
ENGL7000 / 8000: Literary Research “Hobby-Horses and Critical Habits”

Instructor.	Dr. Darryl P. Domingo	Office Hrs.	Thursday 4:30-5:30
Location.	Patterson Hall 317	Phone.	(901) 678-3458
Time.	Thursday 5:30-8:30	E-Mail.	dphnrhnd@memphis.edu
Office.	Patterson Hall 407	Session.	Aug. 28 – Dec. 14, 2023

I hate set dissertations—and above all things in the world, ’tis one of the silliest things in one of them, to darken your hypothesis by placing a number of tall, opaque words, one before another, in a right line, betwixt your own and your reader’s conception—when in all likelihood, if you had looked about, you might have seen something standing, or hanging up, which would have cleared the point at once.

—Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, (1759-67)

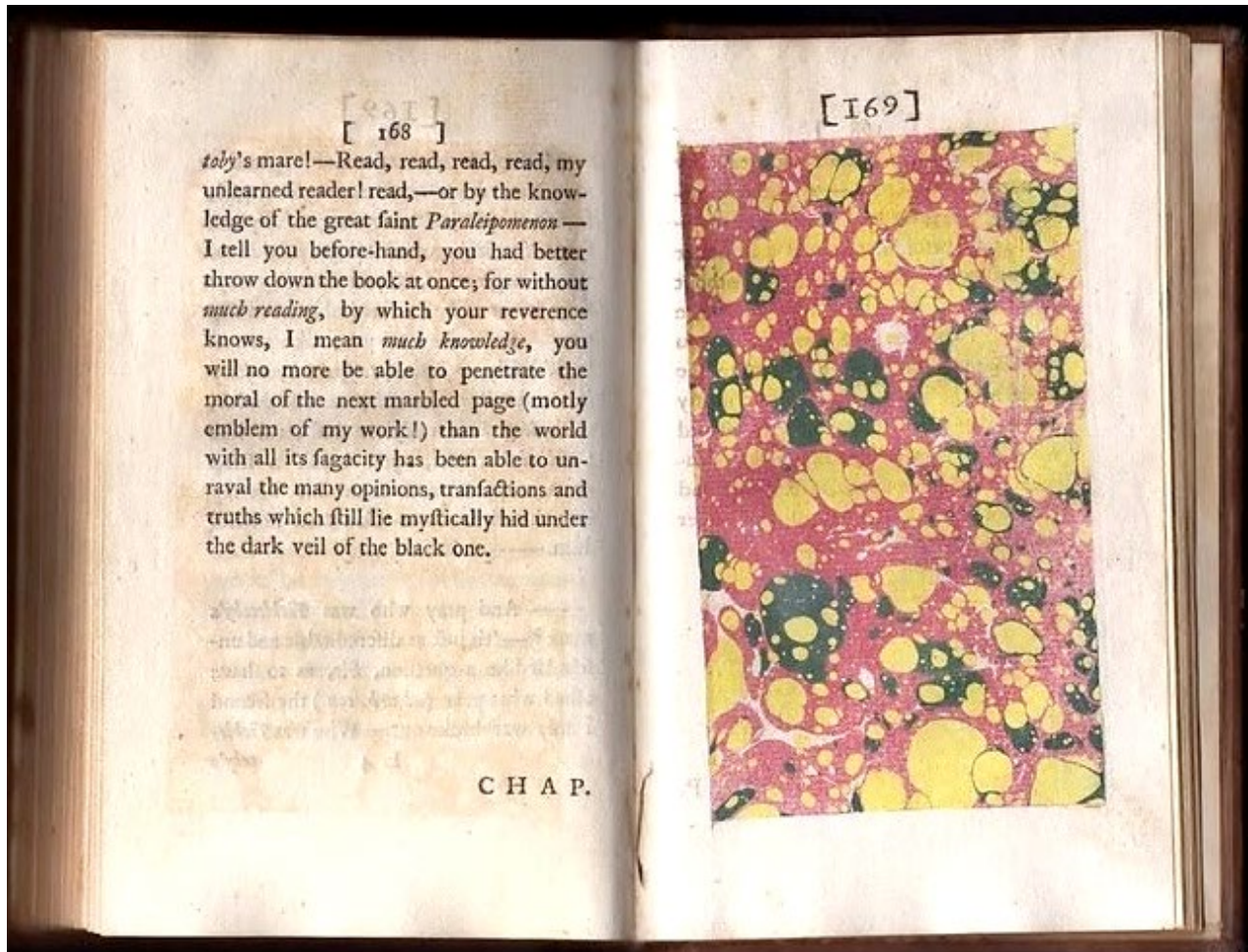
This seminar will introduce new graduate students in Literary and Cultural Studies to a range of methods for reading, analyzing, and writing about texts. In order to help prepare M.A. and Ph.D. students to pursue advanced research in English, we will discuss recent developments in critical methodology and (re-)familiarize ourselves with the literary and theoretical terminology through which we often engage poetry, drama, and fiction. We will evaluate strategies for applying “theory” to literary “practice” by examining several novels that reflexively challenge interpretation and foreground the experience of both the writer *writing* and the reader *reading*. The main goal of the course is to encourage a similar reflexivity in graduate students looking to refine their skills as readers and to find their own distinctive critical voice as writers. The course will thus invite students to interrogate assumptions about what constitutes literature and consider how literary “text” relates to broader cultural, ideological, and bibliographical context. It will also give them an opportunity to cultivate good scholarly and critical habits through response papers and seminar presentations, library workshops and database exercises, an annotated bibliography and research essay, and a class conference on a Shandean theme: “Hobby-Horses and Critical Habits.”

Required Reading. Ross C. Murfin and Supriya M. Ray, *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms*, 4th edition (Bedford / St. Martin’s, 2018 / 9781319035396); Laurence Sterne, *Tristram Shandy*, ed. Judith Hawley (Norton, 2019 / 9780393921366); Colson Whitehead, *The Intuitionist* (Penguin/Anchor, 1999 / 9780385493000); Alexandra Kleeman, *You Too Can Have a Body Like Mine* (HarperCollins, 2015 / 9780062388674); Nicholson Baker, *The Anthologist in The Paul Chowder Chronicles* (New York: Penguin, 2014 / 9780399172595) or Nicholson Baker, *The Anthologist. A Novel* (Simon & Schuster, 2009 / 9781416572459).

Recommended Reading. Eric Hayot, *The Elements of Academic Style: Writing for the Humanities* (Columbia, 2014 / 9780231168014); Jonathan Culler, *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction*, 2nd edition (Oxford, 2011 / 9780199691340).

Learning Outcomes. Upon successful completion of the course, students should be able to:

- describe and engage with the major critical and theoretical movements of the last century;
- reflect upon methodology as it relates to reading and writing about literature and culture;
- demonstrate a facility with literary, critical, and theoretical terminology;
- undertake advanced scholarly research and integrate secondary criticism into the analysis of primary texts;
- develop original arguments using effective academic prose, supplemented by rigorous bibliographical citations;
- devise, pitch, and present a persuasive paper to an audience;
- reflect upon the value of English Studies to careers within and without the Humanities.



The Marbled Page in Volume 3 Chapter 36 of Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1761).