

Key Concepts in Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

Course Code: SMLM tba

Semester: 2

Credit Value: 30

Module Organiser: Dr. Angus Nicholls

Assessment: One 4,000 word essay (100%)

All students must ensure that they obtain a copy of the School Handbook for MA Students and follow the School's guidelines and regulations in all matters regarding this module. Students must note that failure to do so may result in de-registration from the module, which may have a significant impact on their overall degree classification.

DESCRIPTION

During the twentieth century, literary studies developed as an academic discipline. As part of this process of development, twentieth-century theorists of literature formalised key concepts which they had inherited from earlier periods. In this module, students will be introduced to five of these key concepts – mimesis, narrative, symbol, metaphor and allegory – in the writings of a range of theorists from the Anglo-American, German, French and Russian critical traditions. Students will also learn to apply these concepts to literary texts chosen in consultation with the course coordinator.

LEARNING OUTCOMES OF THE MODULE

Knowledge outcomes:

At the end of this module students will be able to:

- Demonstrate a good understanding of the key concepts of mimesis, narrative, symbol, metaphor and allegory, and some of the twentieth-century critical discourses surrounding these concepts;
- Understand these key concepts as having emerged from specific national critical traditions as well as from transnational exchanges in literary studies.

Discipline-specific skills:

At the end of this module students will be able to:

- Explain in clear prose the meanings of the key concepts of mimesis, narrative, symbol, metaphor and allegory;
- Apply these key concepts to works of literature in written essays.

Personal development:

At the end of this module students will be able to:

- Engage in verbal literary analysis at a high conceptual level through the critical deployment of the concepts of mimesis, narrative, symbol, metaphor and allegory;
- Write clear works of literary analysis through the deployment of these concepts and the theoretical discourses surrounding them.

General intellectual attributes:

At the end of this module students will be able to:

- Reflect upon the development of twentieth-century literary studies through an historical understanding of some of its key concepts;
- Reflect upon the uses and the limits of theory in literary analysis.

MODULE SCHEDULE

INTRODUCTION

Week 1: Introduction
Reading: T.S. Eliot, "The Function of Criticism" (1923)

BLOCK ONE: MIMESIS

Week 2: Classical and Romantic Theories of Mimesis
Reading: Selections from M.H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp* (1971)

Week 3: Mimesis, Society and De-Familiarization
Reading: Viktor Shklovsky "Art as Technique" (1917)

BLOCK TWO: NARRATIVE

Week 4: Structuralist Approaches to Narrative
Reading: Roland Barthes, "Introduction to the Structuralist Analysis of Narrative" (1966)

Week 5: Narrative, Psychoanalysis and Subjectivity
Reading: Harold Bloom, "The Internalization of Quest Romance" (1968)

BLOCK THREE: SYMBOL

Week 6: Verbal Symbolism
Reading: Selections from Tzvetan Todorov, *Symbolism and Interpretation* (1973)

Week 7: READING WEEK

Week 8: Symbolic Action
Reading: Kenneth Burke, "Symbolic Action in a Poem by Keats" (1945)

BLOCK FOUR: METAPHOR

Week 9: Metaphor and Cognition
Reading: Selections from Hans Blumenberg, *Paradigms for a Metaphorology* (1960)

Week 10: Metaphor and Life
Reading: Selections from Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor* (1975)

BLOCK FIVE: ALLEGORY

Week 11: Allegory, Distance and Death

Reading: Walter Benjamin, Selections from *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (1928)

Week 12: Allegory and Symbol Compared

Reading: Paul De Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality" (1971)

SET TEXTS/PRIMARY READING

- Abrams, Meyer Howard. *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1971.
- Auerbach, Erich. *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*. Trans. Willard R. Trask. 1946; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003.
- Barthes, Roland. *Image, Music, Text*. Ed. and trans. Stephen Heath. London: Fontana, 1977.
- Benjamin, Walter. *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*. Trans. John Osborne. 1928; London: Verso, 1998.
- Bloom, Harold. *The Ringers in the Tower: Studies in Romantic Tradition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971.
- Blumenberg, Hans. *Paradigms for a Metaphorology*. Trans. Robert Savage. 1960; Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010.
- Burke, Kenneth. *A Grammar of Motives*. 1945; Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1969.
- De Man, Paul. *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1971.
- Eliot, Thomas Stearns. "The Function of Criticism". In: *Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot*. Ed. Frank Kermode. London: Faber and Faber, 1975, pp. 68-76.
- Ricoeur, Paul. *The Rule of Metaphor: The Creation of Meaning in Language*. Trans. Robert Czerny, Kathleen McLaughlin and John Costello. 1977; London: Routledge, 2003.
- Shklovsky, Viktor. "Art as 'Technique'". In: *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*. Ed. and Trans. Lee T. Lemon, and Marion J. Reis. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1965, pp.3-24.
- Todorov, Tzvetan. *Symbolism and Interpretation*. Trans. Catherine Porter. 1973; Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982.

FURTHER READING

- Abrams, Meyer Howard. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. 9th Ed. Boston, MA: Wadsworth, 2009.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. "Epic and Novel". In: *The Dialogic Imagination*. Ed. and trans. Michael Holquist and Caryl Emerson. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981, pp. 3-40.
- Groden, Michael, Martin Kreiswirth and Imre Szeman, Eds. *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism*. 2nd Ed. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005.
- Lemon, Lee T. and Marion J. Reis, Ed. and Trans. *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1965.
- Lodge, David and Nigel Wood, Eds. *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*. 3rd Ed. New York: Pearson / Longman, 2008.
- Lotman, Yurii. *The Structure of the Artistic Text*. Trans. Ronald Vroon. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, 1977.
- Preminger, Alex and T.V.F. Brogan, Eds. *The New Princeton Encyclopaedia of Poetry and Poetics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993.
- Rivkin, Julie and Michael Ryan, Eds. *Literary Theory: An Anthology*. 2nd Ed. Oxford: Blackwell, 2004.
- Wellek, René. *Concepts of Criticism*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1963.

Last modified: 30 June 2010