Fall 2015

ENG 294 Introduction to Contemporary Theory:

How to Survive the Twenty-First Century



**Professor Gregory Castle ♣ MW 10:30am-11:45am ♣ Ln. 86514**

**Off. LL 202A ♣ Off. Hrs. M 1-3 and by appt.**

**Ph. 965-0856 ♣ dedalus@asu.edu**

This course is designed to introduce students to key ideas and concepts in contemporary critical and cultural theory. This is not a historical survey course, but rather one in which these ideas and concepts will be applied to literary and cultural texts (books, film, music, video games, the artful body). We use a theory “primer” that will provide short bursts of background on earlier theories, but the primary texts we read will be in the newest theories out there. In addition to the “posts”—postmodernism, poststructuralism, post-Marxism, postcolonial studies, post-feminism and posthumanism—we will explore new theoretical formations that have emerged in response to our contemporary social condition, such as queer theory, trauma theory, disability studies, cognitive studies, the new “object-oriented” philosophies and materialist theories. And then there’s the “trans” domains—transnationalism, transgender studies and transhumanism— which, like so many contemporary theoretical formations opens up new perspectives on where and how we live, who we are and even *what we are*. The contemporary theories studied in this course provide the tools for understanding twentieth-first century life and the limits and enjoyments of our humanity—and our posthumanity, for we are living on the cusp of a transformation: from a humanism that has reached its limit to a posthuman dispensation the limits of which are as yet unknown. Be prepared for this “brave new world.”

**Course Objectives**

The goal of this course is to introduce students to the fundamental ideas, concepts, terms, themes and issues in contemporary literary theory. While the course is designed for the English major, non-majors will benefit from achieving the following objectives:

* to learn the chief characteristics of major theoretical schools of thought;
* to learn the basic structure and vocabulary of theoretical analysis
* to learn the basic competency skills in terms of writing about and/or applying theoretical concepts;
* to have a fair knowledge of the historical development of literary theory;

**::::::::///><\\\::::::♋::::::///><\\\::::::|♎|::::::///><\\\::::::♋::::::///><\\\::::::|♎|::::::///><\\\::::::♋::::::///><\\\::::::**

**Required Texts**

Gregory Castle, *Literary Theory Handbook* (Wiley-Blackwell 2013)

Alison Bechdel, *Fun House: A Family Tragicomic* (Mariner 2006)

ASU *Guide to Style*: <http://www.public.asu.edu/~dedalus/guidetostyle/index.html>

Additional readings will be assigned as needed, either on Blackboard or online.

**Course Assignments and Policies**

**Assignments.** All students will be asked to complete the following assignments. Failure to turn in *any assignment or to take any examination* will result in a failing grade for the assignment and/or course. All assignments will posted on Blackboard.

Four short critical papers (3 pp) 50 pts each

Participation 50 pts

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Total 250pts

**Papers.** Format for term: Times New Roman font (12pt); please double space, using standard margins (1” top/bottom, 1.25” left/right). *No cover sheets*. For paper setup, citation and bibliographic format, please follow ASU *Guide to Style* (based on MLA format). Hard copies of your papers are due **in class** on the date specified on the course itinerary; please send an electronic copy via email to dedalus@asu.edu. Late papers will be docked 5 pts per day late

For more information about paper format and construction, citation guidelines and matters of style, consult the ASU *Guide to Style*: <http://www.public.asu.edu/~dedalus/guidetostyle/index.html>. Additional citation and bibliographic information can also be found in the MLA *Handbook for Writers* (Hayden Ref. LB 2369 G53 2003).

***Please note:*** The ASU *Guide to Style* is a required text

**Participation.** In-class participation (50 pts) is satisfied by a number of things, including taking part in class discussion, acquiring appropriate text books and bringing them to class, taking notes, attending office hours, and turning assignments in on time. *Note*: not everyone needs to do all these things well all at once. But they are the factors that help me determine the “class participation” portion of the overall grade.

**Attendance and Class Decorum.**Attendance, of course, is mandatory. Students are allowed 3 unexcused absences; excused absences beyond this limit are considered on a case-by-case basis and must be documented. (Doctor’s notes must be produced immediately after the absence and must indicate a specific and sufficient reason for missing class. Whenever possible, notify me via e-mail if you are going to claim an *excused* absence.) Excessive absence and habitual tardiness can lead to a failing grade.

All students are expected to conduct themselves in a manner befitting a college classroom. *Please do not use laptops, tablets, cellphones, ipods and other electronic devices during class*. Also please refrain from leaving the room during class time; if you know you must leave early, alert the instructor and sit near the door.

On the use of laptops in class, please see this article from the *Chronicle of Higher Education*: <http://chronicle.com/blogs/linguafranca/2014/08/25/why-im-asking-you-not-to-use-laptops/>

**Note:** ASU policy states that email is an official means of communication and that students are responsible for checking it. See: <http://www.asu.edu/aad/manuals/ssm/ssm107-03.html>

**Establishing Eligibility for Disability Accommodations:** Students who feel they will need disability accommodations in this class but have not registered with the Disability Resource Center (DRC) should contact DRC immediately. Students should contact the Disability Resource Center on the campus that your class is being held. Campus-specific [location and contact information](https://eoss.asu.edu/drc/contactus) can be found on the DRC website. DRC offices are open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday – Friday. Check the [DRC website](http://eoss.asu.edu/drc) for eligibility and documentation policies

**Caveat Emptor.** Academic dishonesty (cheating, plagiarism and copying)will not be tolerated. Plagiarism means “using another's words, ideas, materials or work without properly acknowledging and documenting the source. Students are responsible for knowing the rules governing the use of another's work or materials and for acknowledging and documenting the source appropriately.”

See ASU *Student Academic Integrity Policy* (p. 2 §H and p. 8): <https://provost.asu.edu/sites/default/files/AcademicIntegrityPolicyPDF.pdf> and on Blackboard.

*Nota Bene*.No tape recording for any reason (without prior permission) or notetaking for commercial use allowed.

**::::::::///><\\\::::::♋::::::///><\\\::::::|♎|::::::///><\\\::::::♋::::::///><\\\::::::|♎|::::::///><\\\::::::♋::::::///><\\\::::::**

**Course Itinerary**

All readings should be completed *before* the class period in which they are discussed. Please bring your book to each class period. *LTH* = *Literary Theory Handbook*.

**Week One**

Mon. 8/24 Introductions

Wed. 8/26 *LTH*, “Introduction”

**Week Two**

Mon. 8/31 *LTH*, “The History of Literary Theory

Wed. 9/2 Text/Interpretation. Reading. *LTH*, “Reader-Response Theory”

**Week Three**

Mon. 9/7 *Labor Day—No class*

Wed. 9/9 Art/Aesthetics. *LTH*, pp. 12-23

**Week Four**

Mon. 9/14 Language/Form. *LTH*, “Formalism and Structuralism”

Wed. 9/16 Language/Text. *LTH* , “Poststructuralism”

**PAPER ONE DUE**

**Week Five**

Mon. 9/21 Discourse/Formation. *LTH* , “Poststructuralism”

Wed. 9/23 Mind/Body. *LTH*, “Psychoanalysis”

**Week Six**

Mon. 9/28 Mind/Language. *LTH*, “Psychoanalysis” (emph. on Lacan)  
Wed. 9/30 Gender/Sexuality. *LTH*, “Feminism”

**Week Seven**

Mon. 10/5 Gender/Sexuality. *LTH*, “Gender/Sexuality.”

Wed. 10/7 Body/Norms. *LTH*, “Disability Studies”

**Week Eight**

Mon. 10/12 *Fall Break—No class*

Wed. 10/14 Body/Norms. *LTH*, “Trauma Studies”

**PAPER TWO DUE**

**Week Nine**

Mon. 10/19 Dialectics/Economics. *LTH*, “Marxist Theory”

Wed. 10/21 Ideology/Critique. *LTH*, “Critical Theory”

**Week Ten**

Mon. 10/26 Aesthetics/Politics. *LTH*, “Post-Marxist Theory”

Wed. 10/28 Consumers/Simulations. *LTH*, “Postmodernism”

**Week Eleven**

Mon. 11/2 Nature/Culture (again). *LTH*, “Cultural Studies”

Wed. 11/4 Signifyin’/Signification. “African American Studies”

**Week Twelve**

Mon. 11/9 Other/*Ethos*. *LTH*, “Ethnic and Indigenous Studies”

**PAPER THREE DUE**

Wed. 11/11 *Veterans Day—No class*

**Week Thirteen**

Mon. 11/16 Colony/Nation. *LTH*, “Postcolonial Studies”

Wed. 11/18 Nation/Globe. *LTH*, “Transnationalism”

**Week Fourteen**

Mon. 11/23 Colony....Globe. Continuation.

Wed. 11/25 Humanity/Beyond. *LTH*, “Posthumanism”

**Week Fifteen**

Mon. 11/30 Objects/Things. “Object-Oriented Ontologies”

Wed. 12/2 Inside/Outside. *LTH*, “Evolutionary Literary Theory” and “Ecocriticism”

Mon. 12/9 **PAPER FOUR DUE**

Course Withdrawal Deadline Nov 4 **///** Complete Withdrawal Deadline Dec 4