



**Dr. Howe**  
**EN502: The Transformation of Literary Study**  
**Critical Theory**  
**Spring 2011**

Meeting Day: Tuesday  
Meeting Time: 6:30-9:15pm  
Room Number: Gailhac G204  
Course Website: <http://thowe.pbworks.com>  
Final Exam: Wed, April 27, 6:30pm

My Office: Gailhac 2011  
Office Hours: TBA \*\*  
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\*\* please see my online office schedule for details

**UNIVERSITY STATEMENTS**

*Academic Integrity*

By accepting this syllabus, you pledge to uphold the principles of Academic Integrity expressed by the Marymount University Community. You agree to observe these principles yourself and to defend them against abuse by others.

*Special Needs and Accommodations*

Please advise the instructor of any special problems or needs at the beginning of the semester. If you seek accommodation based on disabilities, you should provide a Faculty Contact Sheet obtained through Disability Support Services located in Gerard Hall, (703) 284-1615.

*Access to Student Work*

Copies of your work in this course including copies of any submitted papers and your portfolios may be kept on file for institutional research, assessment and accreditation purposes. All work used for these purposes will be submitted anonymously.

*University Policy on Snow Closings*

Snow closings are generally announced on area radio stations. For bulletins concerning Marymount snow or weather closings, call (703) 526-6888. Unless otherwise advised by radio announcement or by official bulletins on the number listed above, students are expected to report for class as near normal time as possible on days when weather conditions are adverse. Decisions as to snow closing or delayed opening are not generally made before 5:00 AM of the working day. Students are expected to attend class if the University is not officially closed.

*Turnitin.com*

It is possible that student work will be submitted to TurnItIn.com for review.

*Student Copyright Authorization*

For the benefit of current and future students, work in this course may be used for educational critique, demonstrations, samples, presentations, and verification. Outside of these uses, work shall not be sold, copied, broadcast, or distributed for profit without student consent.

## 1. BROAD PURPOSE OF COURSE

This course involves a study of the major contributions to modern literary theory in Europe and the United States. (3)

In contemporary literary study, the “map” of literature is being redrawn; methods of interpretation, even the nature of literature itself, are shifting under the aegis of critical theory. The last thirty years have seen the development of new methods of interpretation and interdisciplinary initiatives, as well as new areas of teaching and research. By engaging with a wide spectrum of primary theoretical materials—from Russian formalists and American New Critics to deconstructionism and critical race theory—supplemented by student-generated illustrations, we will become familiar with the dynamic transformation of literary study throughout the twentieth century.

## 2. COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be expected to

- demonstrate an understanding of the issues related to theory -- how, what, and why we read -- by evaluating these issues and critiquing them in class discussions and response papers;
- determine and explain the similarities and differences among the various theoretical approaches studied and apply these approaches to literary and cultural texts;
- understand and critique the nature of recent changes in literary studies;
- demonstrate an in-depth understanding of one theoretical approach by applying it to a piece of literature in a longer research paper;
- develop and articulate a personal response to theory in general and individual theoretical approaches in particular.

**3. TEACHING METHOD** Seminar, workshop, lecture, small group discussion, student presentations, and interdisciplinary team projects

## 4. GRADE BREAKDOWN (See full [grading standards](#) and assignments online.)

Weekly 3-4-page summaries with illustration (35%)

Team discussion initiations (15%)

Seminar Essay (20%)

Midterm and Final Exams (20%)

Participation (10%)

**On the typical 100-point scale, the letter breakdown is as follows:**

100-90: A

89-80: B

79-70: C

69-60: D

59-below: F

Not turned in receives a zero

**For smaller assignments and activities, I use a 10-point check-check plus-check minus scale, in which:**

Check Plus: 10

Check: 8

Check Minus: 6

Not turned in receives a zero

**Please be advised that I use the full range of grades. The following rubric can be applied to all of our formal work for this class.**

*The 'F' Paper*

- reads as if it were written the night before.
- is overwhelmed with mechanical, syntactical, and grammatical errors.
- replaces an argument with clichés, unexamined assumptions, and unsupported assertions.
- makes no effort to think analytically.
- often contains neither a thesis nor “a point,” and haphazardly presents the rare idea.
- may not adhere to the assignment, or it may be plagiarized.

*The 'D' Paper*

- attempts to fulfill the terms of the assignment, but has many weaknesses. Such a paper is generally comprehensible.
- exhibits some effort at argument but shows no evidence of real engagement.
- may posit a thesis that is unclear, illogical given the evidence, or commonplace.
- contains numerous mechanical, syntactical, expressive, and organizational problems, which mar the development of effective argument or analysis.
- makes use of ill-chosen, contradictory pieces of evidence.
- relies somewhat on clichés, unexamined assumptions, and unsupported assertions.

*The 'C' Paper*

- takes many shapes. Generally, it fulfills the assignment in a routine way and makes only a meager attempt at argument, criticism, or analysis.
- avoids effective analysis by remaining stuck in a black/white, yes/no, either/or framework.
- does not clarify the relevance of its argument.
- asserts a weak thesis, a thesis contradicted by the evidence examined, or a thesis that mutates throughout the essay.
- is usually stylistically adequate and generally (but not completely) avoids glaring platitudes and distracting word choice.
- might also describe essays that either have many fresh, complex ideas that are unfortunately buried beneath the mechanical and stylistic problems or essays that express common and relatively uninspired ideas with perfect diction and style.

*The 'B' Paper*

- is strong. It does more than merely fulfill the assignment.
- shows evidence of thought and planning. The “B” essay is generally well-organized.
- thoroughly develops its analysis into a clear, interesting point.
- incorporates a variety of specific supporting evidence and fluid transitions between ideas.
- may exhibit logical flaws or faulty, obscure analysis.
- displays the author’s awareness of his/her audience.
- appears stylistically adept, without too many—or too serious—mechanical errors.
- needs to push its thought and analysis further, beyond common knowledge or well-worn definitions.

*The 'A' Paper*

- is outstanding. It goes beyond adequacy and addresses the topic perceptively and thoughtfully.
- reflects original thought that surpasses ideas developed in class discussion.
- has a clearly visible, strong, and debatable thesis statement that supports the entire essay.
- exhibits a finely-tuned and well-organized argument.
- provides its readers with provocative examinations of specific, highly relevant evidence.
- possesses few—if any—mechanical or grammatical errors, and it makes use of the most appropriate and effective language.
- displays a compelling, vigorous authorial voice that considers its audience thoroughly.

## 5. IMPORTANT DETAILS & POLICIES, SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

All of my policies on attendance, late work, extensions, study habits, and so on, including information on the Learning Resource Center and supplementary materials available in the Library, are available on our course website <<http://thowe.pbworks.com>>. My policies are also noted below.

Please read these materials carefully! A syllabus is a **contract** between me and you; my responsibilities include providing the tools and support you need to excel, and your responsibilities include being present (physically, but especially mentally) in class, participating fully in the requirements of the course, respecting the classroom environment as a space of learning, and seeking out additional help where you need it. I am always available for you, but I cannot guarantee As or Bs. Effort is wonderful and expected; however, it cannot determine your grade! **The standard in-class/out-of-class formula for college-level work is 1:2, meaning that for every hour of in-class time, you should be spending about 2 hours on your homework and writing assignments out-of-class.**

I view the classroom as a microcosm of the kinds of personal, ethical, and civic responsibilities everyone has in the so-called "real world"--though we all know that the college classroom is an instance of some make-believe fantasy space which in absolutely no way resembles what will happen to you once you graduate. (I hope everyone got the irony there!) Each professor has different expectations in the classroom, and different classroom policies to reflect them. Mine are as follows:

### **Reading in this class means more than letting your eyes linger over the words on the page**

You should look up words you don't know, take notes, underline things, ask questions, and engage your reading assignments actively, critically, and closely. Your participation in the class is largely contingent upon your ability to discuss the readings effectively. I may ask to look at your notes from time to time as part of the class participation grade.

### **Using Wikipedia and the Web**

It's good to use the web to get your bearings, but remember that we're in a graduate-level course and I'm expecting you to move beyond the trite and the commonplace. Though that's not to say everything on the web is trite and commonplace--just that you need to learn how to recognize what is and what isn't! Do not use websites in any of your work for this class.

### **Technology**

We may be using technologies with which you are initially unfamiliar, so you should be prepared to spend time outside of class working with these tools. Your participation grade in part captures your ability to make progress with these unfamiliar technologies--what we're learning here, in other words, is proactive learning and adaptability, which you'll need, again, in the so-called "real world." Staff in the E-Learning Services Center (basement of the Library) are available to help you, as is IT (x6990), myself, and the wide world of the web. You've no idea how many video tutorials people have created to help you with facebook, wikis, MLA formatting, Microsoft Word, writing annotated bibliographies, conducting research... You can [start with my information on technology](#).

**Do not text in this classroom. I encourage you to bring your laptop for notetaking, but do not use it for other purposes.**

### **All assignments**

All assignments--including reading--must be completed by the dates indicated. If you know you will not be able,

for some significant reason, to complete the work by those dates, you must see me immediately to negotiate an extension, if an extension is possible.

### Late work

All **late work** will be penalized one letter grade per business day late, but it is better to turn something in than nothing--and after three days, I will not accept your work. **A 55 always averages better than a 0!** Finally, note that the late work policy only applies to formal essay assignments; in-class activities and participation assignments cannot be turned in late.

### MLA style

**All formal writing for this class** (anything that you do at home) should be formatted in [MLA style](#) from the first letter to the last. This is not because I'm obsessed with arbitrary details, but rather because I want to encourage you to turn in work that conforms to a set of arbitrary parameters. In the so-called "real world," your future employer will expect something of the sort, and I do, too. **I will deduct a letter grade** for any assignment not turned in in an appropriate format, from top to toe (plagiarism is a different story). If you have questions, look the answers up in a reliable source.

### Revision

At the graduate level, I expect the work you turn in to me to be in its most finished, polished state. Therefore, I am not allowing revisions in this class as a rule; if an assignment is not acceptable, however, I may return it without a grade and require a revision.

### Paper, or electronic copy?

Unless otherwise noted, all formal work for this class must be turned in as hard copies, in MLA format. If you do need to turn something in late, you should give it to me personally or have the good folks in Arts & Sciences place it in my mailbox. **Please don't send your essays to me willy-nilly, and don't slip things under my door!** I cannot keep track of everything, and I'm asking you to turn your work in to me on paper.

### Grading Standards

I use the full range of grades in this class, including grading participation. **A major part of my responsibility to you is providing an honest evaluation of your work (note: your work, not you!)** For a sense of how I grade your formal essays for this class, check out [my page on grading standards](#). Hint: Reading through all of the grade descriptions can help you as you draft and revise! Graduate seminars typically use a grading scale of A through C for final grades, but I will use the full range.

### The 24-hour rule

This policy states that you cannot ask me about your grade on a returned assignment until 24 hours have passed. You must read my comments, make an appointment to meet with me, and come prepared with thoughtful responses to my comments.

### Participation

Because this is a seminar-style graduate course, which presumes a higher level of academic seriousness and purpose, it is assumed that students will attend all classes and participate in class discussions. The final grade will, in part, reflect students' attendance and participation. **Participation is defined as a sincere effort to be involved in class discussion/activities and to progress toward accomplishment of the course objectives.** Polite, respectful classroom behavior is expected. Please note the class start time. As a matter of

courtesy to both the instructor and to fellow students you are asked to arrive promptly, and not to make a habit of entering the classroom after class is under way.

**In the event of an absence**

it is your responsibility to speak with a peer to get notes, homework assignments, and so on.

**Intellectual honesty**

**“Plagiarism” derives from the Latin “plagiarius,” meaning “kidnapper.” To plagiarize, as to kidnap, is a kind of stealing,** and it is both a fundamental transgression of the Honor System and an offense to our intellectual community. We will be doing research in this class, and students are responsible for understanding the rules of appropriate citation and turning in their own intellectual work. If you have any questions about this matter, including uncertainties about what constitutes plagiarism, please consult a writing handbook or ask me.

**Email Communication**

Please be sure, on all your electronic correspondence with me, to write with care and thought—after all, this is a form of writing, and this is an English class! Also, if you do not include your name and indicate which course you are taking, I will not know who is writing me. What we’re modeling here is not only courtesy and civic behavior, but also personal responsibility.

**If you have any questions or concerns at all**

it is imperative that you [come and see me about them!](#) Otherwise, I will not know, and will therefore have no opportunity to address them.

**6. CLASS SCHEDULE** (Subject to change. On the date listed, the assignment is due and will be discussed.)

1/11	<b>Week 1: Formalisms</b> Introduction: Rivkin & Ryan Eichenbaum, “Introduction to the Formal Method” (skim) Schlovisky, “Art as Technique” Brooks, “The Formalist Critics” Brooks, “The Language of Paradox” Wimsatt, “The Structure of the ‘Concrete Universal’” (skim)
1/18	<b>Week 2: Structuralism</b> Introduction: Rivkin & Ryan Culler, “The Linguistic Foundation” de Saussure, <i>Course in General Linguistics</i> Lévi-Strauss, “Anthropology and Myth” Barthes, <i>Mythologies</i> Foucault, <i>The Archeology of Knowledge</i> Chatman, “The Structure of Narrative Transmission” (skim)
1/25	<b>Week 3: Reader Response</b> Introduction: Rivkin & Ryan Austin, “How to Do Things with Words” Fish, “Interpretive Communities” Fish, “Not So Much a Teaching as an Entangling” Bourdieu, <i>Distinction</i> (skim)
2/1	<b>Week 4: Post-Structuralism, Deconstruction, Post-Modernism</b> Nietzsche, “Truth and Lying in an Extra-Moral Sense” Bataille, <i>Heterology</i>

	<p>Heidegger, "Identity and Difference"  Derrida, "<i>Différance</i>"  Derrida, "Of Grammatology"  Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy" (online)</p>
2/8	<p><b>Week 5: Post-Structuralism, Deconstruction, Post-Modernism</b>  Johnson, <i>Writing</i>  Cixous, <i>The Newly Born Woman</i>  Baudrillard, <i>Simulacra and Simulations</i>  Deleuze and Guattari, <i>A Thousand Plateaus</i></p>
2/15	<p><b>Week 6: Psychoanalysis</b>  Introduction: Rivkin &amp; Ryan  Freud, <i>The Interpretation of Dreams</i> (skim)  Freud, "The Uncanny"  Freud, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle"  Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience"  Lacan, "The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious or Reason since Freud"  Girard, "Triangular Desire" (online)</p>
2/22	<p><b>Week 7: Historicisms</b>  Introduction: Rivkin &amp; Ryan  Williams, <i>The Country and the City</i>  Thompson, "Witness against the Beast"  Foucault, <i>Discipline and Punish</i>  Montrose, "Professing the Renaissance"</p>
3/1	<p><b>Week 8: Historicisms, Political Criticism</b>  Armstrong, "Some Call it Fiction: On the Politics of Domesticity"  Sundquist, "Melville, Delany, and New World Slavery"  Bakhtin, <i>Discourse in the Novel</i>  Bakhtin, <i>Rabelais and His World</i></p>
3/8	<p>Spring Break – no class  <b>** Take-Home Midterm Due Electronically by 12:00pm</b></p>
3/15	<p><b>Week 9: Political Criticism: Marxism, Cultural Materialism</b>  Introduction: Rivkin &amp; Ryan  Marx, <i>Grundrisse</i>  Marx, "Wage Labor and Capital"  Marx, <i>Capital</i>  Gramsci, "Hegemony"  Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses"  Macherey, "Theory of Literary Production"  Fetterley, "On the Politics of Literature"</p>
3/22	<p><b>Week 10: Feminism</b>  Introduction: Rivkin &amp; Ryan  Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex"  Irigaray, "The Power of Discourse and the Subordination of the Feminine"  Gilbert and Gubar, <i>The Madwoman in the Attic</i>  Spivak, "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism"  Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (online)  Lorde, "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference"</p>
3/29	<p><b>Week 11: Gender Studies</b>  Introduction: Rivkin &amp; Ryan  Foucault, <i>The History of Sexuality</i>  Sedgwick, <i>Between Men</i> (online)  Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution"  Sedgwick, <i>Epistemology of the Closet</i></p>

	Moon, "A Small Boy and Others"
4/5	<b>Week 12: Critical Race Theory</b> Introduction: Rivkin & Ryan Haney-Lopez, "The Social Construction of Race" Fishkin, "Interrogating Whiteness" Gates, "The Blackness of Blackness: A Critique on the Sign and the Signifying Monkey" Morrison, "Playing in the Dark" Anzaldúa, <i>Borderlands/La Frontera</i>
4/12	<b>Week 13: Colonial, Post-Colonial, Transnational Studies</b> Introduction: Rivkin & Ryan Walder, "History" Eldridge, "The Revival of the Imperial Idea" Said, "Austen and Empire" Ngugi, "Decolonizing the Mind" Braithwaite, "English in the Caribbean" McClintock, "The Angel of Progress"
4/19	<b>Week 14: Cultural Studies</b> Introduction: Rivkin & Ryan Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" Horkheimer and Adorno, "The Culture Industry as Mass Deception" de Certeau, "The Practice of Everyday Life" Fiske, "Culture, Ideology, Interpellation"
4/25	<b>Research essay due by 12:00pm</b>
4/27	Final Exam: Wednesday, 6:30pm

## 7. REQUIRED TEXTS

You may purchase these books used online, or from the bookstore.

- Rivkin & Ryan, *Literary Theory: An Anthology* (2004, Blackwell)\*\*
- Recommended: *MLA Handbook* (Gibaldi)
- Notebook, pens/pencils, regular email and web access

\*\* Note that you must have the materials as excerpted in the 2004 edition, not the earlier edition.

Please bring these materials to class every day. If you have a laptop and would like to use it, feel free to do so, but remember to bring hard copies of whatever is due. Finally, if you use a laptop, please respect the classroom, me, and your peers when using it.

## 8. MAJOR ASSIGNMENTS

**Participation (10%):** This is a *seminar-style course*, which means I will not lecture. Rather, it is discussion-based, and everyone is expected to participate—ask questions, raise your voice, seek clarification, contribute to the learning environment. This also means that each discussion initiation that you are not leading is a site for your voice, and I expect you to participate as actively as the discussion leader. Further, while it is not quite standard for graduate classes, I am asking you to **keep thorough notes**—both on your readings, and on class discussion. We will be reading some material that is *very difficult*, and I'm hoping it help you pace yourself effectively and engage more thoroughly with the material. I may ask to look at your notes from time to time, and I can assure you that it will help you in concrete ways on exams. Be sure to note down interesting passages, definitions, places that intrigue you, questions you have, ideas that other authors take up in different ways, and so on. Finally, each student will **post his or her weekly summaries** to our class wiki site, so that we can learn from each other as the course continues.



**Weekly 3-4-page summaries with illustration (35%):** Each week, you'll sign up to summarize one of the authors on the docket. Your summary should include an introductory paragraph of basic biographical information, general information about theoretical circle, and/or general information about historical context (this will vary from author to author), and a conclusion paragraph that summarizes this theorist's contributions, the "so what" point for looking closely at literature. In the supporting paragraphs, you should summarize succinctly and accurately the key points of the text we're reading; in the last supporting paragraph, illustrate one key idea with reference to a literary excerpt (poem, short story excerpt, novel excerpt), a film or television clip, an image, or a historical document. Your illustration should apply the author in some way to the primary source you've brought in; the theoretical text must be used in a way that helps us see something new or unexpected in the literary source you've brought in. I will automatically deduct one letter grade for summaries that don't basically follow this form. These summaries must be **posted to our class wiki site by the due date**, so that we can learn from each other as the course continues.

Documentation: Your summaries—all your work for this class—should be handed in to me in MLA format, from top to bottom. This means that the page should look a certain way—double spacing, margins, titling, header information, and so on. You must include a works cited page and in-text citations in MLA form. It will be your responsibility to learn this documentation form, if you do not know it already. You may use supporting critical or biographical materials from these five sources only: your textbook, the Literature Resource Center, the Oxford English Dictionary, your primary illustration source, and print sources from Aladin/the MLA International Bibliography (or the major scholarly database associated with your disciplinary illustrative choice). All your work must be documented fully and completely. I will automatically deduct one letter grade for any summary not using all aspects of MLA form (plagiarism is a different issue!).

**Team discussion initiations (15%):** *Note that two students will work on a single text, and collaborate to lead discussion. Your summaries, however, should be your own. Each student will initiate two or more discussions, depending on the class size.* On the week you've signed up, with a peer, to initiate discussion, you'll work from your summary and illustration to 1.) give us a conversational overview—no powerpoints, no reading from your summary—of your author. Who is this person, what is s/he known for, what kind of historical or critical context did s/he emerge from? 2.) Give us a basic overview of the text you're working with—and what's going on here? Point out and clarify the main points, working directly with the text and any key terminology to do so. Allow time for discussion, and expect your peers to ask you questions. 3.) You'll also be responsible for drawing our attention to one or two specific passages that particularly interested you, that you found difficult to work out, or with which you disagree. Set up your passage—why did you select it? Choose someone to read it aloud, and finally, elicit your peers' responses on the passages. 4.) Bring in the primary sources to which you've each applied the theoretical source, distribute or show it to your peers—being sure to set it up (author, date, title, basic content, where we are in the plot, what we should be looking for, what you're going to do with it/we should be looking for, etc). Then, walk us through your reading. At all steps, be sure to consider how you will elicit your peers' thoughts, especially the kinds of questions that will punctuate your discussion leadership. **Remember to work with your peer as you develop your discussion points and trajectory; this should be an opportunity to play off one another to share opposing ideas, engage in debate, and generate new ideas with each other and the class.**

In addition to turning in your summary to me, you must prepare a **one-page handout** on your presentation for distribution to the whole class. This handout may only be one page, on one side; anything longer, I will automatically deduct a letter grade. Your handout should contain your name, the theorist's name and title of his/her work, a succinct summary of significant biographical information, key quotes that help us understand important concepts, and one or two questions to stimulate discussion.

**Seminar Essay (20%):** You will be working toward a thesis-driven **12-15-page seminar essay** over the course of the term, due on the Monday after our last class, in hard copy. In your essay, you'll be investigating a primary source—chosen in conference with me—from a specific theoretical perspective. Your goal is to analyze the primary source in support of your thesis (that is, break the source down as you learned in EN501), which should take an informed position on the meaning of your source, the work your text is doing, or its significance in the cultural field. Your analysis should draw on the perspective of one dominant theoretical framework (you may

combine theoretical perspectives, but be sure the components are logically compatible with your purposes). This essay should have a substantial scholarly (not popular) framework associated with it, between 8 and 10 sources. To that end, you will also be responsible for a proposal, an annotated bibliography, and at least one draft. *If these components are not completed satisfactorily, your essay will not be considered complete.*

**Midterm and Final Exams (20%):** These primarily essay-based exams will be designed to test your knowledge of the material we've read and discussed.