

THIS IS A SAMPLE SYLLABI FROM SPRING 2021.  
THE READINGS AND MATERIALS ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

## INTRODUCTION TO LITERARY THEORY: IDEOLOGY

ENGLISH 094.401  
COMPARATIVE LITERATURE 094.401  
SPRING 2021  
W 3:30-6:30PM (SYNCHRONOUS SEMINAR)

PROFESSOR DAVID L. ENG  
OFFICE HOURS T 6:30-7:30PM & BY APPOINTMENT  
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**DESCRIPTION** This seminar will provide an introduction to literary theory by focusing on ideology. We will explore how ideology becomes a name for investigating various social, political, and economic processes underwriting cultural production. Throughout the semester we will read texts that help to establish a genealogy of ideology. At the same time, we will examine a number of critical theories—including (post)structuralism, deconstruction, Marxism, psychoanalysis, feminism, critical race theory, postcolonial studies, and environmental studies—that offer frameworks for analyzing the complex relationships among language, representation, and power in literature, popular culture, and public discourse. Finally, we will place these theories in conversation with a number of contemporary political debates, including feminist challenges to pornography, legal disputes over hate speech, social controversies over affirmative action, state rhetoric regarding the “war on terror,” and scientific deliberations on climate change.

**REQUIRED TEXTS** Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981)  
Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. Richmond Lattimore (New York: HarperPerennial, 1991) [PDF available on Canvas]  
Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002) [PDF available on Canvas]  
Catherine A. MacKinnon, *Only Words* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993)  
Karl Marx, *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (New York: International Publishers, 1998)

**CRITICAL ESSAYS** Muneer Ahmad, “Homeland Insecurities: Racial Violence the Day after September 11,” *Social Text* 72 20.3 (Fall 2002): 101-115.  
Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Toward an Investigation,” *Lenin and Philosophy*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 127-186.  
Dipesh Chakrabarty, “The Climate of History: Four Theses,” *Critical Inquiry* 35.2 (2009): 197-222.  
Dipesh Chakrabarty, “The Idea of Provincializing Europe,” *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 3-23.  
Jacques Derrida, “Signature, Event, Context,” *Limited Inc.*, ed. Gerald Graff (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 1-23.  
Terry Eagleton, “What is Ideology?” *Ideology: An Introduction* (New York: Verso, 1991), 1-31.  
Sigmund Freud, “Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes” (1925), *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 8 (1927): 133-142.  
Sigmund Freud, “Reflections upon War and Death” (1915), *Character and Culture*, ed. Philip Rieff (New York: Collier, 1963), 107-133.  
Franz Kafka, “The Silence of the Sirens,” *The Complete Stories* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 430-432.

Cheryl Harris, "Whiteness as Property," *Harvard Law Review* 106.8 (June 1993): 1709-1791.  
Hua Hsu, "The Rise and Fall of Affirmative Action," *The New Yorker* (15 October 2018)  
<<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/10/15/the-rise-and-fall-of-affirmative-action>>  
Joseph Masco, "The Age of Fallout," *History of the Present* 5.2 (Fall 2015): 137-168.  
Rob Nixon, "The Great Acceleration and the Great Divergence: Vulnerability in the Anthropocene," *PMLA Profession* (19 March 2014),  
<<http://profession.commons.mla.org/2014/03/19/the-great-acceleration-and-the-great-divergence-vulnerability-in-the-anthropocene/>>  
Susan Sontag, "Regarding the Torture of Others," *The New York Times Magazine*, 23 May 2003: 24+  
William Wordsworth, "We Are Seven" (1798) <<https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/we-are-seven>>

**FILMS** Curtis Chin, dir., *Tested* (2015)  
Peter Lord and Nick Park, dir., *Chicken Run* (2000)

(\*) All critical essays are available on Canvas. Required texts and films have been put on reserve at Van Pelt. Alternately, students can obtain these books or films on their own.

**CLASS STRUCTURE** In order to maintain the safety of all students, faculty, and staff, the class structure may be subject to change over the course of the semester due to shifting conditions related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Zoom Etiquette:** We will be discussing difficult social and political issues over the course of the semester. In order to respect our learning process as well as the privacy of your fellow students, you must not record the class for yourself or post recordings, screenshots, or elements of classroom work in any forum. Doing so will result in disciplinary action.

Please sign into synchronous class meetings on the Canvas Zoom link at least a few minutes before the start time and make sure that your name and pronouns are on display. This is a seminar, so please leave your video on for the duration of the class. Having video helps to create a sense of shared community in our (virtual) space, and it encourages engagement. If you need to turn off your video for a particular class, please let me know in advance. Please keep your microphone muted unless you are speaking and use plug-in headphones, if at all possible. Please do not use the chat window for any other purpose than questions or comments. Be aware that after each class a transcript of the chat is saved. As the instructor, I will be able to see the entire chat log, including private chat.

**Office Hours:** In order to protect student privacy, when you join my office hours you will first be placed in a Zoom waiting room. You will see the following message: "Please wait, the meeting host will let you in soon." Stay in the waiting room and do not sign off. When I am finished with the student before you, you will be admitted you into the Zoom meeting room. Please sign up for weekly Tuesday office hours on: <<https://calendly.com/davidleng/spring-2021-office-hours>> If you cannot make my weekly office hours, please email me directly to set up an alternate meeting time. To sign into office hours, please use the following Zoom link: <<https://upenn.zoom.us/j/94837365430?pwd=QnY4WE5JMEJxMFRaSURhdktNbUx1UT09>>

**REQUIREMENTS** This is an introductory class to literary theory. The course materials are designed to develop your critical thinking, reading, and writing skills. A number of the required texts are dense. We will read them carefully and closely, and I hope that you will come away from the class with not only the ability to read with precision and imagination but also with the confidence to approach materials from any discipline and to analyze them rigorously. To do this,

you must honor this social contract and three “yesses” of reading—yes, I will read the text carefully; yes, I will reconstruct its argument; yes, I will identify what is useful in the argument—before moving to any criticism of the required materials.

**ASSIGNMENTS**      Discussion Board: A discussion board, requiring at least two posts per week, will be structured as follows. 1) **Opening post:** read all the materials assigned for this week. Post a 250-word passage in which you offer your own reaction to or thoughts about one aspect or theme in the week’s reading. A good opening post is analytic and engages the readings critically and creatively, i.e., it does not simply summarize what you have read. Please publish your opening post as a new thread to ensure clarity—i.e., by clicking the “reply” button for that week’s discussion board—and begin the paragraph with the following: **“This is my opening post.”** (due by 9am EST on Monday); 2) **Response post:** post a 100-word substantive response to at least one classmate’s opening post. Merely indicating agreement or disagreement with someone is not a substantive response; rather, you should indicate why you agree or disagree, or if you think the original post’s analysis has left out some important consideration, you should note what the missing concerns are, why they matter, etc. Please be sure to post your response by clicking the “reply” button directly underneath the post to which you are responding and begin the paragraph with the following: **“This is my response post.”** (due by 9am EST on Tuesday) (30%)

Midterm Paper: A short paper (5 pages) on one of the assigned readings/film is due on **Friday, 5 March 2021** by 4pm EST. (25%)

Final Essay: A final term paper (8-10 typed pages) on a topic of your own devising will be due on **Friday, 30 April 2021** by 4pm EST. You are required to meet with me during the final weeks of the semester to have your paper topic approved. (35%)

Please note: Paper extensions will be handed out only in the case of emergencies, and you must contact me in advance. All late papers—including approved extensions—may be graded down approximately one letter grade per day. Plagiarized work will result in an F for the course, and your case will be sent to the Office of Student Conduct. Plagiarism is the use of someone else’s work without fully acknowledging it.

Class Participation: You are expected to do all the reading, to attend each class, and to participate actively in all discussions. More than two absences, including excused absences, will result in the lowering of your final mark by one letter grade. Coming to class more than ten minutes late and inattention during class will be marked as absences. (10%)

## COURSE OUTLINE

1	20 January	Introductions
2	27 January <i>Ideology</i>	Eagleton
3	3 February <i>(Post)structuralism</i>	Althusser
4	10 February <i>Deconstruction</i>	Derrida
5	17 February <i>Representation</i>	Barthes
6	24 February <i>Enlightenment</i>	Horkheimer and Adorno, 1-62 Homer (Sirens), Book XII Kafka
7	3 March <i>Marxism</i>	Marx <i>Chicken Run</i>
8	10 March	(spring break)
9	17 March <i>Psychoanalysis/ Terror</i>	Freud, "Reflections" Ahmad Sontag
10	24 March <i>Postcolonialism</i>	Chakrabarty, "Provincializing" Wordsworth
11	31 March <i>Critical Race Theory</i>	Harris
12	7 April <i>Affirmative Action</i>	Hsu <i>Tested</i>
13	14 April <i>Hate Speech/ Pornography</i>	MacKinnon Freud, "Some Psychological"
14	21 April <i>Environmental Studies</i>	Chakrabarty, "Four Theses" Masco Nixon
15	28 April	(open)