

## Critical Approaches to Literature

7.1 Module Overview								
Module Number		Module Title	Critical Approaches to Literature					
Stage of Principal Programme	2	Semester	2	Duration. (Weeks F/T)	12	ECTS	5	
Mandatory / Elective (M/E)	E	Hours of Learner Effort / Week	2.3					
Analysis of required hours of learning effort								
Teaching and Learning Modalities				✓if relevant to this module	Approx. proportion of total (hours)			
Contact Hours								
In person face-to-face				✓	28			
Synchronous								
Indirect/Non-Contact Hours								
Asynchronous								
Work Based								
Other:								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Independent self- direct reading</li> </ul>				✓	57			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research, preparation and completion of assessment</li> </ul>				✓	40			
Total					125			

Pre-Requisite Module, if any. Module # and Title	N/A	
Co-Requisite Module, if any. Module # and Title	N/A	
Maximum number of learners per instance of the module	45	
Specification of the qualifications (academic, pedagogical and professional/occupational) and experience required of staff working in this module.		
Role e.g., Tutor, Mentor, Lecturer, Research Supervisor, etc.	Qualifications & experience required	Staff - Learner Ratio X:Y
Lecturer	A minimum level 9 qualification in English Literature or closely cognate area	1:45

Assessment Techniques – percentage contribution					
Continuous Assessment	40%	Proctored Exam – in person	60%	Practical Skills Based	
Project		Proctored Exam – online		Work Based	
Capstone (Y/N)?	N	If Yes, describe			

7.2 Minimum Intended Module Learning Outcomes (MIMLOs)	
MIMLO	Related MIPLO #
On completion of this module a learner will be able to:	
1. Distinguish between different forms of literary criticism, including their origins and major proponents.	1, 2
2. Interpret literary texts using different critical and/or theoretical perspectives.	3, 4

3. Perform an analysis of a literary text through a critical/theoretical framework, applying any relevant methodologies and employing correct terminology.	<b>4</b>
4. Evaluate the merits/demerits of different forms of literary criticism.	<b>3, 4</b>

### 7.3 Indicative Module Content, Organisation and Structure

This module aims to provide learners with the knowledge, skills and competencies to identify, differentiate and evaluate a number of different critical and theoretical approaches to literary texts, the theoretical origin of these critical approaches, the major proponents of those theories, and how to use these approaches in the evaluation and interpretation of literature. It introduces learners to additional and complementary theoretical approaches that learners encounter in Stage 1 introductory modules. The content is divided into five sections, which are divided between 10 weeks, or 2 weeks per section.

#### **Introduction**

This should introduce learners to (1) the general history of criticism, including the introduction of English as a liberal humanist discipline within the university in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; (2) gloss the major developments and trajectories within literary criticism since the 20<sup>th</sup> century; (3) outline the key theories the course will explore over 12 weeks.

#### **Language, text and the author**

This section of the course explores literary theories that foreground language, including formalism, structuralism and poststructuralism. Learners read essays by Terry Eagleton 'What is a poem?', Roland Barthes 'Death of the Author', and Michel Foucault, 'What is an Author?'

#### **Criticism and ethics**

The Ethical Turn is one of the more significant developments in contemporary literary theory. Classes here will examine the critique of formalism and language-centred theories in contemporary American literature, and readings of selected essays of 'ethical' literary criticism.

#### **Literature, society and the marketplace**

This section of the course covers materialist theories that locate literary texts in their social, historic and economic context. This section includes exploration of Marxian theory, including Cultural Materialism and World Systems Theory. Learners will read excerpts from Terry Eagleton and Pascale Cassanova. This section may also touch on gender and race, but should avoid repeating Stage 1 content.

#### **Literature, the human and the environment**

This section explores literature and the environment. It will look at foundational work by Jonathan Bate as a major proponent of ecocriticism, as well as exploring ecofeminist literary criticism and 'anthropocene' readings of literature.

#### **Approaches to technology and digital literature**

This portion explores how established and literary theories can be applied to forms of digital literature. Learners will consider (a) the historic relationship between technology (e.g., mechanical followed by digital) and literature, and (b) the proliferation of modes through which stories are being told in a digital context – from social media to online fanfiction to video games.

Tutorial time (4 x fortnightly classes) will be used to develop critical skills and methods by exploring a particular critical methodology. Tutorial time should also be used to workshop assignment pieces.

### 7.4 Work-based learning and practice-placement (if applicable)

N/A

## 7.5 Specific module resources required (if applicable)

N/A

## 7.6 Application of programme teaching, learning and assessment strategies to this module

The module is conducted through a mixture of lectures, workshops and tutorials. Lectures will present information to learners in a variety of ways: from lecturer-led presentation to more discursive teaching formats offering greater opportunity to engage in detailed critical analysis of primary texts. In lectures, learners will be strongly encouraged to discuss and interrogate a range of interpretative positions related to the literature under discussion, while tutorials will also provide further opportunity for close-text analysis and debate, learner-led discussion, as well as assistance with assessment. Lecture content will primarily be displayed using Microsoft PowerPoint, but other presentation software will be deployed as needed, including the use of video.

Initial lectures concentrate on introducing learners to general history and trends around literary criticism. Lectures thereafter will typically consist of two-hour blocks broken into two distinct classes. The first hour will be devoted to an overview of a particular form of literary criticism, its origins, main proponents, central themes and application. In the second hour, learners will work in groups or individually with input from the lecturer on the application of theory to a particular text, typically prose or poetry. Occasionally, where appropriate, learners will work on elucidating the key ideas in a critical essay.

The assessment strategy for this module is a mixture of continuous assessment and examination. Continuous assessment consists of two assignments that assess learner understanding of literary criticism. Overall understanding and application of literary criticism will be assessed by exam that is broken into two different sections to assess (1) knowledge and understanding of particular literary theories (2) learner ability to utilise literary criticism in the interpretation of a literary text.

## 7.7 Summative Assessment Strategy for this module

MIMLOs	Technique(s)	Weighting
1, 2, 3	1 x 750-1000-word continuous assessment piece to test ongoing learning, skills and understanding.	30%
1-4	A 2-hour end of term exam to test overall knowledge and competence.	60%
	Attendance	10%

## 7.8 Sample Assessment Materials

### **Continuous Assessment (30%)**

Learners write 1x750-1000-word short assignment testing knowledge and applicability of a critical approach to a literary text of their choosing (depending on where the assessment falls in the term). Learners will be not be able to write on this theory/critical approach again in their exam.

### **Exam (60%)**

#### **Part 1 – Evaluating theory**

Answer A or B

(A) Compare and contrast two critical approaches to literature/culture that you have studied on this module. In your opinion, what are the strengths and weaknesses of each of these critical approaches? Say which one you ultimately think is the more useful in reading literature, and offer reasons why.

OR

(B) We have studied a number of critical approaches on this module. Choose one of these approaches and outline the key ideas underpinning that approach. In your view, what is particularly useful about this particular approach in interpreting literature and/or culture?

#### **Part 2 – Applying theory**

Answer A or B

(A) You have heard that one of your classmates is raising a petition to abolish the teaching of literary theory because it is destroying the enjoyment of literature in favour of obscure ideas with no practical application. However, you disagree with this learner. What would you say to this learner to convince them that the study of critical approaches is not only valuable but vitally important?

OR

(B) Read the following [UNSEEN TEXT]. Offer an interpretation of this [UNSEEN TEXT] using one of the critical approaches you have studied on this module.

Marking of assessments will be in line with the Marking Assessment Guidelines as outlined in Section 3.3 of the College's [Regulations in Relation to Assessment and Standards](#) unless otherwise indicated.

## 7.9 Indicative reading lists and other information resources

### Indicative Reading:

Bate, Jonathan, 'From Red to Green', in Laurence Coupe, ed., *The Green Studies Reader* (London: Routledge, 2000), 167-172

Barthes, Roland, 'The Death of the Author' (any edition, 1968).

Cassanova, Pascale, selected passages from *The World Republic of Letters* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2007).

Cleary, Joe, 'Introduction', *The Irish Expatriate Novel in Late Capitalist Globalization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021).

Davis, Todd and Kenneth Womack, eds, selected essays from *Mapping the Ethical Turn: A Reader in Ethics, Culture and Literary Theory* (Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 2007).

Eagleton, Terry, 'What is Literature' in *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

Eagleton, Terry, *How to Read a Poem* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2006).

Elstermann, Annika, 'Introduction', *Digital Literature and Critical Theory* (London: Routledge, 2023), 1-11

Foucault, Michel, 'What is an Author' (any edition, 1969)

Hiltner, Ken, ed., *Ecocriticism: The Essential Reader* (London: Routledge, 2014)

Royle and Bennet, 'Eco', in *Literature, Criticism and Theory* (Edinburgh: Pearson, 2009), 138-150.

Soper, Kate, 'Naturalized woman and feminized nature', in Laurence Coupe, ed., *The Green Studies Reader* (London: Routledge, 2000), 123-126.

Selected passages from Cleanth Brooks, 'The New Criticism', I.A. Richards, 'Principles of Literary Criticism' and Wimsatt and Beardsley, 'The Intentional Fallacy' and/or 'The Affective Fallacy'.