



HL 2024
Approaches to Literature
AY 2025/26 S1

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Lectures are on Tuesdays (1430 - 1620) at **HSS Auditorium**.

Tutorials are on Wednesdays at varied times from 1030 to 1620 — please check your specific tutorial group for more information.

Office hours are on Wednesday 1430 - 1630 at my office, or by appointment over Zoom.

OVERVIEW

This core literary theory module aims to develop a greater self-awareness in the understanding of the reading process and of critical practice. The course gives students a preliminary introduction to several theoretical and critical concepts influential to the study of English Literature, and models several ways of applying these approaches. By focusing on a specific theoretical context each week, the module aims to develop fluency and confidence towards being critical readers of literature, as well as to develop an awareness of the environments in which literary texts are produced.

COURSE READINGS

To be purchased or taken out from the library:

Peter Barry, *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*

David Mitchell, *Cloud Atlas*

R.F. Kuang, *Yellowface*

Films to be watched on streaming service, from the library, or on DVD:

Burning (dir. Lee Chang Dong)

Portrait of a Lady on Fire (dir. Céline Sciamma)

Uploaded to NTULearn:

Selected short stories, poems, and essays

OPTIONAL:

The readings covered in the lectures are meant to give you a beginner's introduction to these various theoretical approaches. If you're looking to go into greater depth, feel free to check out some of these suggested readings, which I will occasionally refer to in my lectures. This is not an exhaustive list by any means, but it's a good starting point for further secondary sources, and, in the case of Lois Tyson, a friendlier complement to the Barry textbook.

- General: Lois Tyson, *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide*
- Liberal Humanism: Wimsatt and Beardsley, "The Affective Fallacy"; T.S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent"
- Narrative theory: Gerard Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, Mieke Bal
- Authors and Readers: Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?"; Jane P. Tompkins, "Introduction to Reader Response Criticism"
- Structuralism and poststructuralism: Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*; Jacques Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences"
- Marxism: Karl Marx, "Estranged Labour"; Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)"
- Psychoanalysis: Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*; Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits*
- Postmodernism: Jurgen Habermas, "Modernity: An Unfinished Project"; Jean-Francois Lyotard, "What is Postmodernism?"
- Gender and sexuality: Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema"; Rachel Blau DuPlessis, "Manifests"; Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence"; Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*
- Race and colonialism: Chinua Achebe, "An Image of Africa"; Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*; Ngugi wa Thiong'o, "On the Abolition of the English Department"; Maya Mikdashi, "What is Settler Colonialism? (For Leo Delano Ames Jr)"; Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom"

COURSE POLICIES AND STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- (1) **In general**, do your best to complete the assigned pre-class readings and activities, attend all seminar classes punctually, and take all scheduled assignments and tests by due dates. Though the reading schedule may look intimidating at first glance, with the exception of the novels and the films, most of the compulsory readings are brief textbook chapters, short stories, or poems that are easily readable within 15 to 30 minutes. It is your responsibility to stay on top of course notes, assignments and course related announcements for seminar sessions you might have missed. You are expected to make a reasonable effort to participate in all seminar discussions and activities.
- (2) **Participation** The format of this class is split between the lecture and the tutorial, the latter of which is heavily peer-driven. The subject matter of this class is challenging, so I encourage you to make the most of the smaller group setting by candidly voicing any difficulties you might face with understanding the readings, testing out potential arguments, and learning to support and be supported by your peers. If you find yourself befuddled by the material or the assignments, please take the initiative to approach me or your tutors to schedule a consultation within their office hours.
- (3) **Absence** from class without a valid reason will not only affect your overall course grade, but also your holistic understanding of the subject matter. NTU's policy for valid absences include falling sick and participation in NTU's approved activities supported by an excuse letter from the relevant bodies. If there are other intervening factors keeping you from lecture or tutorial, inform me and your tutor prior to the start of class.
- (4) **Deadlines** assigned in this class are to be adhered to, especially for group projects and assignments. If extensions are necessary, you may request one from your tutor, to be granted at their discretion. Unless you are in my tutorial class, **do not direct your extension request to me**. Your tutors have their own independent working schedules and it is your responsibility to negotiate changes to timelines with them.
- (5) **Plagiarism** is dumb as hell. Don't do it.

ASSESSMENT COMPONENTS

The **midterm essay** is worth **20%**, and is due ***Week 7, September 24th***.

The **end of term essay** is worth **30%**, and is due ***Week 12, November 5th***.

The **final exam** is worth **50%**, and is held on ***November 26***.

Essays: You will be asked to formulate two original readings of our course texts that take into account the themes of the class. The first assignment will test your ability to critically analyze the texts, to perform original close readings without the aid of secondary sources, and to advance a coherent and focused thesis. In the second, you will be asked to formulate an original reading of one of our literary texts with the aid of two critical sources that reflect two approaches we have covered in the course. This assignment will test your ability to integrate scholarship from academic sources into your argument. You will also be evaluated on your overall ability to structure a persuasive argument.

Final Exam: You will pick two prompts from several questions given to you, and write two short essay responses that demonstrate your knowledge of the course material and your mastery of its critical concepts. Your essays must correspond to two different theoretical approaches covered in the lectures. This exam is intended to evaluate the degree to which you have internalized the syllabus of this class and synthesize it with your ongoing knowledge of literature.

POLICY ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Good academic work depends on honesty and ethical behaviour. The quality of your work as a student relies on adhering to the principles of academic integrity and to the NTU Honour Code, a set of values shared by the whole university community. Truth, Trust and Justice are at the core of NTU's shared values.

As a student, it is important that you recognize your responsibilities in understanding and applying the principles of academic integrity in all the work you do at NTU. *Not knowing what is involved in maintaining academic integrity does not excuse academic dishonesty.* You need to actively equip yourself with strategies to avoid all forms of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, self-plagiarism, academic fraud, collusion and cheating. If you are uncertain of the definitions of any of these terms, you should go to the academic integrity website for more information. Consult me or your tutors if you need any clarification about the requirements of academic integrity in the course.

On the use of AI tools, here are some guidelines on the use of AI tools for coursework:

1. Do **not** pass off writing from AI as your own. At the university level, the ability to resourcefully consult and connect your writing to other vetted sources is just as important as your ability to generate original ideas. Passing off AI text as your own is not only easily detectable to a trained reader, it also undermines the entire basis of a humanities education.
2. If you are to use any AI tool, ensure that such usage is properly cited. Extending the practice of correctly citing references in your work under NTU's policies on citation and plagiarism, the University requires students to (i) identify any generative AI tools used and (ii) declare how the tools are used in submitted work.

For HL2024, if the assignment explicitly allows for generative AI to be used, you should provide in your submission **clear and complete screenshots** of your conversation with the generative AI tool. These screenshots should include all student-generated text that were fed into the AI as a prompt, well as all responses generated by the AI tool. Failure to pre-emptively identify and declare your use of AI will be treated as academic dishonesty, and you will be disciplined accordingly.

NOTE: even with acknowledgement, copying of output generated by AI tools (in part or whole) may still be regarded as plagiarism (refer to below). If in the doubt, err on the side of caution and talk to me.

3. For HL2024 assignments that exclude the use of generative AI, **your essay should be written entirely on Google Docs** before being downloaded and submitted through NTULearn as a .docx file. You are to retain your original Google Docs file for the duration of the semester, and to grant your instructors access to the file whenever it becomes necessary to inspect the file's version history. **Copying and pasting into this file in any form violates the assessment requirements and will be penalised.**
4. Before submitting a piece of work in which generative AI has been used, make sure to check and recheck your facts, quotes, and sources! Most generative AI tools do not give you actual information; instead, they provide natural sounding language. In other words, they excel at writing nonsense that sounds plausible. If you consult AI at any point, be sure to not only properly cite it, but also to check that the texts it quotes actually exist.
5. Finally, nothing beats your own ideas. AI tools may be good at producing summaries and grammatical sentences, but they cannot replace your original ideas and creativity. A rigorous education will equip you with the ability to express your ideas, process ideas for problem solving and make sound judgements. These capabilities and your unique human experiences are still your most valuable assets.

READING SCHEDULE

Week	Topic	Readings/ Activities
Week 1	Introduction: How Do We Approach Literature?	<p><i>Administrative</i></p> <p>Primary texts: W.B. Yeats, "He Wishes For The Cloths of Heaven"; Elizabeth Bishop, "In The Waiting Room"</p> <p>Secondary texts: Peter Barry, "Theory before theory", Donald Hall, "The New Criticism and Formalist Analysis"</p>
Week 2	Narratology and narrative theory	<p>Primary text: Aimee Bender, "Ironhead"; Julio Cortázar, "The Continuity of Parks"</p> <p>Secondary texts: Peter Barry, "Narratology" H. Porter Abbott, "Narrative and Life"</p>
Week 3	Authors and readers	<p>Primary text: David Mitchell, <i>Cloud Atlas</i></p> <p>Secondary texts: Roland Barthes, "Death of the Author"</p>
Week 4	Structuralism and poststructuralism	<p>Primary text: David Mitchell, <i>Cloud Atlas</i> (Cont'd)</p> <p>Secondary texts: Peter Barry, "Structuralism", "Poststructuralism"</p>
Week 5	Marxist Theory	<p>Primary text: William Faulkner, "Barn Burning"</p> <p>Secondary texts: Peter Barry, "Marxist Theory"</p>
Week 6	Psychoanalysis	<p>Primary text: Haruki Murakami, "Barn Burning"</p> <p>Secondary text: Peter Barry, "Psychoanalytic criticism"</p>
Week 7	Postmodern theory	<p><i>Mid-term paper due</i></p> <p>Primary text: Lee Chang Dong, <i>Burning</i></p>

		Secondary text: Peter Barry, "Postmodern theory"
	Recess Week	
Week 8	Review; Essay writing tips and tricks	N/A
Week 9	Gender, race, and sexuality	Primary texts: Celine Sciamma, <i>Portrait of A Lady on Fire</i> John Donne, "Elegy XIX: To His Mistress Going To Bed" Muriel Rukeyser, "Looking At Each Other" Secondary texts: Peter Barry, "Feminist Criticism"
Week 10	Gender, race, and sexuality	Primary texts: Celine Sciamma, <i>Portrait of A Lady on Fire</i> (cont'd) King Princess, "1950" boygenius, "Not Strong Enough" Secondary texts: Peter Barry, "Lesbian/gay criticism"
Week 11	Gender, race, and sexuality	Primary texts: R.F. Kuang, <i>Yellowface</i> Secondary texts: Toni Morrison, <i>Playing In The Dark</i> [Excerpts] Peter Barry, "Postcolonial Theory"
Week 12	Gender, race, and sexuality	<i>End of term paper due</i> Primary texts: R.F. Kuang, <i>Yellowface</i> [Cont'd] Secondary texts: Edward Said, "Introduction" to <i>Orientalism</i>
Week 13	Gender, race, and sexuality	Guest lecture scheduled