

English 536
Critical and Theoretical Methods in Literary Studies:
New Historicism & American Literary Naturalism
Fall 2016

Meeting Time: Wednesday 5:30-8:00 p.m.

Classroom: Simpkins 27

Instructor: Dr. Jose Fernandez

Office Address: Simpkins 08

Office Phone: 309-298-1042

Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays 11:00-12:30 p.m., Wednesdays 4:30-5:30 p.m., and by appointment.

E-mail: jo-fernandez@wiu.edu

Course URL: <https://westernonline.wiu.edu>

Course Description:

An analysis and study of a particular critical or theoretical movement in the history of literary studies. Topics could include postcolonial studies, formalism and the new criticism, reception theory, new historicism, queer studies, disability studies, ecocriticism, feminist studies, ethnic studies, etc.

Course Overview & Objectives:

This course will focus on the emergence of New Historicism as a theoretical method of literary analysis and as a movement in the history of literary studies beginning in the 1980s. New Historicism evolved in part as a reaction to New Criticism and “old historicist” approaches to literary texts. New Historicism and its emphasis on the interweaving of social, cultural, and economic dynamics and structures shaping aesthetic and literary productions have been integrated into the scholarship of diverse literary periods such as romanticism and modernism. This course will concentrate on the emergence, incorporation, and challenge of New Historicist interpretations in the study of late 19th- and early 20th-century American realist and naturalist authors such as Theodore Dreiser, Frank Norris, Edith Wharton, Kate Chopin, and Jack London. Our reading list will include literary scholars who have developed or incorporated New Historicist approaches to the study of realist and naturalist authors such as Walter Benn Michaels, Donald Pizer, Amy Kaplan, Richard Lehan, Donna Campbell, Bert Bender, and Eric Carl Link.

Required Texts:

Call of the Wild by Jack London (ISBN: 9780451531346)

The Sea-Wolf by Jack London (ISBN: 9780486411088)

The House of Mirth by Edith Wharton (ISBN: 9780486420493)

Sister Carrie by Theodore Dreiser (ISBN: 9780486434681)

McTeague by Frank Norris (ISBN: 9780486434087)

The Awakening by Kate Chopin (ISBN: 9780451524485)

The Red Badge of Courage by Stephen Crane (ISBN: 9780451531803)

One additional text to be selected by students

Assignments and Evaluations:

Class Participation	20%
Reading Responses	25%
Leading Discussion	5%
Paper #1	25%
Paper #2	25%
<hr/>	
Total	100%

Grading Scale:

A = 90%-100%, B = 80%-89%, C = 70%-79%, D = 60%-69, F = 59% or below.

Short Breakdown of Assignments and Evaluations:

- **Class Participation:** Your active participation during class will be necessary to fulfill the goals and objectives of this course. Attend class prepared by reading the assigned materials before class according to the schedule of readings. Students are required to bring their syllabus, books, and secondary readings (hard or electronic copies, NO cell phones) to each class.
- **Reading Responses:** 8-9 short online 300 words posts (approx. 1 double-spaced page) worth 25% of your final grade. Reading responses will help you to formulate ideas, arguments, reactions, and answers based on the assigned readings. Detailed instructions for each reading response will be posted on WesternOnline at least a week before the reading response is due. The posts will be submitted electronically via WesternOnline before the beginning of class. LATE posts will be accepted a few days after the deadline, but LATE or INCOMPLETE posts will NOT receive full points.
- **Leading Discussions:** Each student will select one date for leading discussion on an assigned primary and secondary reading scheduled for discussion in the class syllabus. During the leading discussion, a student will lead a portion of the class discussion based primarily on a set of approximately 10 questions that will be submitted on WesternOnline before class. The main goal of the discussion leader is to get students involved during class discussion by asking questions, soliciting responses and reactions from classmates.
- **Paper #1:** A literary analysis of 2100-2400 words (7-8 double-spaced pages) with a research component based on one of the novels and secondary sources discussed at the beginning of the semester. This paper will contain a sustained argument and will require you to consult, analyze, and incorporate secondary sources. Keep in mind that a well-developed literary analysis will also require you to do a close reading of the primary work and use textual evidence to support your thesis statement. Students will write a proposal, select secondary sources, and write a draft paper (optional) before the paper's final submission for a grade.
- **Paper #2:** A second literary analysis of 2100-2400 words (7-8 double-spaced pages) with a research component based on one of the novels and secondary sources discussed in the second half of the semester. Similar to the first paper, this analysis will require you to develop an argument (thesis statement) and use textual evidence as the basis for your

sustained argument. The same steps of the writing process will be followed for this paper (proposal, selection of sources, draft paper [optional], final version, etc.).

General Guidelines for Assignments and Evaluations:

I will post on WesternOnline an instructions sheet with detailed instructions for the reading responses, the leading discussion, and the two papers. Reading responses will be submitted as posts in the “discussion” section of WesternOnline. Draft papers (optional) and final papers will be submitted electronically as a Microsoft Word document in the “assignments” section of WesternOnline before the beginning of class when the paper is due (see syllabus schedule).

Similar to the reading responses, late papers will be accepted after a few days, but late papers or missing other deadlines (proposal or sources) will affect the paper’s final grade. Make sure to SAVE all your work on your computer or a flash drive. Computer issues are not an excuse for submitting incomplete or late work.

Attendance Policy:

Since this course will rely on students’ active participation through class discussion and active participation, attendance and punctuality are required. If you miss class due to illness, personal emergency, or any other reason, notify me via email before or after an absence occurs. You may have TWO excused or unexcused absences without penalty, but you are still responsible for meeting the assignments’ deadlines. **Beginning with your third absence, you will lose a letter grade from your class participation grade for each subsequent absence.** Habitual tardiness may negatively affect your class participation grade as well. **Keep in mind that if you accumulate more than FIVE absences, you will NOT receive a passing grade in this course.**

Note: Student athletes, students with military obligations, and students with disabilities must meet with me at the beginning of the semester to develop an accommodation plan.

Outside Class Communication:

The best way to reach me outside class is by email. I will respond to your emails promptly (within 48 hours). You are also responsible for checking your WIU email account and WesternOnline on a regular basis. **Please feel free to stop by my office any time during my office hours, or if you cannot meet during my office hours, email me to make an appointment at a time that works for you.** We can discuss any aspect of the course such as the texts, writing assignments, or your overall grade in this course.

Classroom Etiquette:

Students should turn off and put away all their electronic devices before the beginning of class (unless you are using an e-reader or laptop to read secondary sources) **and should not be engaged in any other activity that is not related to the class. Please do not leave the classroom abruptly;** if you need to excuse yourself for an important reason while the class is in session, please let me know before the class begins. You are also expected to show civility and respect for other students’ ideas, opinions, and beliefs expressed in writing or during class discussion. **Failure to comply with these expectations will negatively affect your class participation grade.**

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism:

Plagiarism occurs when students present a short or long piece of a work that was created by another individual or was taken from a source without properly acknowledging it. Plagiarism is a serious offense. **If you plagiarize any section of a reading response, writing assignment, or any other type of writing during this course, it may result in failure of the assignment and failure of the entire course.** If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, ask me or read the Western Illinois University's Student Academic Integrity Policy: <http://www.wiu.edu/policies/acintegrity.php>

Student Rights and Responsibilities:

A complete list of your rights and responsibilities as a Western Illinois University student is available at <http://www.wiu.edu/provost/students.php>

Students with disabilities:

In accordance with University values and disability law, students with disabilities may request academic accommodations where there are aspects of a course that result in barriers to inclusion or accurate assessment of achievement. To file an official request for disability-related accommodations, please contact the Disability Resource Center at 309-298-2512, disability@wiu.edu or in 143 Memorial Hall. Please notify me as soon as possible to ensure that this course is accessible to you in a timely manner.

Title IX:

University values, Title IX, and other federal and state laws prohibit sex discrimination, including sexual assault/misconduct, dating/domestic violence, and stalking. If you, or someone you know, has been the victim of any of these offenses, we encourage you to report this to the Title IX Coordinator at 309-298-1977 or anonymously online at: http://www.wiu.edu/equal_opportunity_and_access/request_form/index.php. If you disclose an incident to a faculty member, the faculty member must notify the Title IX Coordinator. The complete Title IX policy is available at: <http://www.wiu.edu/vpas/policies/titleIX.php>.

Important Dates:

Friday, August 26: Last day of open registration.

Friday, Sept. 2: Last day of restricted registration.

Sunday, October 30: Last day to drop course and last day for a total university withdrawal.

Schedule of Readings and Assignments:

This schedule is subject to change. If any of this information changes, I will inform you during class and post an updated version on WesternOnline.

Important Note: reading assignments are due by the date marked in the left column. Unless changes are announced, reading responses, draft papers, and revised papers should be posted or uploaded electronically on WesternOnline (WO) before class by the day they are due.

Important Note: All articles, book excerpts, and book chapters will be uploaded on WesternOnline (WO) in the “Class Readings” folder one week before the reading is due.

Date	Readings Due & Schedule of Presentations and Leading Discussions	Reading Responses & Writing Assignments Due
Week 1 (Aug. 24)	Book Chapter: “Defining American Literary Naturalism” by Link (posted on WesternOnline) Book Excerpt: <i>The New Historicism</i> (Introduction) by Veerer (posted on WesternOnline)	
Week 2 (Aug. 31)	London’s <i>The Call of the Wild</i> Article: “‘Congested Mails’: Buck and Jack’s ‘Call’” by Auerbach (posted on WesternOnline) Leading Discussion #1	Reading Response 1 Due
Week 3 (Sept. 7)	London’s <i>The Sea-Wolf</i> (first half) Article: “Canvas and Steam: Historical Conflict in Jack London’s <i>Sea-Wolf</i> ” by Papa (posted on WesternOnline)	Reading Response 2 Due
Week 4 (Sept. 14)	London’s <i>The Sea-Wolf</i> (second half) Article: “Jack London, <i>The Sea-Wolf</i> , and the Natural History of Love” by Link (posted on WesternOnline) Leading Discussion #2	Reading Response 3 Due
Week 5 (Sept. 21)	Wharton’s <i>The House of Mirth</i> (first half) Article: “Addictive Habits and Consumer Culture in <i>The House of Mirth</i> ” by Goldsmith	Reading Response 4 Due
Week 6 (Sept. 28)	Wharton’s <i>The House of Mirth</i> (second half) Book Chapter: “Crowded Spaces in <i>The House of Mirth</i> ” by Kaplan Leading Discussion #3	Paper #1 Proposal & Sources Due
Week 7 (Oct. 5)	Dreiser’s <i>Sister Carrie</i> (first half) Book Chapter: “Sister Carrie’s Popular Economy” by Michaels	Reading Response 5 Due

Week 8 (Oct. 12)	Dreiser's <i>Sister Carrie</i> (second half) Book Chapter: "What More Can Carrie Want? Naturalistic Ways of Consuming Women" by Gelfant Leading Discussion #4	Optional Draft Paper #1 (3+ pages) Due
Week 9 (Oct. 19)	Norris's <i>McTeague</i> (first half) Book Chapter: "The Gold Standard and the Logic of Naturalism" by Michaels	Paper #1 Due
Week 10 (Oct. 26)	Norris's <i>McTeague</i> (second half) Article: "Material and Social Waste in <i>McTeague</i> " by Duvall Leading Discussion #5	Reading Response 6 Due
Week 11 (Nov. 2)	Chopin's <i>The Awakening</i> (first half) Book Chapter: " <i>The Awakening</i> and New Woman Fiction" by Heilmann	Reading Response 7 Due
Week 12 (Nov. 9)	Chopin's <i>The Awakening</i> (second half) Book Chapter: "The Teeth of Desire: <i>The Awakening</i> and <i>The Descent of Man</i> " by Bender Leading Discussion #6	Reading Response 8 Due
Week 13 (Nov. 16)	Crane's <i>The Red Badge of Courage</i> Article: " <i>The Red Badge of Class: Stephen Crane and the Industrial Army</i> " by Lawson Leading Discussion #7	Paper #2 Proposal & Sources Due
Week 14 (Nov. 23)	No Class: Thanksgiving Break	
Week 15 (Nov. 30)	Text Selected by Students TBA Secondary Reading TBA Class Evaluations	Reading Response 9 Due
Week 16 (Dec. 7)	Text Selected by Students TBA Secondary Reading TBA Leading Discussion #8	Optional Draft Paper #2 (3+ pages) Due
Week 17 (Dec. 14)	No Final Exam	Paper #2 Due by Wed., Dec. 14 at 6 p.m.