Description: Theory: Gk. theoria; a looking at, viewing, contemplation, speculation...also a sight, spectacle...

“I believe that theory begins to supplant philosophy (and other disciplines as well) at the moment it is realized that thought is linguistic or material and that concepts cannot exist independently of their linguistic expression.” Fredric Jameson, “Symptoms of Theory or Symptoms For Theory?”

Description: This course functions as a form of introduction, aspiring to depth as well as breadth. We will be examining some of the dominant theoretical trends that have shaped and continue to shape work in the humanities and social sciences. We hear about ‘theory’ and we hear an array of names associated with it—Derrida, Lacan, Foucault, Adorno, and so on—very often. That which falls under the broad (and often ill-defined) rubric ‘theory’ has helped scholars develop the kinds of questions that get asked, the kinds of topics that get investigated, in a variety of disciplines today. Literary and cultural theory, in fact, underwrites notions of the interdisciplinary. All too often, however, the work of theoreticians themselves seems difficult to access and hard to read. In this course, we will examine several questions that arise for those of us interested in the relation of theory to interdisciplinary study. What is theory anyway? How does it help us to develop approaches and questions for study? What are some influential theoretical schools and theoreticians? What do they say and how might they be related to one another?

In this course, we’ll work to acquire knowledge of the genealogy of contemporary literary and cultural theory, to acquire a degree of proficiency in using one or more central approach in order to read texts; and by attending to some of the conflicts raised around and within contemporary theory, to raise questions about the status of the theoretical in framing knowledge, in helping us think about what constitutes knowledge in the humanities and in some of the social sciences.

Required Texts:

Rivkin and Ryan, Literary Theory: An Anthology

Conrad, J., Heart of Darkness

Ryan, M, Literary Theory

Photocopied essays, etc, available via Blackboard
**Required Writing:** In a lot of ways, this course is deeply focused on writing. Here’s why, in a nutshell: writing is the single most powerful way of apprehending what you read and this is especially the case where the reading is abstract and difficult, as ours will often be this semester. You’ll be asked to keep a ‘response notebook’ in which you will write frequent brief responses to your reading. In addition, you’ll be writing four essays, three of which will be in the 5-7 page vicinity and one of which will be in the 7-10 page vicinity. The first two essays ask you to put some theoretical texts in dialogue with literary and filmic texts. The third essay asks you to develop a discussion of two theorists whose views seem to you to be similar or strikingly different. The fourth essay is ‘open topic;’ you will be asked to choose a particular approach or theorist in whom you have an especial interest and develop a discussion.
Class Schedule *

January 24: Introductions
January 26: Read Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*
January 31: The Force of Form
Ryan, Chapter 1
February 2: MM Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel"
February 7: Deep Structures
Ryan, on structuralism
Saussure, fr. *A Course in General Linguistics;* Jakobson, “Two Types of Language…”

February 14 Todorov, “The Structural Study of Analysis of Narrative”
February 16: Structuralisms, cont’d.
February 21: Presidents’ Day
February 23: *First paper Due***
Analyze THAT! Psychoanalysis and its Vicissitudes
Freud, fr. *The Interpretation of Dreams*
March 9: Fanon, “The Negro and Psychopathology”
*Second paper due.*
March 14-18: Spring break
March 21: The Centrality of the Economic: Reading Marx
March 23: Lukacs, Tba
March 28: Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses”
March 30: Horkheimer, “Traditional and Critical Theory”
April 4: Horkheimer and Adorno, “The culture industry as mass deception;” Adorno, “Free Time”
April 6: Zizek, “The Sublime Object of Ideology”
April 11: What Doesn't Get Said: The Claims of Post-Structuralism
*Third paper due*
April 18: Barbara Johnson, “Writing”
April 20: Foucault, “The Discourse on Language”

April 25: Foucault, fr. *Discipline and Punish*
April 27: Return to the Heart of Darkness, or Not such a small place after all
Rivkin and Ryan, “English on a World Scale;” Edward Said, on *Heart of Darkness*

May 4: Bhabha, “Signs taken for wonders”
May 9: Last class; Discussion of final papers
May 11: Final papers due by 5 pm

*Some parts of this schedule may change as we go along, depending on class interests*

**You can submit your papers in two ways: hard copy or electronically. If you choose to submit your paper electronically, please make sure that it is in Word or .rtf format. Please do not submit .pdf files.