

**Fañoamnåkan/FALL 2024**

**EN 225 LITERARY CRITICISM**

Section 01: MW 11:00-12:20

Classroom: EC 105

Office # EC 216

Office Hours: M, T, W, TH: 10-11:00; F: 10:00-12:00

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All men by nature desire to know. –Aristotle

All men seek happiness. This is so without exception. –Pascal

*Da-sein*, the being which in every case we ourselves are, is existentially that which is most distant (*das Fernste*) –Heidegger, *Being and Time* (1927)

I am what I am not and not what I am. –Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (1943)

Evil arises from the Indeterminate—Aristotle

EN 225 LINK [Course Descriptions | University of Guam \(uog.edu\)](#)

**Rationale for the Course**

At present, students do not focus on literary criticism until EN 480 in the last years of their studies in English. The guiding rationale for this EN 225 is that it is best to introduce students as soon as possible to ways of critical writing after they have completed the composition sequence.

**Skills and Background Required or Expected**

Students are expected to have passed EN 111. Successful or concurrent completion of EN 210 is also recommended and will be stressed by DEAL Literature advisors. They will possess requisite reading, composition, and multimedia exposure to effectively engage with and profit from the content of the course, and thus achieve the desired outcomes of the course.

**Critical Practice**

This course introduces methods and concepts of literary criticism as they are applied to literary texts in critical practice called *exegesis* (German= *Auslegung*), which is *explication*, or the *art of interpretation*. (There is no infinitive verb form for the abstract noun “exegesis,” so we say *explicate*, which means to *perform an exegesis*.) Explication of a text (book, song, film, painting, video game, etc.) makes the implicit, explicit without erasing or neutralizing its enchanting qualities. This means the spirit of the text must be divined and understood by the reader.

## Learning Objective

This course seeks to prepare students for the kinds of critical writing and interpretation done in upper-level literature and humanities courses. But it's also a preparation for an actively engaged existence where we *read the world as a text and make it our own, become its co-authors, inscribe our own narratives and values, rather than passively inherit "reality" without critical or creative input.* This is why active reading is a kind of writing. This is why in his *Late Notebooks* Nietzsche correlates exegesis with becoming and says that "the will to power *interprets*...sets limits, determines degrees and differences of power. In truth, interpretation is itself a means of becoming master of something."<sup>1</sup>

## Long Term Outcomes

The critical practice of exegesis is the first step in reconfiguring existence to meet personal and generational interests, needs, and desires. By making distinctions and arguing for your insights, for what a text *means*, the critical spirit empowers itself and reenchants the world. This is why the severe decline in reading and symbolic comprehension across the new generations is so disenchanting and ultimately disempowering: millions of people now feel "symbolic misery"<sup>2</sup> because they don't have personal input in what Foucault called *the Order of Things*, which is the global disciplinary matrix (*matrix of domination*) by which meanings and values are predetermined by industrial and ethnocentric, not existential, imperatives.<sup>3</sup> The disenchanting view of reading and writing as chores, as homework. Struggling with some project into the dead of night, the endless return of the same heavy labor feels like eternal slavery. They have not yet internalized **the smile of Sisyphus** by which he takes ownership of his damnation by acknowledging its absurdity. When he inscribes this differential of his will power into the cycle of recurrence, rolling the boulder once more up the hill, he becomes master of his fate. Transfiguration or becoming cannot be ordered or commanded by external authorities, but *by oneself for oneself*. This is the existential meaning of Sisyphus' personal experience of the Eternal Return of the Same.

Critical interpretation does not only occur in critical writing: Any person who thinks for themselves and is not a puppet of ideology is constantly interpreting situations and conditions of existence rather than accepting them at face value. The rise of alarmingly stupid conspiracy theories shows, however, that a critical approach to life is increasingly uncommon. With the decline in critical consciousness, *gullibility* has become viral; the *gulls* (true believers) commingle in flocks at political rallies. In this regard, as Nietzsche argues in the late notebooks which comprised *The Will to Power*, exegesis is the engine of freedom, for the critical position we take via interpretation frees us up from predetermined meanings, values, and structures of social life and, through valuing our own insights and imperatives, individuates us. Attentive daily life in the world and situational awareness are actively *hermeneutic*, a process of critical discernment, judgment, and questioning. Anything less active and more passive leaves us adrift as slavish zombies of consumer culture.

## Evaluative Framework: Assigning Value in Reading

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<sup>1</sup> F. Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks* (Cambridge UP, 2003)

<sup>2</sup> Bernard Stiegler, *Symbolic Misery* (Polity Press, 2014)

<sup>3</sup> Dino Felluga, *Critical Theory: Key Concepts* (2015)

We will consider the general framework of Noel Carroll's "Philosophy of Criticism" based primarily in *Evaluation*, i.e., how to aesthetically and philosophically *assign value* to a text or artwork as a critic. To do this, *criteria* need to be established. What are your values? Aesthetic? Pragmatic? When you praise a film for being "horrifying" or "terrifying," "awesome" or "epic," what exactly do you mean? Carroll's secondary modes of criticism are *Description, Contextualization, Genre Classification and Critique, Elucidation, Interpretation, and Analysis*.

### Toolbox of Critical Concepts

Critical methods are a toolbox of concepts which inform and guide our reading in explicit ways. These modes of exegesis do not operate in a vacuum; we learn them by applying them to compelling texts. Application is not random. *It is the specificity of the text that calls for an apt or fitting mode of criticism*. In this edition of EN 225 we will first establish modal clarity and get our groundwork done by reading stories from *The Art of the Tale: An International Anthology of Short Stories* and explicating them according to the modes of **Existential Criticism, Cultural Critique, Feminism, and Marxist Criticism**. It will become obvious before long that these modes often overlap or work in tandem to each other. In other words, when actively reading (explicating) Natalia Ginzburg's story "The Mother," one cannot help invoking not only feminism, but existentialism and cultural critique, not to mention Marxism, which describes her *alienation* from the *Lebenswelt* (Lifeworld). To some degree, **Psychological Criticism** (both Psychoanalysis and Phenomenological Psychology) is also inescapable. Then we will see if those modes of Western criticism can be applied to the Japanese novel, *Woman in the Dunes*. In the final part of this course, we will "sample" literary theory by Hans Blumenberg in his **Shipwreck with Spectator**, a sustained *metaphorology*, and by doing so learn to distinguish literary criticism from literary theory. At that point, students will apply the shipwreck metaphorology to one of the stories or novel already studied in class.

### Required Texts

- Noel Carroll, *On Criticism* (Routledge, 2009)
- Hans Blumenberg, *Shipwreck with Spectator: Paradigm of a Metaphor for Existence* (MIT Press, 1997)
- Kobo Abe, *Woman in the Dunes* (1962 Vintage International)
- Daniel Halpern, *The Art of the Tale: An International Anthology of Short Stories* (Penguin, 1986); [The Art of the Tale : an International anthology of short stories 1945-1985 : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#)

### HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

- ◆ Dino Felluga, *Critical Theory: The Key Concepts* (Routledge, 2015)  
[Critical Theory: The Key Concepts - 1st Edition - Dino Felluga - Routl \(routledge.com\)](#)

## Class Days and Assignments

The assigned stories are from *The Art of the Tale: An International Anthology of Short Stories*, which is available online or in Penguin paperback.

Wed August 14: Introductions; structure and purpose of *this* EN 225; criticism and critique; evaluation; theory (to theorize: ponder and extrapolate as if without consequences or practical application); Praxis and Theory have an inner relation which is not binary but dialectical, like engineering and physics have with mathematics.

Mon Aug 19: The Bound Man / Ilse Aichinger; [Existentialism \(Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy\)](#)

Wed Aug 21: Everything / Ingeborg Bachmann; [Existentialist Movement in Literature – Literary Theory and Criticism \(literariness.org\)](#)

Mon Aug 26: A Distant Episode / Paul Bowles; **NC Criticism as Evaluation 11-48**

Wed Aug 28:; [Search Results for “cultural criticism” – Literary Theory and Criticism \(literariness.org\)](#); Two Gentle People / Graham Greene

Mon Sept 2: **LABOR DAY** The Mother / Natalia Ginzburg Order of Insects / William Gass

Wed Sept 4: [Feminist Philosophy \(Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy\)](#);

Mon Sept 9: The Child Screams and Looks Back At You / Russell Banks; [Search Results for “feminist criticism” – Literary Theory and Criticism \(literariness.org\)](#); The Tryst / Joyce Carol Oates

Wed Sept. 11: Death and the Maiden / Michel Tournier

Mon Sept. 16: Why I Transformed Myself into a Nightingale / Wolfgang Hildesheimer; [Karl Marx \(Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy\)](#); Seven Floors / Dino Buzzati

Wed Sept 18: Kobo Abe *Woman in the Dunes* 1-60

Mon Sept 23: *Woman in the Dunes* 61-90

Wed Sept 25: Kobo Abe *Woman in the Dunes* 91-134

Mon Sept 30: Kobo Abe *Woman in the Dunes* 135-172

Wed Oct 2: *Woman in the Dunes* 173-239; **FILM of *Woman in the Dunes***

Mon Oct 7: **FALL BREAK**

Wed Oct 9: **FALL BREAK**

Mon Oct 14: **Mid-Term Exercise**

Wed Oct 16: NC The Object of Criticism 48-83

Mon Oct 21: NC The Parts of Criticism 108-126; Nomad and Viper / Amos Oz

Wed Oct 23: NC The Parts of Criticism 127-152

Mon Oct 28: The Aleph / Jorge Luis Borges; Going to Meet the Man / James Baldwin

Wed Oct 30: The Best of Everything/Richard Yates

Mon Nov 4: Blumenberg, *Shipwreck with Spectator*

Wed Nov 6: *Shipwreck with Spectator*

Mon Nov 11: **VETERANS DAY** *Shipwreck with Spectator*

Wed Nov 13: *Shipwreck with Spectator*: apply shipwreck metaphors (metaphorology) to story or novel

Mon Nov 18: Workshop for Presentations

Wed Nov 20: Presentations

Mon Nov 25: Presentations

Wed Nov 27: Workshop for Final Writing Projects

Mon Dec 2: REVIEW

Wed Dec 4: **FINAL EXERCISE; Final Projects due**

Mon Dec 9: OUR LADY OF CAMARIN DAY

OFFICIAL EXAM PERIOD: Dec. 10-12

**Teaching Methodologies; Anticipated class size: 15-20 students**

Teaching will focus on application—discussion; close reading and analysis; interpretation; and exegesis. The course will achieve optimum learning outcomes if it pursues its study of the critical tradition in an applied context with concrete examples and problems from literature, film, and popular culture.

**Learning Objectives for Students**

- a. Demonstrate knowledge of critical terms, methods, concepts, and schools
- b. Evince understanding of literary and new media genres and histories
- c. Express critical thinking and methodological rigor in analysis of representative literature and media
- d. Demonstrate writing and research skills appropriate for assignments undertaken

## Methods of Evaluation

Students will be evaluated on the basis of class participation, writing assignments, quizzes, and examinations. There will be a focus on rigor and quality of analysis as demonstrated in critical papers and discussion. Individual instructors will keep in mind that the primary desired outcome is not only knowledge or information, but a skill set and aptitude capable of producing a higher quality of critical interaction with literary and cultural forms.

## Methods for Student Learning Outcomes Assessment

- 1) Pre-/post test diagnostics linked to specific course content;
- 2) Narrative summaries written by students to evaluate the classroom learning experience;
- 3) Portfolios of graded written work;
- 4) Primary trait analysis of performance-based outcomes

## Student Learning Objectives

Upon finishing the course, each student will be able to demonstrate the following skills and knowledge:

- Understand the main structural elements of the literary works studied in class
- Analyze and evaluate literal and figurative meaning, the symbolism of literary texts
- Write effective and thoughtful critical essays about literary texts
- Have an enhanced appreciation of literature as a source of insight into the human condition
- Demonstrate knowledge of significant authors and critical terms

## Classroom = LDZ (LOW DISTRACTION ZONE)

- ◆ NO LATE PAPERS
- ◆ NO SMARTPHONE or SOCIAL MEDIA DURING CLASS (put away to avoid collateral distractions)
- ◆ MINIMIZE BACKGROUND NOISE, INTERRUPTIONS, AND DISTRACTION
- ◆ Quietly open and close the classroom door; go to lavatory before class if necessary, etc.

## Official AI Statement:

*"The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a research tool is allowed, but it must not replace the student's original ideas, creativity, and critical thinking. AI should be used only as a tool to assist in research, and proper attribution must be given to any AI-generated content. All work submitted for grading must be the sole product of the student's endeavors. **Any violation of academic integrity will be dealt with accordingly.**"*

## Attendance Policy

**Three absences without official excuse** will cost you a letter grade for the semester. Most importantly, keep in touch by email or phone regarding your absences, emergencies, assignments, and so on. Communication is MUCH better than silence when it comes to these official matters.

## ADA Syllabus Statement

The University of Guam (UOG) is committed to achieving equal opportunity and full participation of persons with disabilities by providing non-discriminatory access to its services and facilities through the ADA Office. The Mission of the ADA Office is to ensure non-discriminatory access to all benefits, privileges, opportunities and obligations to faculty, staff and community members with disabilities and to ensure a process for full compliance by UOG with the ADA of 1990, as amended, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, taking into account the economic climate and multi-cultural diversity of the institution. The ADA Office can be contacted at telephone number (671) 735-2244 or Telephone Device for the Deaf (TDD) number (671) 735-2243.

The Enrollment Management & Student Success office provides reasonable accommodations for students in accordance with the UOG Policy and Procedure for student applicants with a disability. The ADA policy can be found on this website.

"**Plagiarism** is the deliberate attempt to deceive the reader through the appropriation and representation as one's own the work and words of others. Academic plagiarism occurs when a writer repeatedly uses more than four words from a printed source without the use of quotation marks and a precise reference to the original source in a work presented as the author's [read plagiarist's] own research and scholarship. Continuous paraphrasing without serious interaction with another person's views, by way or argument or the addition of new material and insights, is a form of plagiarism in academic work."

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### Active Study Skills Empowered by Exegesis in Literary Studies

Students will be engaged with reading, learning, meditation, and assiduous application.

◇ **Reading** (*legendi*) means actively paying attention to what is being said at the level of the words and sentences being used by the author. It requires detailed observation and, in some cases, *explication* of the passages that seem obscure. If you like to write notes to yourself in the margins of a text, you are an active reader!

◇ **Learning** (*doctrina*: studying, grasping the content) means *making connections* to your own memory, experience, and knowledge, *filtering* the written materials for comprehension, *situating* it in culture and history, *finding* new knowledge such as biography and literary criticism, and perhaps *summarizing* for yourself certain issues that demand extra attention and clarity. Learning also involves *looking up and defining new words*, *retaining them in memory*, and sometimes *using them in an essay or class discussion* when they seem apt (see "Assiduous Application")

◇ **Meditation** (*meditatio*) is critical thinking and speculation; it is "philosophical" or thoughtful consideration of the text. It "reaches out farther to what is unknown, and often even rises to the incomprehensible by penetrating, not merely the apparent aspects, but even the hidden recesses of questions."<sup>1</sup> This may involve using the story to make inferences about contemporary culture, psychology, global trends, social and personal habits.

◇ **Assiduous application** (*assiduitas operis*) means that you take what you have read and develop a thoughtful paper from the issues at stake, the problems and question, the words and details that interest you or provoke your research. It also can mean imitating what you have read in a creative response to the story, poem, or play. Application is practice. This is what

Confucius has in mind when he says” “I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I *do* and I understand.”

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<sup>i</sup> John of Salisbury, *The Metalogicon*, trans. Daniel D. McGarry (Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books, 2009), 64.