

CO 265 THEORY OF LITERATURE

Literary History, the Canon, and the Curriculum

Semester I, 2003-2004, N hour

Readings in the theory and practice of literary history, canon formation, and curricular development. Issues will include the repression and recovery of certain texts, authors, or genres. Students will be asked to identify an issue in the history of the literature in which they specialize and develop a term paper on that topic.

This course is presently under development. Most of the books have been selected. They will be read in an order based loosely on the list below, with some books read over the course of the semester, some read entirely at once, and some not read entirely, but read substantially on this occasion. Though the syllabus is clearly based on *literary* history, students with a field in other media, such as film, will be able to address historical issues in those media in their work for the course.

Books Selected

- David Perkins. *Is Literary History Possible?*
 - Gérard Genette. *Introduction to the Architext*
 - Michael McKeon. *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740*
 - Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt. *Practicing New Historicism*
 - Gauri Viswanathan. *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India*
 - John Guillory. *Cultural Capital*
 - Cary Nelson. *Repression and Recovery*
 - Astradur Eysteinnsson. *The Concept of Modernism*
 - Rita Felski, *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics*
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This will be a graduate seminar, organized primarily with the needs of PhD candidates in mind. Others may be admitted, depending on the size of the group and their ability to work under conditions devised for the primary audience. Those conditions are based on some general assumptions about the function of doctoral study and some specific assumptions about the topic of the course.

General and pedagogical assumptions:

- Doctoral candidates are learning to be both scholars and teachers.
- Both scholars and teachers need to understand the theory and practice of literary history: scholars in order to become productive in research, and teachers in order to plan curricula and teach courses mindfully.
- The best way to understand something is to do it.
- For that reason the major productive work required of each student in this seminar will be
 - an essay on a problem in the literary history of his or her field
 - a plan for a new course in his or her field

Intellectual and professional assumptions:

- The study and teaching of literature depend upon certain literary concepts.
- Among these are period, genre, and canon.
- These studies also depends upon certain social or cultural concepts.
- Among these are class, gender, race, and nation.
- The curriculum is based upon these concepts--and also shapes them.
- Every one of these concepts comes with a "problematic"--issues in the definition and application of categorical terminology.
- As the profession is presently constituted, "fields of study" are defined in terms of the concepts active in the curriculum.
- Success as a scholar and teacher depends upon understanding the problematic of one's chosen field and being able to function within it or change it.

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