

English 4314 • Literary Criticism • Fall 2019

Section 001: TR 9:00 AM – 10:20 AM, Hudspeth Hall 300

Professor: Ruben Espinosa
Office Hours: Hudspeth Hall 317, TR, 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM; by appointment
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Course Overview

This course examines the theory and application of several major critical approaches to the study of literature. Through class discussion and formal writing, you will gain a better understanding of varied theoretical perspectives, and you will critically read, analyze, and apply various forms of literary theory to selected works of literature. While we will explore major schools of theory and engage current trends in literary studies, we will focus more closely on the value of race, ethnic, and cultural studies to our understanding of literature. The aim of this class is to provide you with the critical tools to write about literature. Although the theoretical designs are often complex, I am confident that you will find the application of the theory to literary works both stimulating and rewarding. Please note that this class is reading and writing intensive.

Required Texts

- *How to Interpret Literature: Critical Theory for Literary and Cultural Studies*, 3rd ed. Robert Dale Parker (Oxford University Press)
- *The Merchant of Venice*, William Shakespeare (Bloomsbury, Arden Shakespeare)
- *Othello* (Bloomsbury, Arden Shakespeare)

Course Requirements

20% Class Participation (discussion, in-class quizzes, and short writing assignments)
20% Review Essay
20% Group Project
15% Prospectus
25% Research Essay

Class Participation

This is an upper-level course, and its success depends on your preparedness to discuss the assigned readings. You are expected to attend every class meeting, and unexcused absences will count against your final grade. If an emergency causes you to miss class, discuss it with me upon your return. I will assign both in-class and take-home response papers. Quizzes will cover assigned reading and class discussions. All quizzes are unscheduled and unannounced. **I do not offer make-up quizzes nor do I accept late daily response papers.**

Review Essay

For this assignment, you will have to write a review of a scholarly article that engages issues of race/ethnicity in *The Merchant of Venice* or *Othello*. Your Review Essay should be 600 words in length (roughly 2 double-spaced pages), and it should offer a synopsis of the argument in the scholarly article, and your critical reaction to the ideas presented therein. **Once you research and identify the scholarly article you intend to review, please meet with me so I can clear you to move forward with the review essay.**

Group Project

Students will collaborate in small groups to choose **ONE scene** from either *The Merchant of Venice* or *Othello* and develop an idea for teaching this scene with our local community in mind. Your group is responsible for: 1) Articulating why you chose your particular scene; 2) Explaining how, exactly, you feel it connects to our borderland community; and 3) Offering a teaching demonstration of the way your group thinks this scene should be taught in El Paso. You have complete creative license over the teaching demonstration, but your overall presentation should be 15-20 minutes in length. You will be graded based on organization and clarity of your project, originality, and effort.

Prospectus

[Note: Your research project must focus on either *The Merchant of Venice* or *Othello*. You are free to choose your theoretical approach.] Prior to drafting your research paper, you will turn in a prospectus that outlines your design for the project. Your prospectus should include:

- 1) The title of your essay.
- 2) A clear thesis statement directly following your title. (1-2 sentences)
- 3) A 300-word description of your project, with attention to specific elements of the literature you intend to analyze, **and the theoretical ideas that will inform your analysis.**
- 4) An annotated bibliography of your secondary sources (6 sources). Your annotated bibliography should include the bibliographical information followed by 2-3 sentences that summarize the article/chapter's argument, and one paragraph that addresses how this article stands to inform your own analysis.

It is a good idea to begin research early – familiarize yourself with scholarly journals related to your chosen text. **Your prospectus is due November 5**, but you are free to turn it in before then if you want early feedback.

Research Project

Your research project should be a carefully researched, and finely polished, 8-page essay that locates your own interpretation of a specific topic within a literary work. Your essay should offer a clear thesis with an evident theoretical design, and your argument should employ adequate primary and secondary support (you must incorporate a **minimum of 6 secondary sources**). I will be grading your paper based on the clarity of your thesis, strength of your argument, adequate critical support, and quality of your writing. **Follow MLA style and format** with standard font (double spaced, 12-point *Times* or the like). I am happy to meet with you to discuss your research project, so please feel free to see me at any point along the way.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is required and is a part of your Class Participation grade. If a medical or a personal emergency forces you to miss class, it is your responsibility to provide documentation (doctor's note, funeral home director's note, etc.) and discuss it with me immediately upon your return to class. You are also responsible for obtaining class notes from another student if you are absent. **If you have more than three unexcused absences, you will receive a grade of "F" for the semester.** Finally, please observe proper classroom etiquette – **be respectful, turn off and put away cell phones, and refrain from texting in class.**

Plagiarism

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Plagiarism is the act of taking someone else's ideas, words, or writing, and attempting to disguise them as your own. Plagiarism includes failing to cite quotations and borrowed ideas, failing to enclose borrowed language in quotation marks, and failing to put summaries and paraphrases in your own words. Copying another student's paper or searching the Internet for papers is also plagiarism. Penalties include a failing grade for the assignment, a failing grade for the course, and suspension from the university.

SCHEDULE OF READING AND ASSIGNMENTS

(Schedule of Reading and Assignments Subject to Change)

[Secondary Readings (scholarly articles) will be announced in class & posted on Blackboard]

<u>August</u>	T/27	Introduction to Course
	R/29	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i> , Acts 1-2
<u>September</u>	T/3	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>
	R/5	<i>Qualities of Mercy Project</i>
	T/10	Parker, Ch. 10, "Postcolonial and Race Studies"
	R/12	Postcolonial and Race Studies & <i>Merchant of Venice</i>
	T/17	Postcolonial and Race Studies & <i>Merchant of Venice</i> continued
	R/19	Postcolonial and Race Studies & <i>Merchant of Venice</i> continued
	T/24	Parker, Ch. 6, "Feminism"
	R/26	Feminism & <i>Merchant of Venice</i>
<u>October</u>	T/1	Parker, Ch. 7, "Queer Studies"
	R/3	Queer Studies and <i>Merchant of Venice</i>
	T/8	Parker, Ch. 8, "Marxism"
	R/10	Marxism & <i>Merchant of Venice</i>
	T/15	<i>Othello</i> , Acts 1-3
	R/17	<i>Othello</i>
	T/22	Parker, Ch. 9, "Historicism and Cultural Studies"
	R/24	Historicism and Cultural Studies & <i>Othello</i>
	T/29	Historicism and Cultural Studies & <i>Othello</i> continued
	R/31	Critical Race Theory & Ethnic Studies

<u>November</u>	T/5	CRT & <i>Othello</i> ; Prospectus Due
	R/7	CRT & <i>Othello</i> continued
	T/12	<i>Othello</i> and Adaptation Studies
	R/14	<i>Othello</i> and Adaptation Studies continued
	T/19	Parker, Ch. 10, “Ecocriticism”
	R/21	Ecocriticism & <i>Othello</i>
	T/26	Ecocriticism, Race, & <i>Othello</i>
	R/28	Thanksgiving Holiday
<u>December</u>	T/3	Group Project Presentations
	R/5	Group Project Presentations

Final Exam

Tuesday, December 10, 10:00 AM – **Research Essay Due**