



Master Course Syllabus

For additional course information, including prerequisites, corequisites, and course fees, please refer to the Catalog: <https://catalog.uvu.edu/>

Semester: spring

Year: 2025

Course Prefix: engl

Course and Section #: 3890-001

Course Title: Contemporary Critical Approaches to Literature WE

Credits: 3

Course Description

Provides in-depth study of one contemporary theoretical and critical approach to literature using primary texts. Explicates how interpretive techniques function within the discipline of English Studies. Required for English majors. Should be taken beginning of junior year.

Course Attributes

This course has the following attributes:

- General Education Requirements
- Global/Intercultural Graduation Requirements
- Writing Enriched Graduation Requirements
- Discipline Core Requirements in Program
- Elective Core Requirements in Program
- Open Elective

Other: *Click here to enter text.*

Instructor Information

Instructor Name: John Goshert

Student Learning Outcomes

Distinguish major theorists in contemporary theory.
Recognize the tenets of one major theoretical approach to literary theory.
Use critical vocabulary persuasively in written and spoken discourse.
Identify the terminology, contexts, and uses of contemporary cultural theory.
Analyze cultural and literary texts according to one major theoretical approach.
Compose written analyses of cultural and literary texts using a specific, contemporary theoretical approach.

Course Materials and Texts

Required Texts—to be Purchased in Physical Form

Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens), *Pudd'nhead Wilson and Those Extraordinary Twins*. 2nd Edition. Norton,

2005 ISBN: 978-0393925357

Don DeLillo, *White Noise*. New York: Penguin, 2016. ISBN: 978-0143129554

Charles Johnson, *Middle Passage*. Scribner, 1998. ISBN: 978-0684855882

Jean François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*. U of Minnesota, 1984. ISBN: 978-0816611737

Jodi Dean, *Comrade*. Verso, 2019. ISBN: 978-1788735018

Recommended Text

A comprehensive dictionary of literary/critical terms and theory

Required Supplemental Materials (Canvas Files)

Roland Barthes. Introduction (excerpt), *S/Z* 3-13.

---. "The World of Wrestling," "Operation Margarine," and "Dominici, or the Triumph of Literature,"

Mythologies 15-25, 41-46.

Michel Foucault. "The Means of Correct Training." *Discipline and Punish* 170-94.

Eric Sundquist. "Mark Twain and Homer Plessy." *Representations* 24 (1988): 102-28.

Linda Hutcheon. "Representing the Postmodern." *The Politics of Postmodernism* 1-29.

Jean Baudrillard. "Astral America." *America* 26-73.

Barbara Z. Thaden. "Charles Johnson's *Middle Passage* as Historiographic Metafiction." *College English*

59.7 (1997): 753-66.

Dori Laub. "Bearing Witness" and "An Event Without a Witness." *Testimony* 57-92.

Pierre Bourdieu. "Invisible Structures and their Effects." *On Television* 39-67.

Course Requirements

Course Assignments, Assessments, and Grading Policy

Policies

While supported with digital resources, this is a face-to-face course. Discussion based class sessions will be the primary means of delivering information and, more importantly, developing course content at students' direction. You should plan to attend and be prepared for each class by completing all reading and writing tasks scheduled for the day in advance of the class meeting. To support and facilitate a discussion-based class environment, **laptop computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices may not be used during class time**. Students should acquire physical copies of course texts, make printouts of reserve readings, and have physical means of notetaking. More than four absences in the term can result in failure of the course.

Course Content Notice

Literary/aesthetic texts for this course were chosen for their artistic quality and ability to represent/engage arguments, issues, and sensibilities of their moment. Critical texts for this course were chosen for their ability to broaden conversations about literary works with insights into philosophical, historical, social and cultural matters either directly concerning particular authors and texts, and/or genres, cultural contexts, and concerns related to them. The purpose of this course is to discover how critical interpretation of aesthetic texts works and how aesthetic texts may in turn be influenced by critical movements and interests; it does not endorse or advocate any interpretive approach, political position or cultural stance.

By design, students should plan to engage with challenging content including, but not limited to some of the following:

Representations of murder, rape (including vulnerable people), suicide, wage slavery, racism (including racial epithets), chattel slavery, imperialism/colonialism, ableism, misogyny, genocide (including the Nazi holocaust), sex and sexuality. These texts may critique social/cultural norms including racism, sexism, fundamentalism/evangelicalism, meritocracy, relativism, individualism, identitarianism, capitalism, American exceptionalism, technophilia, white supremacy, normative literary taste, democracy.

Codes of conduct will be discussed on the first day of class and revisited as needed; this list will be revised as needed over the term. **Students must keep in mind the distinction between representations of ideas, issues, positions, etc., and their endorsement.**

Plan for active class participation by completing assigned readings and preparing to discuss your experiences, both in terms of content and in relation to course projects. Take notes as you read, including:

1. **Summarizing/connecting ideas:** What makes sense? What's familiar? How can you connect class readings to prior knowledge, current events/issues, and/or personal experience?
2. **Prioritizing important ideas:** What's new? What seems especially significant? Why?
3. **Asking questions:** What doesn't make sense? Which ideas, perspectives and tasks are confusing? How can we work through your questions to clarify challenging concepts and ideas?

During Class, practice the same strategies by:

1. **Summarizing/connecting ideas:** bring your notebook and write down points that come up in discussion, items written on the board, etc. Make connections: why and how are quotes, observations, arguments and claims related? Who do you agree/disagree with and why?
2. **Prioritizing important ideas:** "star" key points and issues. Jot down additional notes to develop these points in your own words.
3. **Asking questions/making observations: Participate actively in class! If things don't make sense, be sure to ask a question (why...?, how...?, what does this mean...?). The point of class time is to work on questions and challenges together.**
4. **Making it practical:** Be sure to think and talk about how class discussions apply to writing projects. Let's work out a question or challenge by using your idea/draft/project as an example.

Avoid becoming distracted by phones and other devices during class. Without exception, device dependency impedes students' capacity to engage in class conversations and threatens success on written assignments.

Since communication outside of class hours will be electronic but students may have multiple means of contact on file, everyone will **activate UVU Canvas messenger** and **plan to check email** regularly. You can set UVU email and Canvas notifications to be forwarded to any preferred email, but Canvas/UVU email will be the only means for maintaining predictable student-instructor contact. In cases where an attachment is required, direct email should be used. Expect about a 24-hour turnaround for email responses M-F; weekend communication solely at instructor's discretion. Individualized assistance with the course and any projects gladly given as one on one and/or small group conferences.

Resources: If you ever have questions about the class in general or your work in particular, take advantage of office hours; they are there for your benefit. It is your responsibility to make sure assignments and class activities are clear. Meet a couple of people in class who can give you notes, peer reviews, assignments, etc. on the days you can't make it. Take advantage of tutoring services in the writing center (FL 201 and online at <https://www.uvu.edu/writingcenter/>). Students of all levels will benefit from advice, readings, and discussions, in individual and small-group settings, face to face and online, which are provided free of charge by tutors.

Prerequisite Skills

Using reading skills and strategies of argument learned in courses such as Engl. 2600 and 2010, students are expected, from the opening of the course, to be prepared to actively, critically read literary texts, and to respond orally and through writing. This course will add to those skills and strategies through lecture, class discussion, and engagement with current critical approaches for responding to literature.

Response Paper Guidelines

2-3 page response papers are due periodically, beginning **January 29**. While this paper is, primarily, an expression of your ideas, you should nonetheless develop a cogent, well-written, and evidence-based argument. The best responses take on a specific topic from lecture, class discussions, presentations (or, of course, from your own reading alone), which is then worked out in some *critical/analytic* detail. Avoid trying to fit an entire week's reading—an entire novel or other extended text—into your response, since this leaves you with such a broad scope that any detailed examination is difficult.

Avoid summarizing the text and, instead, argue for a particular position, for a particular "reading." Your treatment of whatever topic you choose will be enhanced not only by a strong thesis, but also by your incorporation of specific material from the texts—both literary and critical (**use of critical texts required for passing scores**); that is, present details, such as dialogue or other citations. This is in keeping with that old adage of "showing" rather than "telling" as you work out your argument/position.

Consider also addressing questions you have about the reading—perhaps centered on a scene, event, character, etc. How do specific questions or parts of the novel/essay/poem inform the significance of the whole? You may also think about developing connections between works—how do formal characteristics, topics, characters, etc. resonate across periods and nations, across gender and/or ethnic boundaries? How are those characteristics treated differently and why?

Plan to put your growing critical apparatus into practice. Develop the research and response strategies which will be required for success on your term project. Articulate your agreement with or dissent from critical responses we read, or pursue critical readings on your own which will allow you to enter into an informed conversation on literary, cultural, and theoretical concepts.

The final response paper, a narrative self-and-course evaluation, is due with the final project.

Term Project Guidelines

The term project is essentially a researched argument—typically a paper of 10-12 pages—on any topic within the scope of the course (the exploration of critical relationships between art and philosophy). You may use any of the course texts/authors or develop a project on texts, authors, music, film, art, and so on of personal interest with one caveat: ensure in making your choice that the subject matter merits close examination, and that you can develop a research question and a critical apparatus to explore it—**all projects must incorporate a substantial body of peer reviewed scholarly sources**. Successful students tend to settle on at least a broad subject and begin the research and writing process shortly following the midterm. A term project proposal is due on or before **March 27**.

Grade Distribution/Notes

Response papers: 30%

Take-Home Midterm: 20%

Final Project: 30%

Attendance/Participation: 20%

Grading Standards—Per UVU catalog:

A: “an honor grade indicating superior achievement”

B: “a grade indicating commendable mastery”

C: “indicates satisfactory mastery”

D: “indicates substandard progress and insufficient evidence of ability to succeed in sequential courses”

F: “indicates inadequate mastery of pertinent skills or repeated absences from class”

Course materials are determined by standards of academic inquiry and a commitment to the exchange of ideas; materials will not be “rated G” or censored in any way. As Vladimir Lenin once wrote, “we must face facts and call things by their right names; we must tell the workers the truth”; one could argue that the same applies to our work in the academic community as well. Similarly, contemporary writer Robin DG Kelly recalls, texts that may seem unsafe, challenging and triggering “were our sources of social critique and weapons . . . [I]t never occurred to us to refuse to read a text simply because it validated the racism, sexism, free-market ideology, and bourgeoisie liberalism against which we railed. Nothing was off limits. On the contrary, delving into these works only sharpened our critical faculties.”

- Attendance is required. You should plan to attend and be prepared for each class meeting. Because we will take a discussion/workshop approach to the course, attendance and participation will weigh significantly in your grade.
- All written work will follow MLA style guidelines, and be submitted to Canvas as doc, docx, or PDF only (google docs and other unformatted documents will not be accepted)

- Late work will receive a 10% grade deduction for every day past the deadline, beginning at the posted assignment closing day/time.
- Per UVU policies: “Each student is expected to take an active role in the learning process by meeting course requirements as specified in written syllabi” (VII.A). Thus, the course syllabus comprises a contract between instructor and students, who will be held to its terms and expectations, for “The right to receive academic credit and/or academic degrees when all specified requirements and course work have been satisfied” (V.L). That is, the student has the right to receive credit for work that meets or exceeds satisfactory performance; however, the student also has the right to fail based on those same performance conditions.
- It is not only your right, but also your responsibility to ask questions, to raise challenges, to discuss readings, and to otherwise participate in the class as it unfolds over the semester.

Required or Recommended Reading Assignments

See course calendar below

General Description of the Subject Matter of Each Lecture or Discussion

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS

Additional readings may be assigned as appropriate

JANUARY

- T 7 Course introduction
 R 9 *Pudd'nhead Wilson* ch. 1-11
 Barthes *S/Z* excerpt (handout)
- T 14 Complete *Pudd'nhead*
 R 16 *Those Extraordinary Twins*
 Barthes (reserve)
- T 21 Foucault (reserve)
 R 23 Sundquist (reserve)
- T 28 *White Noise* 1-84
 W 29 **Response paper #1 due**
 R 30 *White* 85-180

FEBRUARY

- T 4 *White* 181-295
 R 6 Complete *White Noise*
 Baudrillard (reserve)

T 11 Hutcheon (reserve)
R 13 *Middle Passage* 1-70
F 14 **Response paper #2 due**

T 18 *Middle Passage* 71-140
R 20 *Middle* 140-182

T 25 Complete *Middle Passage*
Thaden (reserve)
R 27 Laub (reserve)
Midterm prep
F 28 **Response paper #3 due**

MARCH

T 4 Term project introduction
Research seminar (class meets in FL 207)
Midterm assigned
R 6 Film screening: *La jetée*

T 11 NO CLASS
R 13 NO CLASS

T 18 Term project Q&A
Midterm due at class time
R 20 *Postmodern Condition* Intro, 3-27 (**Jameson's Foreword not required**)

T 25 *Postmodern* 27-47
R 27 *Postmodern* 47-67
Project proposal due

APRIL

T 1 Complete *Postmodern Condition*
R 3 Bourdieu (reserve)

T 8 *Comrade* 1-52
W 9 **Response paper #4 due**
R 10 *Comrade* 52-80

T 15 *Comrade* 80-116
R 17 Complete *Comrade*

T 22 Last day of class

Response paper #5 due

T 29 **Term Project due**

Response paper #6 due

Deadline: 5:00pm

Required Course Syllabus Statements

Generative AI

- Plagiarism will result in failure of the course and the possibility of administrative action.

Using Remote Testing Software

This course does not use remote testing software.

This course uses remote testing software. Remote test-takers may choose their remote testing locations. Please note, however, that the testing software used for this may conduct a brief scan of remote test-takers' immediate surroundings, may require use of a webcam while taking an exam, may require the microphone be on while taking an exam, or may require other practices to confirm academic honesty. Test-takers therefore shall have no expectation of privacy in their test-taking location during, or immediately preceding, remote testing. If a student strongly objects to using test-taking software, the student should contact the instructor at the beginning of the semester to determine whether alternative testing arrangements are feasible. Alternatives are not guaranteed.

Required University Syllabus Statements

Accommodations/Students with Disabilities

Students needing accommodations due to a permanent or temporary disability, pregnancy or pregnancy-related conditions may contact UVU [Accessibility Services](#) at accessibilityservices@uvu.edu or 801-863-8747.

Accessibility Services is located on the Orem Campus in BA 110.

Deaf/Hard of Hearing students requesting ASL interpreters or transcribers can contact Accessibility Services to set up accommodations. Deaf/Hard of Hearing services can be contacted at DHHservices@uvu.edu

DHH is located on the Orem Campus in BA 112.

Academic Integrity

At Utah Valley University, faculty and students operate in an atmosphere of mutual trust. Maintaining an atmosphere of academic integrity allows for free exchange of ideas and enables all members of the community to achieve their highest potential. Our goal is to foster an intellectual atmosphere that produces scholars of integrity and imaginative thought. In all academic work, the ideas and contributions of others must be appropriately acknowledged and UVU students are expected to produce their own original academic work.

Faculty and students share the responsibility of ensuring the honesty and fairness of the intellectual environment at UVU. Students have a responsibility to promote academic integrity at the university by not participating in or facilitating others' participation in any act of academic dishonesty. As members of the academic community, students must become familiar with their [rights and responsibilities](#). In each course, they are responsible for knowing the requirements and restrictions regarding research and writing, assessments, collaborative work, the use of study aids, the appropriateness of assistance, and other issues. Likewise, instructors are responsible to clearly state expectations and model best practices.

Further information on what constitutes academic dishonesty is detailed in [UVU Policy 541: Student Code of Conduct](#).

Equity and Title IX

Utah Valley University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age (40 and over), disability, veteran status, pregnancy, childbirth, or pregnancy-related conditions, citizenship, genetic information, or other basis protected by applicable law, including Title IX and 34 C.F.R. Part 106, in employment, treatment, admission, access to educational programs and activities, or other University benefits or services. Inquiries about nondiscrimination at UVU may be directed to the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights or UVU's Title IX Coordinator at 801-863-7999 – TitleIX@uvu.edu – 800 W University Pkwy, Orem, 84058, Suite BA 203.

Religious Accommodation

UVU values and acknowledges the array of worldviews, faiths, and religions represented in our student body, and as such provides supportive accommodations for students. Religious belief or conscience broadly includes religious, non-religious, theistic, or non-theistic moral or ethical beliefs as well as participation in religious holidays, observances, or activities. Accommodations may include scheduling or due-date modifications or make-up assignments for missed class work.

To seek a religious accommodation, a student must provide written notice to the instructor and the Director of Accessibility Services at accessibilityservices@uvu.edu. If the accommodation relates to a scheduling conflict, the notice should include the date, time, and brief description of the difficulty posed by the conflict. Such requests should be made as soon as the student is aware of the prospective scheduling conflict.

While religious expression is welcome throughout campus, UVU also has a [specially dedicated space](#) for meditation, prayer, reflection, or other forms of religious expression.