

American Literary Theory BMA-AMED-203

(“every thing you always wanted to know about theory but were afraid to ask”)

This is an advanced (graduate) survey of 20th century American theories of literature and culture. The various schools and trends to be discussed include Formalism, New Criticism, Structuralism, Narratology, Poststructuralism, Deconstruction, Feminist Criticism, Gay and Lesbian Criticism, Queer Theory, Performative Theory, Intersubjective Theory. We will explore theories and thematics such as literary form, signification, metaphor and metonymy, mimesis and diegesis, the episteme, poststructuralism, binary oppositions and their deconstruction, centered structure, the subject, identity, essence/essentialism, performativity, and intersubjectivity, among others.

Grades will be based on individual and team performance (showing comprehension of the assigned texts) and the final oral exam.

Students are required to read ALL the assignments for ALL the classes. They must come prepared to present the readings assigned for those classes. In order to be able to do this, students are encouraged to do their individual readings into the schools in question in handbooks.

ELTE students have the right to miss three classes per semester. In this class, not reading the assignments of the day counts as an absence (even if you are physically present) and is therefore included into the three possible absences you can accumulate.

All the assigned readings are available electronically.

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Schedule of classes and assignments

Orientation

Formalism and New Criticism

Viktor Shklovsky, “Art as Technique” (pdf)

“New Criticism” chapter, Lois Tyson, *Critical Theory Today*, 129-160 (pdf)

MARCH 1 Structuralism

Roman Jakobson, “Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances” (pdf)

Roman Jakobson, “Closing Statement—Linguistics and Poetics” (pdf)

Ch’s 2+3, Hans Bertens, *Literary Theory—The Basics* (“Reading for Form I-II), 31-77 (pdf)

Narratology

David Lodge, “Mimesis and Diegesis in Modern Fiction” (pdf)

Poststructuralism

Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author” (pdf)

Michel Foucault, pp. 135-141, 195-209, from *Discipline and Punish* (pdf)

[background reading: Ch 5+6, Hans Bertens, *Literary Theory—The Basics* (“The poststructuralist revolution,” “Poststructuralism continued”), 117-170 (pdf)]

Deconstruction

Jacques Derrida, “Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences” (pdf)

[background reading: Jonathan Culler, Chapter Two: “Deconstruction,” *On Deconstruction* (85-280) (pdf)]

Feminist Criticism I

Judith Fetterley, "Reading about Reading: 'A Jury of Her Peers,' 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue,' and 'The Yellow Wallpaper'" (pdf)

Feminist Criticism II

Judith Butler, Ch 1, *Gender Trouble*, 1-34 (pdf)

Gay and Lesbian Criticism, Queer Theory

Eve Kosofsky-Sedgwick, "The Beast in the Closet" (pdf)

Henry James, *The Beast in the Jungle* (find text)

Performative Theory

J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (pdf)

Enikő Bollobás, "The performative: early history," "Extending the performative" ("Performativity in theories of the subject," "Performance and performative constructions of the subject") (in *They Aren't, Until I Call Them* 25-31, 76-96) (pdf)

Intersubjective Theory

Nick Crossley, *Intersubjectivity* (1-72) (pdf)

FINAL ORAL EXAM

Assigned texts

- 1.a. Viktor Shklovsky, “Art as Technique” (pdf)
- 1.b. Lois Tyson, “New Criticism” chapter, *Critical Theory Today*, 129-160 (pdf)

- 2.a. Roman Jakobson, “Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances” (pdf)
- 2.b. Roman Jakobson, “Closing Statement—Linguistics and Poetics” (pdf)
- 2.c. Ch’s 2+3, Hans Bertens, *Literary Theory—The Basics* (“Reading for Form I-II), 31-77 (pdf)

3. David Lodge, “Mimesis and Diegesis in Modern Fiction” (pdf)

- 4.a. Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author” (pdf)
- 4.b. Michel Foucault, pp. 135-141, 195-209, from *Discipline and Punish* (pdf)

- 5.a. Jacques Derrida, “Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences” (pdf)
- 5.b. Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction* (pdf)

6. Judith Fetterley, “Reading about Reading: ‘A Jury of Her Peers,’ ‘The Murders in the Rue Morgue,’ and ‘The Yellow Wallpaper’” (pdf)

7. Judith Butler, Ch 1, *Gender Trouble*, 1-34 (pdf)

8. Eve Kosofsky-Sedgwick, “The Beast in the Closet” (pdf)

- 9.a. J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (pdf)
- 9.b. Enikő Bollobás, “The performative: early history,” “Extending the performative” (“Performativity in theories of the subject,” “Performance and performative constructions of the subject”) (in *They Aren’t, Until I Call Them* 25-31, 76-96) (pdf)

10. Nick Crossley, *Intersubjectivity* (1-72) (pdf)