

Masters Program in Literature, Program-specific Course 1.
Introduction to Literary Interpretation (LVAK01) (Autumn 2017)

Instructors: Paul Schreiber (coordinator) and **Irina Rasmussen**

This course is coordinated by the Department of Culture and Aesthetics. The Department of English gives a series of seminars for the course in English, alongside a lecture series organised by the Department of Culture and Aesthetic. Detailed schedule is available on www.english.su.se

There may be some adjustments to the below readings before the start of the course.

Mon. 28 Aug	Introduction (Paul Schreiber)
Seminar 1 September 6, 14:00-16:00, F339	“The Mirror and the Lamp: Classical Visions of Interpretation” (Schreiber) Readings: Introduction to Theory and Criticism (Norton Anth.1-33) Plato: <i>Republic</i> Books II, III, VII, Aristotle: <i>Poetics</i> Kant: <i>Critique of Judgment</i> * (optional) Schleiermacher: <i>Hermeneutics</i> Shakespeare: <i>Macbeth</i>
Seminar 2 September 20 14:00-16:00, F363	“Places of Meaning in the 20th century debate” (Schreiber) Readings: Freud: from <i>The Interpretation of Dreams</i> , “The Uncanny” Eliot: “Tradition and the Individual Talent” Wimsatt and Beardsley: “The Intentional Fallacy,” “Affective Fallacy” Jauss: “Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory” de Man: “Semiology and Rhetoric” Barthes: “The Death of the Author”
Seminar 3 October 4 10:00-12:00, F339	“The Particular Problem of Poetry” (Schreiber) Readings: Plato: <i>Republic</i> Book X Horace: <i>Ars Poetica</i> Sidney: “The Defence of Poesy”* (optional) Pope: “An Essay on Criticism”* (optional) Wordsworth: “Preface to <i>Lyrical Ballads</i> ” Shelley: “A Defence of Poetry” Poe: “The Philosophy of Composition” Mallarmé: “Crisis in Poetry” Derrida: “Letter to a Japanese Friend” (handout)
Submission October 8	Deadline First Assignment (before midnight, submit on Mondo under “assignments”)/PS
Seminar 4 October 11, 15:00-17:00, F320	“Aesthetic Theories and Interpretation” (Rasmussen) Readings: Baudelaire: “The Painter of Modern Life” (Norton)

	<p>Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological reproducibility"</p> <p>Wiseman: "Levi-Strauss, Caduveo Body Painting and Readymade: Thinking Borderlines" (handout)</p> <p>Fried: "Art and Objecthood" (handout)</p>
<p>Seminar 5 October 18, 13:00-15:00, F339</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">"Critical Theories and Interpretation" (Rasmussen)</p> <p>Readings: Foucault: "What is an author?" (Norton) Moretti: <i>Graphs, Maps, and Trees</i> (Norton) Frow, "A Pebble, a Camera, a Man Who Turns into a Telegraph Pole" (handout) Latour: "Why Has Critique Run out of Steam?" (Norton) Foster: "Post-Critical" (handout)</p>
<p>Seminar 6 October 25 13:00-15:00, F363</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">"Narrative Theories and Interpretation" (Rasmussen)</p> <p>Readings: Auerbach: "Odysseus' Scar" (Norton) Moretti: "Serious Century" from <i>The Novel</i> v.1 (handout) Bratu Hansen, "The Mass Production of the Senses" (handout) Hebdige, "Subculture: The Meaning of Style" (Norton)</p>
<p>November 6</p>	<p>Deadline Second Assignment (before midnight, submit on Mondo under "assignments")/IR</p>
	<p>Conclusion and Segway (Schreiber)</p>

Course description

This course introduces the long tradition of textual interpretation and interpretive theories within literary studies. Key concepts are studied within the history of literary criticism from Plato on down: from mimesis to morality, from poetic genre to degeneracy. The limits of literary interpretation are explored in relation to other forms of interpretation; authorial intentionality, the historicity of interpretation and interpretive validity are covered. The course is designed to increase the student's knowledge in these areas, as well as raise awareness of the ongoing and persistent debates about interpretational authority.

Course Literature

Literary texts

Shorter primary texts will be assigned.

Critical texts

Most of the readings are taken from *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism 2nd Edition*, Leitch, Vincent, et al., eds. New York: Norton, 2010.
Shakespeare: *Macbeth* (any edition)

Other readings may be given as handouts.

Course aims

At the end of the course, students should

- have acquired a broad knowledge about, and understanding of, different concepts and problems in interpretive theory, as represented by the readings for the course.
- have acquired a critical perspective on the nature of textual interpretation and its conflicting positions and values.
- have the ability to interpret literary texts with an awareness of the kinds of limits, pressures and foundational assumptions that are in place in those interpretations.
- have developed the ability to present arguments about interpretive positions in written or spoken English, using the appropriate concepts and making the appropriate references.

This is what we aim for. The means for this is conscientious preparation for each seminar, active participation in seminar discussion, focused responses to given assignments, and the independent production of written work.

Course requirements

To achieve the goals of the course, and be given a passing grade, you will be required to

- Attend the seminars. That is, attendance is compulsory. Notify the course coordinator and the seminar instructor **by e-mail** ASAP if for some reason you will be/have been absent. For each seminar you miss you will be given an extra assignment to make up for your absence, but you are only allowed to miss two seminars. If you miss more than two seminars you will automatically fail the course.
- Prepare for the seminars by reading the assigned texts in a critical and active manner. Also prepare by carrying out any other tasks that you have been assigned.
- Participate actively in class discussion. During the seminars every one of us will take part in a discussion that aims at finding and probing the difficult questions that come up when we investigate the nature of literature, interpretation and criticism. Come well prepared and be ready to contribute to constructive and critical exchanges. Since at each seminar you will communicate your main findings and questions to others, it is important to be prepared for this task.
- Complete at least one written assignment per instructor covering the three seminar readings by that instructor. Topics and parameters will be assigned separately by each instructor. Usually these written assignments will be 1400-2000 words of formally organized and developed critical arguments.
- Your performance will be assessed according to the following distribution: written assignments (70%), seminar work (30%).

Contact info

Course coordinator: Paul Schreiber; Office: E848

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Assessment and assessment criteria

You will be continually assessed according to your performance in class, and according to the quality of your submitted assignments. Your grade for the course will be averaged between all of the assignments as they are judged by the three instructors in the course.

OUTSTANDING

For a grade of **A** the student should ...

- Display wide-ranging knowledge of the themes and concepts covered by the course material and seminar presentations as well as a profound familiarity with the texts we have read.
- Show the ability, in written work and in active class discussion, to critically analyze theoretical arguments and literary works in a manner that is on occasion innovative and often illuminating, consistently deploying appropriate critical concepts in an elegant way.
- Present his/her arguments in a persuasive and coherent manner, in correct, fluent and idiomatic English, in a consistently academic style of writing and spoken delivery.

EXCELLENT

For a grade of **B** the student should ...

- display a broad knowledge of the themes and concepts covered by the course material and seminar presentations as well as an solid familiarity with the texts we have read.
- show the ability, in written work and in class discussion, to critically analyze theoretical arguments and literary works in a manner that is on occasion illuminating, with frequent and correct use of appropriate critical concepts.
- present arguments in a solid and coherent manner, in correct and fluent English, in an academic style of writing and in an acceptably formal register of spoken delivery

GOOD

For a grade of **C** the student should ...

- display considerable knowledge of most of the themes and concepts covered by the course material and seminar presentations as well as an adequate familiarity with the texts we have read.
- show the ability, in written work and in class discussion, to critically analyze theoretical arguments and literary works, with at least occasional and correct use of appropriate critical concepts.
- present arguments in a coherent manner, in adequate English with only minor errors, with only some lapses from an academic style of writing and with a correct and fluent spoken delivery

SATISFACTORY

For a grade of **D** the student should ...

- display basic knowledge of most of the themes and concepts covered by the course material and seminar presentations as well as some familiarity with the texts we have read.
- show the ability, in written work and in class discussion, to critically analyze literary works and theoretical arguments, with some, basic use of appropriate critical concepts.
- present his/her arguments in a largely coherent manner, in adequate English with only minor errors, in a consistent, formal register of writing and with a largely correct and fluent spoken delivery

ADEQUATE

For a grade of **E** the student should ...

- display basic knowledge of some of the themes and concepts covered by the course material and seminar presentations as well as a basic knowledge of some of the elements of plots, characters, settings and narrative structure in most of the texts we have read.
- show some ability, in written work and in class discussion, to critically analyze literary works and theoretical arguments, with at least a minimal employment of technical terms.
- present his/her arguments in an intelligible manner, in adequate English, in a largely formal register of written or spoken delivery, with some fluency and few errors.

INADEQUATE

A grade of **F** will be set if the student

- fails the attendance requirements or fails to hand in assignments in time.
- shows scant or no knowledge of the themes and concepts covered by the course material and seminar presentations; likewise shows very little or no familiarity with the texts we have read.
- fails to reach a satisfactory level of critical analysis in written assignments and in class discussion, a failure that includes inability to properly use critical concepts.
- fails to communicate adequately in English, with many errors and no sense of stylistic register.

Any of these failures is enough for an overall fail.

INCOMPLETE

The **Fx** grade is set if the student has reached most of the Learning outcomes of the course, but must hand in revised or supplementary material in order to fully meet the requirements.