

AM-340.56
Fall 2005
Fri 10:30-12

Reading Critical Texts
Enikő Bollobás
ADs 238

This course sets out to explore the aims, goals, and mechanics of critical thinking and critical writing. We will discuss ten major critical texts, and learn to read them in terms of what the texts *say* as well as what they *do*. By giving close reading to New Critical, poststructuralist, deconstructionist, feminist, and queer critical-theoretical texts, we will get a better understanding of the actual praxis of these critical-theoretical trends and schools. In addition, we will develop skills of critical reading and, ultimately, of writing as well.

Weekly readings have been compiled in a **Packet** (available in the Dept Office).

Class requirements: weekly reading assignments, weekly homework, in-class final test. In addition to the reading assignments (an average of one text per week), every student will have to write the weekly homework (half a page, typewritten) detailing (1) the main theses and the (2) text acts of the assigned text(s). These homeworks must be submitted independent of whether the student does or does not attend the class (university regulations, as you know, allow three absences per semester); in other words, even if you are absent from that week's class, you have to leave your homework in my mailbox before class.

Assessment: class participation+homework 60%, final test 40%.

Syllabus

September 9	Orientation
September 16	READ: T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and Individual Talent" (1919) HOMEWORK: Give the main theses, preferably of each paragraph/ section. What is being stated? What does the author SAY?
September 23	No class
September 30	READ: Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author"(1968) Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author?" (1969)

HOMEWORK: main theses

- October 7** READ: Barthes and Foucault again
HOMEWORK: Identify the text acts of this piece. What acts are being performed by the text? What does the author DO in the text? What is being achieved in the individual paragraphs or sections?
- October 14** READ: Jacques Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" (1966)
HOMEWORK: main theses
- October 21** READ: Derrida again
HOMEWORK: text acts (what the author/text does)
- November 11** READ: Nina Baym, "Melodramas of Beset Manhood: How Theories of American Fiction Exclude Women Authors" (1980)
HOMEWORK: main theses and text acts
- November 18** READ: Annette Kolodny, "Dancing Through the Minefield: Some Observations of a Feminist Literary Criticism" (1981)
HOMEWORK: main theses and text acts
- November 25** READ: Barbara Christian, "The Race for Theory" (1987);
HOMEWORK: main theses and text acts
- December 2** READ: Linda Kerber, "Can a Woman Be an Individual?: The Discourse of Self-Reliance" (1991)
HOMEWORK: main theses and text acts
- December 9** READ: Judith Butler, "Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of 'Postmodernism'" (1991)
Zsadányi Edit, "Az elveszett hangok nyomában. Gertrude Stein, *Tender Buttons*." (2001)
HOMEWORK: main theses and text acts
- December 16** **In-class final test**

COURSE PACKET

1. T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and Individual Talent." *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. Ed. Vincent B. Leitch. New York: Norton, 2001. 1092-198.
2. Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author." *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. Ed. Vincent B. Leitch. New York: Norton, 2001. 1466-1470.
3. Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author?" *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. Ed. Vincent B. Leitch. New York: Norton, 2001. 1622-1636.
4. Jacques Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences." *The Structuralist Controversy: The Languages of Criticism & the Sciences of Man*. Ed. Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1970. 247-265.
5. Nina Baym, "Melodramas of Beset Manhood: How Theories of American Fiction Exclude Women Authors." *The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature & Theory*. Ed. Elaine Showalter. New York: Pantheon Books, 1985. 63-80.
6. Annette Kolodny, "Dancing Through the Minefield: Some Observations of a Feminist Literary Criticism." *The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature & Theory*. Ed. Elaine Showalter. New York: Pantheon Books, 1985. 144-167.
7. Barbara Christian, "The Race for Theory." *African American Literary Theory. A Reader*. Ed. Winston Napier. New York: New York UP, 2000. 280-289.
8. Linda Kerber, "Can a Woman Be an Individual?: The Discourse of Self-Reliance." *Toward an Intellectual History of Women*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1997. 200-223.
9. Judith Butler, "Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of 'Postmodernism.'" *Feminist Contentions. A Philosophical Exchange*. Ed. Linda Nicholson. New York: Routledge, 1995.
10. Zsadányi Edit, "Az elveszett hangok nyomában. Gertrude Stein, *Tender Buttons*." *Hang és szöveg*. Szerk. Bednadies Gábor, Bengi László, Kulcsár Szabó Ernő és Szegedy-Maszák Mihály. Budapest: Osiris, 2003. 528-550.