

English 8/7702 Contemporary Criticism and Theory
Fall 2019 Thursday 5:30-8:30 (Room TBA) CRN: 93485/93486

Professor Theron Britt,
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Office Hours: Th 4-5 and by appointment

TEXTS:

Vincent Leitch *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* (Third Edition)
ISBN-13: 978-0393602951

Note that the syllabus and other materials will be posted on my account on UMDrive; go to the appropriate course section at: umdrive.memphis.edu/tbritt/public

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course will explore contemporary questions of criticism and theory that begin in an understanding of poststructuralism and how this pervasive theory has influenced contemporary concerns with gender, race, and class. With that as a base, the course will then explore the putative limitations of poststructuralist criticism and theory and as well the current critical modifications or challenges to it such as ecocriticism, the new materialism, cognitive theory, actor-network theory, and speculative realism.

This course is meant to give you a practical mastery of contemporary approaches to literary criticism and theory that will enable you to enter into current critical debates and thus help you in your other coursework. **No background in literary theory is required.** And depending on your specific career path, this course counts as a theory course, but for some students not in the literature major it can count as a literature course.

GRADES: Grades will be figured on a **1,000 point system**. There will be **weekly response paper assignments** focused on that week's reading (roughly two pages each, typed, double-spaced, **500 points total**). In addition to the response papers, students will develop their own specific interests via a **substantial seminar paper on a literary or theoretical topic** of their own choosing that engages with an aspect of literary or cultural theory covered in the course (**400 points**). And finally, in conjunction with their seminar paper assignment, all students **will give a class presentation on an aspect of literary theory that either grows out of their seminar paper project or is related to their specific scholarly interests (100 points)**. [Note that final grades will be rated on the plus/minus scale as follows: an "A+" 966-1000; an "A" 935-965; an "A-" 900-934; a "B+" 866-899; a "B" 835-865; a "B-" 800-834, and so on.]

LATE ASSIGNMENTS: Late assignments will not be accepted without prior arrangements, though exceptions may be made for emergencies. The earlier that you are able to contact me the better, as this class moves quickly through the reading material and the writing assignments.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: Plagiarism will not be tolerated. All work submitted for the class must be your own, and you are not allowed to use previously submitted academic work to fulfill

requirements. If you use the work of others in your assignments (including anonymously published analyses, comments, or postings on websites), you must acknowledge and accurately cite their contributions. Plagiarism of any kind or extent will result in failure on the assignment and other consequences as per University policy, which can include failure in the course, suspension, and/or expulsion from the university. For further information, please see “Academic Misconduct” at the website for Office of Student Conduct:
<http://www.memphis.edu/studentconduct/academic-misconduct/index.php>

LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the conclusion of this course, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate knowledge of current trends in contemporary literary criticism.
- Have a sophisticated understanding of the backgrounds to and concerns of contemporary literary theory
- Understand the practical application of literary theory to specific literary texts
- Have a critical understanding of how to use contemporary literary criticism as part of a scholarly paper about a literary work
- Understand and use the conventions of scholarly research and citation
- Produce a substantial seminar paper that demonstrates knowledge of contemporary criticism and theory

UNIVERSITY POLICIES: For further information on University policies regarding classroom conduct, plagiarism, and other issues, please see the website for the Office of Student Conduct:
<http://www.memphis.edu/studentconduct/academic-misconduct/index.php>

DISABILITY RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

Reasonable and appropriate accommodations will be provided to students with disabilities. Students who have a disability or condition that may impair their ability to complete assignments or otherwise satisfy course criteria are encouraged to contact **Disability Resources for Students** (DRS) to identify, discuss, and document any feasible instructional modification or accommodations. Reasonable and appropriate accommodations will be provided to all students with disabilities who present a memo from DRS. If you may need class or test accommodations based on the impact of a disability, you are encouraged to discuss your specific needs with me in private. Students with disabilities should also **contact DRS at 110 Wilder Tower, 678-2880** or at www.memphis.edu/drs . DRS coordinates reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.