Bibliography or JSTOR (found at LU Library Article Databases). Please email your instructor if you can’t find any articles.
3. Below the MLA documentation for each article, indicate which theoretical approach the critic is using, explaining how you know. Then summarize the main argument in 150-250 words.
4. Finally, brainstorm about a “new” theoretical approach that might yield fresh and interesting insight to your chosen text. (In other words, aim for a theoretical approach that has not yet been used by the other two critics -- and preferably any other critic too—with respect to this text). For example, if the critics use a feminist and psychoanalytic approach, consider taking a marxist or postcolonial approach instead.) When selecting your “new” theoretical approach, specifically mention one theorist and theoretical article from our textbook (preferably one we studied in class) that you think could work well with this text.
5. In 1-4 sentences, using the theoretical vocabulary of your “new” approach, sketch out a potential thesis claim for your essay with three or four aspects to support that claim.
6. The proposal is due October 19 via the Assignment Area of Mycourselink. Length: 4 numbered pages, typed, double-spaced, 12 pt. font, normal margins. Worth 10%.

For your **essay**, apply your chosen theory to the text you described in the proposal. In your first paragraph, introduce the author, title, genre, and key features of your text. Mention the scope of critical responses to the text. Then briefly critique the two perspectives that you summarized in the proposal, but in only one to two sentences each. Mention what the critics have observed and what they have missed. Then articulate your fresh approach, noting how you will be filling the gaps. Mention your chosen theoretical perspective and articulate the “new” thesis that this perspective enables you to support. Your second paragraph should explain your theoretical perspective, defining one or two key terms you have chosen, and clarifying how the
theorist(s) uses it. Use specific quotes to support your summary. The body paragraphs (as many as are needed to discuss your points) should show how this theoretical perspective assists in shedding light on the text, explicating the text in detail with regular quotes from the text, as well as from the theory when needed. Within your conclusion, remind the reader of what the theory enables one to see with respect to this text and why that is important. Perhaps include a recommendation for future readers to consider.

- Remember that all words and ideas that are borrowed (including websites and class lectures) MUST be documented using MLA documentation format.
- The essay is due November 23 via the Assignment Area of Mycourselink. Length: 1800-2000 words. Worth 20%.
- The essay will be evaluated according to the English Department’s Marking Standards for Literature and Theory Courses at Lakehead University (online).\(^1\) Please consult your instructor if you are confused about a concept or are in doubt about a potential application.

**Final Exam  25%**

Although the final exam requires you to prove your mastery of the course material, you will be given potential examination questions in advance, from which three or four will appear on the exam, and from which you will be required to answer one or two (to be specified prior to the exam). To assist you with writing specific answers without access to your open textbook, you will be allowed to prepare in advance a “cheat sheet” consisting of two 8 ½ x 11 inch pages filled with quotations from assigned texts that you will use to answer your questions. No other aids will be permitted when writing the exam. On your cheat sheet, margins and font have no restrictions. These pages must be handed in along with your exam answer (not to be marked). On this paper, you may **not** write your answers in advance, although you may organize your quotations with subheadings. Include the author of a quotation (not the editor but the person who wrote the words), title, and page numbers for each one. Up to 5 quotations from secondary sources may be included, but are not required. If you choose to include them, include full bibliographical information. The exam will be written during three consecutive hours on the date designated by the Registrar’s office. You should be able to write it directly within the Assignment area of Mycourselink. It will be worth 25% of your final mark.

**Collaboration/Plagiarism Rules**

As stated in the English Department Marking Standards\(^2\), “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 will be reported to the

\(^1\) http://flash.lakeheadu.ca/~jrichard/Markingstandards.pdf
\(^2\) https://www.lakeheadu.ca/programs/departments/english/marking-standards
Dean, who is responsible for judging academic misconduct and imposing penalties. The minimum penalty for academic misconduct is a 0 on the assignment in question. It might also be subject to more severe academic penalties. See the Code of Student Behaviour3 for more details.”

Course Policies
1. Absence from the Zoom portion of the course will affect both your achievement and your enjoyment in this course since individual and group discussions are aimed at making the theory accessible and meaningful. If you have internet access difficulties, please talk to your instructor as soon as possible. If you find yourself struggling in the course, please consult your instructor before November 6 which is the last day to drop the course without academic penalty.
2. It is imperative that you read the assigned reading before the class in which it is being discussed so as to be able to make valuable contributions to discussions.
3. The university expects you to treat your fellow students and instructors with mutual respect and fairness. Differences of opinion are what fuel interesting debate in a classroom, which is strongly encouraged in this course. However, oppressive statements or behaviour based on race, class, gender, sexual orientation, nation of origin, (dis)ability, religion, or any other identity marker are clearly not appropriate and will be dealt with accordingly.

University Policies
- Students in this course are expected to conform to the Code of Student Behaviour: https://www.lakeheadu.ca/students/student-life/student-conduct
- Lakehead University provides academic accommodations for students 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.

3 https://www.lakeheadu.ca/students/student-life/student-conduct