



Instructor: Mark Cimmins

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Course Number: ENG380H5S

Course Title: History of Literary Theory

Course description: This course will examine various theories of literature from antiquity through the Renaissance, from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries into the twentieth century. Our examinations will include the enormously historically influential theories of Plato, Aristotle, and Horace; Sir Philip Sidney's Renaissance's rearticulation and reformulation of ancient theories; Alexander Pope's Eighteenth-Century musings on the art of criticism; the groundbreaking and revolutionary ideas of Wordsworth at the outset of English Romanticism; Matthew Arnold's impassioned appeal for criticism's relevance in the Victorian era; and the work a plethora of other theorists and critics over the centuries. The historical evolution of Feminist theory and Marxist theory in particular will be emphasized. Our studies will also take us to the at times exhilarating, at times arcane Structuralist and Poststructuralist modes of theoretical discourse. Representative texts from Postmodern and Postcolonial theory will also be studied. In our investigations, we will also consider many differing schools of critical thought and their different emphases and concerns, keeping before us basic questions about the nature of literature, the function of theory, and the varied and complex attitudes to literature which have evolved over the centuries and indeed over recent decades.

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Required Reading: The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism, Second Edition.

First Three Texts/Authors to be Studied: Plato, Aristotle, Horace.

Method of Instruction: Lecture and Discussion.

Method of Evaluation: Two short theoretical position papers: 20% each; Midterm Test: 15%; Final Exam: 35%; Participation: 10%.