

**English 221.1: INTRODUCTION TO LITERARY THEORY**

Fall 2016@FISK 204a{T/TH 12:30 p.m.— 1:45 p.m.}

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Office Hours: Tu-Th.: 3:15-4:00 p.m. (or by appt.)

This course will survey and examine diverse moments in what is often all too easily labeled (and dismissed) as Literary Theory. The very term “theory” implies that Literary Theory imagines itself as all too pure and can only be abstract, alienating and reductionist when applied either to the complexities of cultural texts, or to the existential experiences communicated by these texts. After surveying the movements that are generally agreed to constitute Literary Theory, we will engage the possibilities of applying these movements to a literary text— Raymond Chandler's *Farewell My Lovely*—alongside a cinematic text-adaptation of Chandler's noir novel, *Murder, My Sweet*.

**Written and oral assignments are to display:**

A historically informed comprehension of what defines literary theory and the various strands that constitute it.

An ability to apply these various strands to the analysis of cultural texts.

A critical reflexivity in regards to the ambitions, limitations and effects of theory vis-à-vis literary criticism and the analysis of film/culture.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

**(please use these specific editions and read relevant introductory and editorial matter)**

*The Norton Anthology of Criticism, Second Edition.*

*A Very Short Introduction to Literary Criticism* by Jonathan Culler (Oxford)

Raymond Chandler, *Farewell, My Lovely* (1940)

FILM: *Murder, My Sweet* (1944)

**GRADING**

Class Participation/Attendance: 15%

Class Presentation: 15%

Midterm: 4-5 page essay 30%

Final: 5-6 page essay 40%

## ***PURE THEORY: A POSSIBILITY?***

*FIRST DAY OF CLASSES:* Tues Aug. 30: Introduction/Over-view.

Sept. 1: Defining the History of Literary Theory (test reading: Keats, "On first looking into Chapman's Homer"); New Criticism (all readings in Norton 2cd. Ed. unless noted): 1217-1229, 1232-37, 1255-1261.

Sept. 6: New Criticism continued: 1217-1229, 1232-37, 1255-1261.

Sept. 8: Reader-Response Criticism: 1406-1420, 1524-1532.

Sept. 13: HOLIDAY

Sept. 15: Structuralism: 850-66, 1320-1331, 1152-56.

Sept. 20: Deconstruction (Derrida) Plato?: 77-83, 1697-1706, 1729-34.

Sept. 22: American Deconstruction (de Man): 1365-78.

Sept. 27-29: Psychoanalysis (Freud): 818-21, 824-45.

Oct. 4: Psychoanalysis (Lacan): 1163-1181.

Oct. 6: Feminism I: 1265-1273, 1926-1938.

Oct. 11: HOLIDAY

Oct. 13: Feminism II: 1942-1949, 2071-2081.

Oct. 18: Foucault and the New Historicism: 1490-1521.

Oct. 20: New Historicism in the USA: 2150-2161.

Oct. 25: Cultural Studies and Class: 1664-1670, 1763-1778, 2481-88.

Oct. 27: Cultural Studies and Race: 1782-1795, 2556-2575.

Nov. 1: Postcolonialism and Globality: 1440-1446, 2114-2126.

Nov. 3: Queer Theory: 1591-1603, 2470-2477, 2540-2553.

Nov. 8: Film Studies: 2084-2095.

### **IS APPLIED THEORY ONLY POSSIBLE IN THEORY?**

Nov. 10-15: Putting Theory to Work: Watch ***Murder, My Sweet.***

Nov. 17: Analyze ***Murder, My Sweet.***

Nov. 22: HOLIDAY

Nov. 24: Continue Analyzing ***Murder, My Sweet.***

Nov. 29-Dec. 1.-Dec. 6: Analysis of textual source for the film: Raymond Chandler's *Farewell, My Lovely.*

## GUIDELINES FOR THIS COURSE

No cell phone usage or signs, sounds or semblance of cell phone usage in class (loss of participation points will be the result of disregarding this guideline).

Use *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (by Joseph Gibaldi) for writing, researching and documenting research papers: **Absolutely no rewrites of essays are permitted.**

Prepare readings and bring handouts (when relevant) to class (participation points will be deducted for non-compliance with this all-too-obvious guideline).

Do Not Plagiarize, Cheat or otherwise Deceive your Professor (see “Student Code of Conduct” in *Student Handbook*). Any violation of academic integrity will receive, as per the “Student Code of Conduct,” a failing grade of forty points for the assignment in question. Plagiarism will be monitored remotely.

<http://pnp.aub.edu.lb/general/conductcode/158010081.html>

**CLASS PARTICIPATION:** 5 points out of 15 derive from participation in class discussion, which does not mean sycophantic grade-mongering. A genuine effort to engage with the texts in question is what is required. Lack of engaged class involvement will lead to zero out of 5 points. Please write potential points of interest and intervention if public speaking is not your forte. The remaining 10 points are based on attendance and punctuality: 3 late arrivals = one absence; every absence = a loss of 2 points. 2 absences from class are permitted per semester. No excused absences are permitted (including doctor notes and emails to your professor—N.B.; such emails will result in the loss of 2 participation points).

**CLASS PRESENTATION:** Students will have to present a short talk (8 minutes/ 4 double-spaced pages) on a theoretical movement (or on an aspect of one of these movements) we are studying this semester. Present the text to the class by leading us through a discussion based on textual details and rhetorical modes of argumentation that are relevant to your attempt to outline; 1) what is being analyzed; 2) why it is being analyzed; 3) methodical assumptions; 4) aims and goals at issue. The point of this assignment is to open the text to further discussion for the benefit of the class as a whole, hence a handout covering your major points would be a definite asset.

**ESSAYS:** MLA-formatted essays are required at the mid-term and at the end of the term. Topics, due dates and guidelines for each essay will be distributed two weeks prior to the due date.