

Literary Theory and the Limits of Language

CPLT 110: Intro to Literary Studies
Emory University
Fall 2014

Instructor: Andrew Kingston
Location: Callaway Center S102
Meeting Times: Tu/Th/F 11-11:50am
Office Hours: Thursdays, 2-4pm, Callaway N106 (by appointment)
Email: [REDACTED]

Course Description:

After a brief exploration of formal academic writing, this course will move through a more subversive history of the way language has been considered in the West, beginning with the early linguistic theories of pioneering French semiotician Ferdinand de Saussure, then moving on to more radical reconceptualizations of language, such as those of Surrealism and psychoanalysis, in order to better interpret how language and discourse can often break down when pushed to extremes. In short, this course will explore the aspects of language that miscommunicate, or that don't serve communicative functions at all. As we thus interrogate language and its (ab)uses throughout the semester, you will write several short response papers, as well as more unstructured "free writes". This method will allow you to experiment with a variety of writing genres. Such an approach to language will help you to situate yourself within a multiplicity of linguistic theories and practices that will enable you to critically engage both reading and writing in general.

Course Objectives:

By the end of this course, you will:

- Be able to compose persuasive essays, making good argumentative, descriptive, and rhetorical choices
- Be able to revise your work
- Know the fundamentals of university level research
- Have a basic command of the practices of citation and academic writing
- Be able to critique the limits of generic and transparent writing

Required Texts

They Say, I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing, by Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein

Course in General Linguistics, by Ferdinand de Saussure

Five Lectures on Psychoanalysis, by Sigmund Freud

Maldoror, by Isidore Ducasse (Compte de Lautréamont)

Lautréamont and Sade, by Maurice Blanchot

The Bataille Reader, edited by Fred Botting and Scott Wilson

All other readings will be provided electronically.

Suggested Texts:

Manifestoes of Surrealism, by André Breton

Revolution in Poetic Language, by Julia Kristeva

History of Surrealism, by Maurice Nadeau

Reading Policy

You should probably do the readings. It really will help you. I promise. Plus, if you don't, it will be obvious to me in your writing and it will hurt your grade.

Attendance Policy

Attend Class. There will be a sign-in sheet, which it is your responsibility to sign. If you have more than 5 recorded absences, I reserve the right to lower your final grade by up to a full letter grade. There are *no* make-ups for in-class work.

Late Work

Late work will be penalized by 10%, and then an additional 10% for each week that it remains late. For example, if you have late work that takes you under a week to make up, it will be penalized 10%; after a week it will be penalized 20%, and so on.

Electronics Policy

Please try not to text or check email/social media during class. If this gets to be a problem, I might take points out of your participation.

Academic Integrity Policy

Do not be academically dishonest. If you are unsure what this means, please consult the Emory honor code (http://catalog.college.emory.edu/academic/policy/honor_code.html). Above all, do not plagiarize. Should you plagiarize in any way, you will receive an F for the course.

Public Nature of the Course

When you write anything for this course (and in general), please be aware that it might be seen by anyone—not just me. So don't confide your deepest darkest secrets unless you

are comfortable making them public. But also, don't worry about what others might think. #YOLO

Assignments and Grade Breakdown

Attendance and Participation: **20%**
Research Paper, Abstract and First Draft (6-8 pages): **10%**
Research Paper, Final Draft: **30%**
Creative Writing (3-5 pages): **10%**
In-Class Writing Portfolio: **20%**
Presentation: **10%**

Major Assignment Details

- Research Paper (6-8 pages): This will be your opportunity to engage with the traditional academic genre of the “research paper”. It will require multiple scholarly resources, appropriate citation, critical thinking, good argumentation, and coherent composition. The purpose of this paper is to give you a chance to master the tools that will help you succeed in thoroughly and accurately informing yourself on a topic, and then presenting your newly found knowledge in a cohesive and lucid way, in accordance with current academic standards. More than “Wikipedia knowledge” is required. This assignment will also require an abstract and a rough draft.
- Presentation: After picking your topic for your research paper, and after performing some preliminary, you will give a brief (~5 minute) *informal* presentation on it to the class, with the purpose of honing your public speaking skills and gathering important feedback from your peers, as well as fostering communication between students, since then everyone will know what everyone else's project is. Don't worry too much about this presentation; it is only meant to facilitate communication. Here—and *not* in your writing—is where you could resort to Wikipedia, for example.
- Creative Writing (3-5 pages): You will write a short piece, or combination of pieces, of poetry and/or prose informed by the theories that we cover in class. This could be a series of absurd or experimental poems, personal journal-style writing or fictional stories that involve themes that we have discussed, or any other kind of writing that you can think of. For example, you might consider incorporating collage, concrete poetry, or even asemic writing. There are no specific instructions except that you use language creatively to address course themes.
- In-class Writing Portfolio: *Most days* we will begin class with 10 minute period in which you will write reflections on the reading that you did for that day, or some other short writing exercise. I will collect these writings, and you will receive

credit just for doing them. Quality of writing does not matter. Initially, its purpose is only to get you thinking about the reading that we will discuss.

At the end of the semester, you will choose what you consider the best five pieces of your in-class writing, and revise their content, expanding each out to one full page of writing. These five pieces will be turned in along with their originals, as well as a short written reflection on how you revised them, and you will be graded mainly on quality of revision.

Grading Scale

Percentage Scale:

Percentage	Letter Grade
90.00-100	A
86.00-89.99	B+
80.00-85.99	B
76.00-79.99	C+
70.00-75.99	C
66.00-69.99	D+
60.00-65.99	D
0-59.99	F

Emory Grade Point Scale:

Points	Letter Grade
4.00	A
3.70	A-
3.30	B+
3.00	B
2.70	B-
2.30	C+
2.00	C
1.70	C-
1.30	D+
1.00	D
0.00	F

Explanation of Letter Grades

A: An excellent response to the assignment. Demonstrates a *sophisticated* use of rhetorical knowledge, writing, and design.

B: A good response to the assignment. Demonstrates an *effective* use of rhetorical knowledge, writing, and design. May have some minor errors and mistakes.

C: An average response to the assignment. Demonstrates *acceptable* use of rhetorical knowledge, writing, and design. Generally follows instructions, but may have errors and mistakes that distract from the overall quality of the composition.

D: A poor response to the assignment. Demonstrates a *lack of* rhetorical knowledge and writing and design. May have major errors and mistakes.

F: A failure to respond to the assignment appropriately. May have an *unacceptable* number of errors and mistakes.

Student Resources

Emory provides a lot of ancillary resources for its students, which you pay for with your tuition. I encourage you to take advantage of them. Some of the more important ones are listed below:

- **“Disability” Resources**

Students with medical/health conditions that might impact academic success should visit Access, Disability Services and Resources (ADSR formerly the Office of Disability Services, ODS) to determine eligibility for appropriate accommodations. Students who receive accommodations must present the Accommodation Letter from ADSR to your professor at the beginning of the semester, or when the letter is received.

- **Emory Writing Center**

The Emory Writing Center offers 45-minute individual conferences to Emory College and Laney Graduate School students. The EWC is located in Callaway N-212. We encourage writers to schedule appointments in advance as we can take walk-ins on a limited basis only. We require hard copies of traditional paper drafts and encourage you to bring a laptop if you're working on a digital or multi-modal text. Please bring a copy of your assignment instructions, too. In addition to our regular conferences in Callaway, we host Studio Hours every Tuesday from 7-9 pm in Woodruff Library 214. Studio Hours provide a supportive, focused workspace and are open to all students. EWC tutors circulate to encourage writers, provide resources, and address questions. For more information about the EWC, or to make an appointment, visit <http://writingcenter.emory.edu>.

- **Tutoring for Multilingual Students**

If you are a multilingual student and English is not your first language, you may benefit from working with trained ESL Tutors. These tutors are undergraduates who will support the development of both your English language and writing skills. Like Writing Center tutors, ESL tutors will not proofread your work. ESL tutors will meet with you in designated locations on campus for 1-hour appointments, and they will help you at any stage of the process of developing your written work or presentation. You may bring your work on a laptop or on paper.

For instructions on how to schedule an appointment, links to ASST, and the policies for using the service, go to:

<http://college.emory.edu/home/academic/learning/esl/tutoring/index.html>. If you do not have a scheduled appointment, you may use the Academic ESL Skills Lab, located in Room 422 of Woodruff Library (next to the Language Center). Here, you may have less time with a tutor if other students are waiting, but you can find drop-in support just when you need it. To view the lab hours for the current semester, go to: <http://college.emory.edu/home/academic/learning/esl/lab.html>. For information about other ESL services available to undergraduates, go to: <http://college.emory.edu/home/academic/learning/esl/index.html> or contact Jane O'Connor, Director of ESL Services (jcoconn@emory.edu) or Denise Dolan, Assistant Director of ESL Services (denise.dolan@emory.edu).

▪ **Emory Counseling Services**

Free and confidential counseling services and support are available from the Emory Counseling Center (404) 727-7450. This can be an invaluable resource when stress makes your work more challenging than it ought to be. Visit <http://studenthealth.emory.edu/cs/>

Final Exam

The exam period for this semester is December 10-19. We will not have class during this time. There is no final exam for this course.

Schedule

Thursday, 8/28: Introductions, go over syllabus

Friday, 8/29: *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (Ch. 1)

Tuesday, 9/2: *They Say I Say* (Introduction and Part 1)

Thursday, 9/4: *They Say I Say* (Part 2, Ch. 4-5)

Friday, 9/5: *They Say I Say* (Part 2, Ch. 6-7)

Tuesday, 9/9: Library Day

Thursday, 9/11: Ferdinand de Saussure's *General Course in Linguistics* (Part 1, Ch. 1)

Friday, 9/12: Ferdinand de Saussure's *General Course in Linguistics* (Part 2, Ch. 4-6)

Tuesday, 9/16: Roland Barthes's "The Death of the Author"

Thursday, 9/18: Introduction to Psychoanalysis/Freud Documentary

Friday, 9/19: Sigmund Freud's *Five Lectures* (Lecture 1)

Tuesday, 9/23: Sigmund Freud's *Five Lectures* (Lectures 2 and 3)

Thursday, 9/25: Sigmund Freud's *Five Lectures* (Lecture 4)

Friday, 9/26: Sigmund Freud's *Five Lectures* (Lecture 5) and Excerpts from Jacques Lacan's "The Instance of the Letter"

Tuesday, 9/30: Surrealism Documentary: *Surrealism or Dada and Surrealism*
Thursday, 10/2: André Breton's *Manifesto of Surrealism* (first manifesto)
Friday, 10/3: Excerpts from Surrealist Texts (Breton, Char, Artaud)

Tuesday, 10/7: Julia Kristeva's "Semiotics: A Critical Science and/or a Critique of Science"
Thursday, 10/9: Julia Kristeva's *Powers of Horror* (pp.1-18)
Friday, 10/10: Julia Kristeva's *Revolution in Poetic Language* (pp. 217-226)

Tuesday, 10/14: FALL BREAK!
Thursday, 10/16: Lautréamont's *Maldoror* (pp. 27-58)
Friday, 10/17: Lautréamont's *Maldoror* (pp. 59-90)

Tuesday, 10/21: Lautréamont's *Maldoror* (pp. 91-108)
Thursday, 10/23: Maurice Blanchot's "Lautréamont" (pp.43-69)
Friday, 10/24: Maurice Blanchot's "Lautréamont" (pp. 69-96)

Tuesday, 10/28: Maurice Blanchot's "Lautréamont" (pp. 96-117)
Thursday, 10/30: Progress Meetings
Friday, 10/31: Progress Meetings

Tuesday, 11/4: Progress Meetings
Thursday, 11/6: Presentations
Friday, 11/7: Presentations

Tuesday, 11/11: Maurice Blanchot's "Literature and the Right to Death" (first half)
Thursday, 11/13: Maurice Blanchot's "Literature and the Right to Death" (second half)
Friday, 11/14: Documentary: *À perte de vue*

Tuesday, 11/18: Georges Bataille's "Notion of Expenditure (*The Bataille Reader*, pp. 167-182)
Thursday, 11/20: Georges Bataille's *Inner Experience* (*The Bataille Reader*, pp. 64-91)
Friday, 11/21: Georges Bataille's Eroticism (Introduction, *Erotism*)

Tuesday, 11/25: Georges Bataille's "Madame Edwarda" (*The Bataille Reader*, pp.223-237)
Thursday, 11/27: - THANKSGIVING BREAK!
Friday, 11/28: - THANKSGIVING BREAK!

Tuesday, 12/2: Workshop – Revise Research Paper
Thursday, 12/4: Workshop – Revise Portfolio
Friday, 12/5: Workshop – Revise Portfolio

Tuesday, 12/9: Reflections

(This class schedule may change as the semester progresses.)

Deadlines

Research Paper: Abstract Due **10/23**, First Draft Due **11/11**, Final Draft Due **12/2**

Creative Writing: **10/31**

Portfolio: **12/7**