Fall 8-15-2000

ENG 4775-001: Studies in Literary Criticism

Dana Ringuette
Eastern Illinois University

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English 4775
Studies in Literary Criticism:
English Studies at the Crossroads
Fall 2000

Course Information:
English studies and all that comprises this field—for example, literary study and criticism, writing and composition studies, language studies, creative writing, pedagogy and curriculum—finds itself facing all sorts of complex but fundamental concerns as we make our way into the new millennium. It seems that everywhere an English major looks nowadays in newspapers, journals, and magazines, she or he is confronted by the question of the place of the humanities—for us, the study of literature, language, and writing—within rapidly changing priorities for college and university systems, within high school and community college curricula. How can or should we answer this question? It's important because the issues are complex and the stakes high. Exploring the concerns and questions will be our errand and risking some answers will be our ambition.

Required Texts:
Richter, Falling into Theory, 2nd ed.
Anzaldúa, Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza
Du Bois, The Souls of Black Folk
Momaday, The Way to Rainy Mountain
Williams, Paterson
College English 61.6 (July 1999)
Various duplicated materials as needed (I'll supply these for you)

• Recommended: a notebook, earmarked for this class, for use both in class and as a reading journal. I strongly encourage you to keep a reading journal throughout the semester.

Such an errand is ambitious; these crossroads represent a broad and varied field. We will move from broad overviews of the situation of English studies at the present time and work gradually toward more specific issues such as canon (literary history/periodization), cultural and multicultural studies (race/gender/ethnicity/class), pedagogy (what can or should be taught/preserved), and aesthetics and value. In our reading we’ll focus on, broadly speaking, American literature (although we may find ourselves rethinking the traditional sense of this term). But, these foci do not preclude critical work on composition, or creative writing, or the integration of technology in English studies, or British studies, should you wish to pursue any of these. It’s simply that the field, like Elvis, is huge, and these foci provide just that—a means of focusing. My overall aims for this course are pretty straightforward: to read specifically, critically, and widely in the representative criticism we’ll take up and to bring such reading to bear upon the literary work of Williams, Anzaldúa, Du Bois, and Momaday.

Course Requirements:
1. Written responses and oral presentations: Each seminar member will choose two of the critical essays we’ll be reading and discussing—beginning with the Bass article in Week 3—one before midterm and one after. For each article, you will write a one-page, single-spaced, response/review of the article. This response will then function as the script for a presentation to the rest of us and will motivate our discussion of the piece. The response should end with at least one question whose answer is, as you see it, a key to understanding the writer’s argument. The response will be duplicated and distributed to all of us. After the discussion of each article, you will then write a brief (no more than one-page, single-spaced) revision of your response, focusing on how class discussion changed (or verified) your response, due one week after the actual presentation. (30%)
2. A 5-7 page critical essay focusing on two of the critics and their articles which we have read up to midterm. In this paper you’ll focus on points of contact, convergence and divergence, in their arguments concerning the place, situation, problems, opportunities of English studies. Such a focus should help you develop your own working reading of, or interpretation of, how, where, and why English Studies is situated now as it is. You are also free (even encouraged!) to read and consider other work which either or both of these critics have written about this subject. Because this essay is due right after midterm, you can think of this essay as a kind of take-home midterm, assigned very early. (20%)

3. A longer, critical research essay (10-15 pages) on one of the literary texts (Williams, Anzaldúa, Du Bois, Momaday). This essay is due at the end of the semester, and while the specific topic is open and of your choosing (in consultation with me—I will ask about and require a proposal of some kind), and the essay is one of interpretation and research, I am assuming your work will be underscored and informed by the reading and discussing we will have accomplished throughout the semester. (25%)

4. A final (take-home) exam. (15%)

5. Sustained, engaged, thoughtful and thorough, reading, participation, and contribution throughout the semester. Because we can proceed in a seminar format, we will rely on each other’s active involvement. (10%)

6. Attendance policy: Be here (see point #5 above).

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**SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS**
(all changes will be announced in class)

*FT = Falling into Theory*

*CE = College English 61.6*

**Week 1**
- 8/22: Introductions; read Richter, “Introduction” FT 1-11
- 8/24: Brantlinger CE 681-90 & Richter, FT 235-52

**Week 2**
- 8/29: Richter, FT 15-30
- 8/31: Menand, FT 103-10 & FT Scholes 111-20

**Week 3**
- 9/5: Bass, CE 659-70 & Fetterley, CE 702-11
- 9/7: Discussion of findings concerning EIU

**Week 4**
- 9/12: WCW, Paterson, Books I, II, & III
- 9/14: Paterson

**Week 5**
- 9/19: Paterson
- 9/21: Paterson
Week 6
- 9/26: Richter, *FT* 121-36

Week 7
- 10/3: Sedgwick, *FT* 183-88 & hooks, *FT* 79-84
- 10/5: to be assigned

Week 8 -- midterm
- 10/12: *Borderlands/La Frontera*

Week 9
- 10/17: *Borderlands/La Frontera*; **Midterm Essay Due**
- 10/19: Holloway, *CE* 712-20 & Ohmann, *FT* 89-95

Week 10
- 10/24: Dasenbrock, *CE* 691-701
- 10/26: Morrison, *FT* 310-22 & Gates, *FT* 175-182

Week 11
- 10/31: Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*
- 11/2: *The Souls of Black Folk*

Week 12
- 11/7: Posnock (duplicated essay) & Jay (duplicated essay)

Week 13
- 11/14: to be assigned
- 11/16: to be assigned

  - **Thanksgiving Break 11/20-24**

Week 14
- 11/30: Momaday, *The Way to Rainy Mountain*

Week 15
- 12/5: *The Way to Rainy Mountain*
- 12/7: *The Way to Rainy Mountain*
- 12/8: **Critical, Research Essay Due**

Final Exam: Wed., 12/13, 12:30
SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS
(all changes will be announced in class)

FT = Falling into Theory
P = Patterson
B/LaF = Borderlands/La Frontera
WRM = The Way to Rainy Mountain

Week 1
• 8/22: Introductions: read Richter, “Introduction” (FT 1-11)
• 8/24:

Week 2
• 8/29:
• 8/31:

Week 3
• 9/5: 7
• 9/7: 7

Week 4
• 9/12:
• 9/14:

Week 5
• 9/19:
• 9/21:

Week 6
• 9/26:
• 9/28:

Week 7
• 10/3:
• 10/5:

Week 8 -- midterm
• 10/10:
• 10/12:

Week 9
• 10/17:
• 10/19:

Week 10
• 10/24:
• 10/26:

Week 11
• 10/31:
• 11/2:

Week 12
- 11/7:
- 11/9:

Week 13
- 11/14:
- 11/16:

- Thanksgiving Break 11/20-24

Week 14
- 11/28
- 11/30:

Week 15
- 12/5:
- 12/7:

Final Exam: