
ENGL 150

Rethinking the Shape of Theory

MW [10am-12pm]

Workshop every Friday. 10pm-1pm

Office Hours: MW [8pm-10am]

Or by appointment

The Pool Players.

Seven at the Golden
Shovel.

We real cool. We

Left school. We

Lurk late. We

Strike straight. We

Sing sin. We

Thin gin. We

Jazz June. We

Die soon.

----- GWENDOLYN BROOKS

Course Description: What does theory look like? This course is designed to immerse students into the world of theory. Students will be introduced to the debate over what constitutes theory. This course will validate alternative theoretical materials that are traditionally viewed as non-theory. Both by reading the work of professional theorists and creating an independent project, you will explore various approaches to the form of theory. Using professional theorists as your models you will create a thoughtful and original independent project. This course will examine poetry, visual art, and prose, as well as traditional theory. Students will encounter a definition of theory that works for them. Through our discussions students are encouraged to think about form and structure in their own life. I'm excited to work with you this summer!

Goals:

Our class will examine differing theoretical landscapes. This class will:

- Define theory and understand theoretical utility.
- Consider extending the definition of theory to encompass other creative mediums.
- Explore different forms of theory that act as resistive forces.
- Develop strong writing skills

Required Texts:

These text are required for class:

- Ntozake Shange, *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When The Rainbow is Enuf.*
- Alejandro Murguia, *The Medicine of Memory: A Mexica Clan in California*

- All additional readings will be accessible via WISE e-reserve.

Evaluation and Individual Writing Workshops

Students will be evaluated on their ability to meet the course objectives. There are no grades for this course. This course challenges students to consider alternative evaluative forms. The intention of this course is to explore outside the boundaries of traditional academia. Student's mastery of course topics will be measured through a personal discussion and commitment level. The instructor will factor equally student participation, writing proficiency, and overall desire for exploration into course assessment. Course assessment will happen through writing guidance with instructor and commitment to the Friday student workshops. These workshops will evaluate and grow the student's writing proficiency and expand student's mastery of course topics. These are designed to establish a relationship between instructor and student and allow for individual writing instruction.

Independent Projects / Group Workshops:

You will meet with me in the second week of class to determine an independent project. This project will broach ideas that pertain to theory and your personal interests. Every Friday students will meet in small groups and discuss independent projects. Group sessions are designed for collaboration in the writing process. This is unstructured time for you to think theoretically. I encourage you to dedicate time outside of class to this independent project every week. The final product will be a creative writing form that broaches theoretical ideas. I am purposely leaving this assignment vague-- I want you to think creatively!

Participation and Attendance:

This is not a lecture class. You should come to each and every class prepared to speak about the material at hand. As good discussion skills require considering and responding to the ideas of others, your participation grade will also include how you leave space for other

Children make the best theorists, since they have not yet been educated into accepting our routing social practices as natural, and so insist on posing to those practices the most embarrassingly general and fundamental questions, regarding them with a wondering estrangement, which we adults have long forgotten. Since they do not yet grasp our social practices as inevitable, they do not see why we might not do things differently.

-- Terry Eagleton

voices and how actively you listen and respond to them. A good goal to shoot for is to contribute *substantially* to discussion at least twice every class period.

Regular attendance is required for this course, and your grade may be affected by absence. More than 2 unexcused absences—equivalent of a week’s-worth of classes—will likely affect your final grade, and if you miss 4 times (whether the absences are excused or unexcused) you may fail the course. If you cannot attend class, please let me know in advance if possible. If you miss a class or workshop please email me, I will send you necessary information to keep you up-to-date.

Disability Accommodations:

Students seeking academic accommodations must first meet and register with Student Disability Services (see <http://www.willamette.edu/dept/disability/>). Students approved for accommodations should meet privately with me during the first 2-3 weeks of the semester so we can make appropriate arrangements.

Course Schedule: (Tentative)

Week One: The Structure of Theory

M: Discussion of Syllabus, Course Introduction

W: Bell Hooks – Theory as Liberatory Practice (E-Reserve)

Terry Eagleton, “The Significance of Theory.”(E-Reserve)

F: Alan Johnson, “Patriarchy, the System: An It, Not a He, Them, or an Us,” (E-Reserve)

Nancy Cott, “Introduction” from “The Grounding of Modern Feminism”, (E-Reserve)

Week Two: Feminist Theory (Essentialism Vs. Social Construction)

M: Kolmar and Bartkowski – “Essentialism / Social Construction / Difference” (E-Reserve)

Linda Alcoff, “Cultural Feminism Versus Post-Structuralism” (E-Reserve)

Diana Fuss, “The Risk of Essence” (E-Reserve)

W: Judith Butler, from “Gender Trouble” (E-Reserve)

Martha Nussbaum, “Professor of Parody” (E-Reserve)

****F: First workshop. Discuss project ideas****

Week Three: Expanding Feminist Theory

M: Gloria Anzaldua, “La Conciencia de la Mestiza,” (E-Reserve)

Audre Lorde “Master’s Tools” (E-Reserve)

Robert Mapplethorpe: “Male Nudes” (E-Reserve)

W: Poems: Angelina Welde Grinke, Alice Walker, Audre Lorde (E-Reserve)

F: Workshop

Week Four: Intersectional Critical Consciousness

M: Shange, “For Colored Girls”

W: CONTINUED, “For Colored Girls”.

F: Workshop

Week Five: Essay One

****M: DUE: Part one of independent project** (Please bring to class two copies of your work)**

Patricia Hill Collins, “The Politics of Black Feminist Thought” (E-Reserve)

W: Movie “For Colored Girls”

F: Workshop

Week Six: Cultural Theory

M: Intro to the Harlem Renaissance (E-Reserve)

Houston A. Baker, from *The Signifying Monkey*. Chapter Three. (E-Reserve)

W: Poems: Sterling Brown, Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen (E-Reserve)

Booker T. Washington, “The Atlanta Exposition” (E-Reserve)

F: Workshop

Week Seven: Individual Writing Meetings with Joe

M: No Class (Meeting)

****Read WEB Du Bois, “Criteria of Negro Art” (E-Reserve)****

W: No Class (Meeting)

F: Workshop

Week Eight: Expanding on Cultural Theory (Post-Colonialism)

M: Medicine of Memory, Mugeria. part one.

W: Medicine of Memory, part two.

F: Workshop

Week Nine: (Post-Colonialism)

M: Medicine of Memory, Mugeria end.

W: Kincaid “A Small Place.” (E-Reserve)

F: Workshop

Week Ten: Contemporary Forms of Theory, Slam Poetry and the Black Arts Movement

M: Amari Baraka, “The Revolutionary Theater” (E-Reserve)

Susan Sommers-Willett, *from* “The Cultural Politics of Slam Poetry”

W: YouTube links to HBO’s slam poetry (E-Reserve)

F: Workshop

Week Eleven: Independent Projects

M: No Class (Optional meetings with Joe)

W: Project presentation

F: Project presentation

Week Twelve: Final Projects due on Monday.

W: Meetings with Joe to discuss independent project

F: Meetings with Joe to discuss independent project