

Introduction to Literary Criticism

ENGL 101

Spring 2026 Section 80 Fully Online 4 Unit(s) 01/22/2026 to 05/11/2026 Modified 01/26/2026

Contact Information

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Office Hours: MW 11:45-12:30 [online via zoom; use the class zoom link]

Course Information

This course offers an introduction to literary criticism, theories and methodologies used by scholars and critics of the 20th and 21st centuries. We will examine major movements or schools of criticism and theory like Structuralism, Marxism, Feminism, New Historicism, and Postcolonialism to learn how they developed and how they are used in the study of literature. By analyzing essays written by prominent literary critics, we will try to improve our own ability to analyze literature and to read/write literary criticism. You will be introduced to a lot of new terms/concepts that you will learn to use to analyze literary texts. We will examine fundamental questions and common assumptions about language, literature, reading, and writing. Since literary theory works across the boundaries of disciplines like criticism, psychology, sociology, anthropology, philosophy and history, this course will challenge you to read a considerable amount of dense and complex material. but it should also be exciting and empowering because you will have an opportunity to form clearer perspectives on language/literature and to acquire the critical tools necessary for analyzing and interpreting language/literature.

Lecture/Discussion

MW 10:30-11:45

Online

Course Description and Requisites

Study and application of various historical and contemporary approaches, including foundational twentieth century theory as well as contemporary approaches. Applications of critical models to various literary, visual, and digital texts.

Prerequisite(s): ENGL 100W.

Letter Graded

* Classroom Protocols

Attendance & Participation: Although attendance cannot be graded, regular attendance and active participation in class discussions are extremely important for your success in the class.

Please have your camera on whenever possible so that we are able to see one another and feel like we're together in a classroom.

Please arrive on time and stay for the entire class. You are responsible for all materials assigned, presented and discussed. You are encouraged to take notes in class, but you should have studied the materials before class begins.

Poor attendance/participation will have negative effects on your final grade. Since most classes will be based on lectures and discussions, it is crucial for you to keep up with the readings and take an active as well as thoughtful role in all classroom activities. Your questions, comments, insights, and interpretations are valuable no matter how outlandish they may seem. So do speak up!

Because this course is likely to challenge our thinking, it's important to keep an open mind, listen respectfully to others, express your ideas or disagreement in a civil manner, and refrain from using harmful or hateful language.

All readings are listed against dates they will be discussed in class; so when you come to class you should have already read the materials and be prepared to discuss them

Devices: You may use your laptops/tablets in class for class-related activities but please refrain from using your phone or engaging in activities that may distract the class.

Conferencing: I encourage you to schedule a meeting whenever you need to discuss something, whether it is an assignment or any other difficulty you may be having with the structure and format of the class. I am completely open to criticism and suggestions because the only way I can fix things is if I know what is wrong.

Submitting work: All assignments must be turned in on Canvas on the date indicated in the schedule; please do not email assignments to me. Exams will be during class time on Canvas.

AI: Please do not rely on AI to do your research, thinking or writing; learning depends on your personal engagement with the course materials.

Program Information

The following statement has been adopted by the Department of English for inclusion in all syllabi: In English Department Courses, instructors will comment on and grade the quality of student writing as well as the quality of ideas being conveyed. All student writing should be distinguished by correct grammar and punctuation, appropriate diction and syntax, and well-organized paragraphs. The Department of English reaffirms its commitment to the differential grading scale as defined in the SJSU Catalog ("The Grading System").

Grades issued must represent a full range of student performance:

- A = excellent;
- B = above average;
- C = average;
- D = below average;
- F = failure.

Within any of the letter grade ranges (e.g. B+/B/B-), the assignment of a +(plus) or -(minus) grade will reflect stronger (+) or weaker (-) completion of the goals of the assignment.

Program Learning Outcomes (PLO)

Upon successful completion of an undergraduate degree program in the Department of English and Comparative Literature, students will be able to:

1. Read closely in a variety of forms, styles, structures, and modes, and articulate the value of close reading in the study of literature, creative writing, or rhetoric.
2. Show familiarity with major literary works, genres, periods, and critical approaches to British, American, and World Literature.
3. Write clearly, effectively, and creatively, and adjust writing style appropriately to the content, the context, and nature of the subject.
4. Develop and carry out research projects, and locate, evaluate, organize, and incorporate information effectively.
5. Articulate the relations among culture, history, and texts, including structures of power.

Department Information:

Department Name: English and Comparative Literature

Department Office: FO 102

Department Website: www.sjsu.edu/english (<https://www.sjsu.edu/english>)

Department email: english@sjsu.edu (<mailto:english@sjsu.edu>)

Department phone number: 408-924-4425

Course Goals

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate familiarity with different modern schools of literary theory
2. Demonstrate familiarity with major theorists/critics/texts associated with each school

3. Understand and use the key concepts and terms associated with each major school
4. Apply different critical theories to analyze various literary texts and cultural/artistic products.
5. Communicate their ideas/analysis in cogent, critical language, both orally and in writing.

1-Unit Enhancement

Because this is a 4-unit course, students can expect to spend a minimum of twelve hours per week preparing for and attending classes and completing course assignments. This course will have integrated into the syllabus the following 1-unit enhancement: Higher Level Critical Thinking.

With guidance from the instructor, students will prepare a glossary of key terms/concepts. Students will gloss at least 2 key terms/concepts from each theory from the list provided. The instructor will provide detailed guidelines, including a template as well as samples. Each gloss will include (i) a complete, accurate, precise, and clear definition of the key term/concept and (ii) concrete examples where appropriate. You will bring your glosses to share in class. This scaffolded assignment will enhance students' abilities to integrate knowledge of literary theory and criticism (PLO 2), write effectively (PLO 3).

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Read closely in a variety of forms, styles, structures, and modes, and articulate the value of close reading in the study of literature;
2. Show familiarity with major literary works, genres, periods, and critical approaches to literature;
3. Write clearly, effectively, and creatively, and adjust writing style appropriately to the content, the context, and the nature of the subject;
4. Develop and carry out research projects, and locate, evaluate, organize, and incorporate information effectively;
5. Articulate the relations among culture, history, and texts.

Course Materials

Required Texts

Tyson, Lois. *Critical Theory Today*. New York & London: Garland.

Shakespeare. *The Tempest: A Case Study*. Ed. Gerald Graff. St. Martins.

Recommended: (excellent reference for key terms/concepts)

Murfin and Ray: *The Bedford Glossary of Literary Terms*

Course Requirements and Assignments

Assignments (additional details will be provided on canvas and in class)

All Assignments should be submitted on Canvas on the date/time specified in the schedule. Unless you have received prior permission, late submissions will be graded one letter grade lower for each late day and will not be accepted beyond one week.

1. Applications (PLO 1): You will write four "applications" (250-300 words each) on **Maurice Sendak's [Where the Wild Things Are](#)** using a different theoretical lens each time. Your application must follow the specified format given in the Assignment guidelines. Each application must include (i) a clear thesis statement that interprets WTTWA using the specified theory, (ii) two key supporting ideas, and (iii) a brief explanation of how the particular theory is being applied. Apply only those theoretical approaches we have discussed in class. Applications must be submitted on Canvas on the dates indicated in the schedule; you will be asked to share these applications in class from time to time.

Grading criteria: Demonstrated ability to apply a particular theory or approach to a literary work; correct use of key terms/concepts; insightfulness of analysis; clarity of expression; follows format.

2. Reader Response (PLO 2): For each critical essay on *The Tempest* discussed in class, you will prepare a typed bullet-pointed one-page response following the format of the sample provided. Each RR must include (i) a short summary of the thesis, (ii) short summary of two key supporting ideas, and (iii) a brief example/illustration from the essay to show how a particular theory is being applied. You will bring these RRs to share in class during discussions. Class lectures will cover these key terms/concepts. You may make notes/revisions during and after class. You will collect these RRs in the form of a 2-part portfolio and submit them on the dates indicated in the schedule. These RRs should be used as a study guide to prepare for the exams; you will also be able to consult them during the exams.

Grading Criteria: Accurate completion of at least 5+5 = 10/12 RRs following the specified format and submission on time.

3. Glossary: You will gloss at least 2 key terms/concepts in each theory from the given lists. Following the sample provided, each gloss must (i) identify which theory/theories use the term, (ii) give a complete, accurate, precise, and clear definition or explanation of the term, and (ii) present concrete examples where appropriate. You will bring your glosses to share and revise during/after class. You submit the glossary in two parts on the dates indicated in the schedule. The Glossary should be used as a study guide to prepare for the exams; you will also be able to consult your glosses during the exams. So I strongly recommend you gloss as many terms as you can every week and review them periodically.

Grading Criteria: Accurate completion of assignment following the specified format and submission on time.

4. Exams (PLO 1 & 5): You will take a midterm and a final exam on the dates indicated in the schedule.

The exams will ask you to define key terms/concepts as well as analyze excerpted passages of literary criticism on *The Tempest*. The questions are meant to assess your understanding of the course material as well as your ability to apply the concepts and integrate the methods we study.

Important Note: Your glossary and weekly RRs are best study guides for the exam. You will also be able to use these during the exams, so please be sure to do them regularly.

✓ Grading Information

Grading:

Applications 400 (100x4)

Reader Responses 100 (50x2)

Glossary 100 (50x2)

Midterm exam 200

Final exam 200

Grading Scale:

98-100: A+

94-97: A

91--93: A-

88-90: B+

84-87: B

81-83: B-

78-80: C+

74-77: C

71-73: C-68-70: D+

64-67: D

61-63: D-

0-60: F

The following statements have been adopted by the English department:

1. In English Department courses, instructors will comment on and grade the quality of student writing as well as the quality of ideas conveyed. All student writing should be distinguished by correct grammar and punctuation, appropriate diction and syntax, and well-organized paragraphs.

2. Grading Policy: The Department of English reaffirms its commitment to the differential grading scale as defined in the official SJSU Catalog ("The Grading System"). Grades issued must represent a full range of student performance: A = excellent; B = above average; C = average; D = below average; F = failure.

Courses graded according to the A,B,C, No Credit system shall follow the same pattern, except that NC, for No Credit, shall replace D or F. In A,B,C, No Credit courses NC shall also substitute for W (Withdrawal) because neither NC nor W affects students' grade point average.

University Policies

Per [University Policy S16-9 \(PDF\)](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on the [Syllabus Information](https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php>) web page. Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

Course Schedule

Course Schedule

This schedule is subject to change with fair notice via mysjsu/canvas

C = Canvas; T: Tempest

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
1	1/26 M	Review Syllabus and Canvas Course Structure Intro. to <i>The Tempest</i> (<i>finish reading before class</i>)
	1/28 W	
2	2/2 M	Reading With/Against the Grain Classical & Romantic - Mimetic & Expressive theories.
	2/4 W	Tyson: New Criticism
3	2/9 M	Reuben Brower "The Mirror of Analogy" (T) Review Sample RR
	2/11 W	Review Application Guidelines and Sample
4	2/16 M	Tyson: Structuralist Criticism
	2/18 W	Frye "Shakespeare's The Tempest" (RR1) Homework: Application # 1 Due 2/22 by Midnight

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
5	2/23 M	Tyson: Post Structuralism - Deconstructive Criticism
	2/25 W	Miko "The Tempest" (C) (RR2)
6	3/2 M	Feedback on Application #1 Glossary Review (bring yours to share in class)
	3/4. W	Tyson: New Historicism (Cultural Criticism)
7	3/9. M	Frank Kermode "Shakespeare's final plays" (T) (RR3)
	3/11. W	Barker & Hulme "Nymphs and Reapers Heavily Vanish" (T) (RR4) Tyson Postcolonial Criticism (& Critical Race Theory) Application #2 Due 3/15 by Midnight
8	3/16 M	Singh: Postcolonial Readings of The Tempest (RR5). . (https://padlet.com/discovering_literature/post-colonial-reading-of-the-tempest-qj4aw8sgqx3u7egg).
	3/18. W	Review for Midterm (Bring your glossary to share)

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
9	3/23 M	Midterm Exam In class, on Canvas
	3/25 W	Work on Glossary & RR Part 1 Portfolios
10	3/30 M	Spring Break
	4/1 W	

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
11	4/6 M	Tyson "Marxist Criticism"
	4/8 W	Poulard "Politics of Invisibility: Power and Ideology in The Tempest" (C) (RR6)
		RR Portfolio Part 1 Due 4/12 by Midnight
		Glossary Part 1 Due 4/12 by Midnight
12	4/13 M	Tyson "Feminist Criticism"
	4/15. W	Thompson "Miranda, Where's Your Sister?" (T) (RR7)
		Lomba "Gender, race & renaissance drama" (T) (RR8)
		Application #3 Due 4/19 by midnight
13	4/20 M	Tyson "Psychoanalytic Criticism"
	4/22 W	Paris "The Tempest" (C) (RR9)
14	4/27 M	Tyson "Reader-Response Criticism"
	4/29 W	Skilleas "Anachronistic Themes" (C) (RR10)
		Application #4 Due 5/3 by midnight

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
15	5/4 M	Ecocriticism
	5/6 W	Gray: Command these elements to Silence (RR11)
	5/11 M	<p>Review for final exam</p> <p>Bring your glossary of key terms/concepts to share</p> <p>Glossary Part 2 Due 5/13 by Midnight</p> <p>RR Portfolio Part 2 Due 5/13 by Midnight</p>
	5/13 W	<p>Final Exam 10:45-12:00</p> <p>In class, on Canvas</p>