

# Introduction to Literary Criticism Section 01

## ENGL 101

Spring 2025 Hybrid 4 Unit(s) 01/23/2025 to 05/12/2025 Modified 01/23/2025

### Contact Information

---

Instructor:	Dr. Maite Urcalegui (she/they)
Email:	maite.urcalegui@sjsu.edu
Office Location:	Faculty Offices Building (FOB) 216
Office Hours Information:	In-person T/Th 4:30-5:30  On <a href="https://sjsu.zoom.us/j/84765764961?pwd=MkFXSTVhb0d3alF2NXZ1Tm9XZEZKUT09">Zoom</a> ( <a href="https://sjsu.zoom.us/j/84765764961?pwd=MkFXSTVhb0d3alF2NXZ1Tm9XZEZKUT09">https://sjsu.zoom.us/j/84765764961?pwd=MkFXSTVhb0d3alF2NXZ1Tm9XZEZKUT09</a> ) by appointment
Class Day, Time, & Location:	T/Th 1:30-2:45 p.m.  Sweeney Hall 229

### Course Information

---

**English 101: Introduction to Literary Criticism** is the study and application of literary theory and criticism from the 20th and 21st centuries. Throughout this course, we will explore key movements of literary theory, how they have developed over time, and how they shape the study of literature. We will practice using literary theory and criticism as frameworks that inform our interpretations of literature, art and other media, and our own lives. In particular, we will explore theory as a critical framework that draws attention to and critiques "commonsense" values and assumptions (both in the study of literature and in society in general) that often uphold and invisibilize structural power dynamics and inequalities, or the status quo. Because theory, by nature, is fundamentally interdisciplinary (it draws on multiple areas of study) and challenges taken-for-granted ways of thinking, it can be very difficult to read. However, it can also empower us to become more self-aware and active participants in reading, knowledge creation, and our world. By reading and discussing these different and difficult theoretical perspectives, we will further hone our close reading, critical thinking, and analytical writing skills in order to participate in and contribute to ongoing conversations within literary studies and beyond.

# Course Description and Requisites

---

Study and application of various historical and contemporary approaches, including foundational twentieth-century theory as well as contemporary approaches. Applications of critical models to various literary, visual, and digital texts.

Prerequisite(s): ENGL 100W.

Letter Graded

## \* Classroom Protocols

---

### Attendance

While attendance is not and cannot be graded per [University Policy F15-12](https://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F15-12.pdf) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F15-12.pdf>), regular attendance is vital to your learning and success in the course. I encourage you to attend as regularly as possible. We don't want to miss out on the opportunity to learn from/with you! If you are sick, or are unable to make it to class for whatever reason, you can catch up on the material you missed on our course Canvas page, via a friend/peer, and/or in my office hours or by appointment.

### Preparation & Participation

We all have a responsibility and an opportunity to be an active participant in our own learning and to contribute to knowledge that we'll create together in this class! Please come prepared to do so. This means that you've completed the assigned reading for the day in advance of class; you have access to those readings during our class discussion; and you have basic materials like pen/pencil, paper, and a device if you would like or are requested.

### Devices

You are welcome to use larger devices like an tablet or laptop for class-specific activities, but please refrain from using your cell phone. I do ask that you be present and help create a respectful and distraction-free class by using your devices for class work only during our time together.

### Engaging in Class Discussion & Building Community

By nature, theory asks us to reconsider seemingly "commonsense" ways of thinking that often uphold unequal power dynamics. Because of this, it is very challenging and asks us to grapple with challenging issues around language, power, identity, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, coloniality, and class. I encourage you to engage in these discussions to the degree you feel comfortable, to connect what we read to your own life and to the world around you, and to listen to and learn from your peers with respect and care. We will continue to discuss our collective goals around engaging in class discussion and building community throughout the semester, but here are some foundational considerations:

- We can disagree and challenge each other's thinking and ideas in a civil, respectful, and productive way as long as that disagreement is not predicated on hate speech, disinformation, or exclusion.
- We will not use sexist, racist, homophobic, transphobic, ableist and other marginalizing language. If harmful language is used in class, we will address it together as a learning moment to the extent it is appropriate and safe to do so. Intentionally violent and exclusionary language (i.e., slurs of any kind), however, will not be tolerated.
- Close attention to the language that we read, write, and use is a necessary component of reading and thinking like a literary scholar, which we all are when we enter this classroom. Please be mindful of the language you use, and we will continue to work together to unpack the relationship between and among language, identity, and power.

### **Course Communication & Emails**

All course materials can be found on [Canvas Learning Management System course login website](#). Please check both our course Canvas and your email regularly to stay up to date. For help with using Canvas see [Canvas Student Resources page](#).

Please be aware that I do not respond to emails outside of traditional business hours, M-F 9-5. I encourage you to also maintain professional boundaries around email and step away from it when you can/need. Unless it is a weekend or I am sick or away for travel, I should respond to your message within 48 hours. If you worry that I haven't seen or responded to your email, please do not hesitate to send me a follow up. I would appreciate it in fact!

When you email me, I'd appreciate it if you included a specific subject that states the purpose of your email as well as a greeting, message, and your name.

### **Academic Originality, Honesty, and AI**

The literature we will be reading and discussing is so, so good, and it explores narratives and experiences that are often ignored, distorted, or marginalized. I want you to do justice to that literature by seriously engaging with it and developing your own original analysis of it. While you are welcome to collaborate with resources like Grammarly to edit your work, you should also ensure that you do your own round of editing to not only catch what those virtual tools might have missed but also to develop your own editorial eye. You should not at any stage of your process use generative AI (ChatGPT, Google Gemini, Claude, Meta AI, etc.) to generate ideas, outlines/writing structures, or language/sentences. If for whatever reason you decide to ignore this and use AI, you must properly cite and credit the information, ideas, and language that you pulled. The model that AI like ChatGPT uses to generate material is fundamentally derivative and is also known to be inaccurate/incomplete and to reproduce misinformation, biases, and stereotypes. I want to hear your original ideas, arguments, and writing that can only be achieved by engaging with the texts we're reading and the writing process! Additionally, we want to make sure that the scholars and authors whose ideas we engage with are properly cited and credited to not only credit their labor/talents/insights but also to build our own credibility as an writer.

You should also be aware of SJSU's [Academic Integrity Policy](#), and know that, as a faculty member, I am required to report all violations of this policy to the Office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. If I suspect that you have plagiarized material or generated content with AI, I will not grade your work and will

contact both you and the Office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development regarding future steps.

Please visit the [Student Conduct and Ethical Development](#) website for more information on academic integrity. It is your responsibility to know what plagiarism is, how to avoid it, and how to properly cite all sources.

## Program Information

---

The following statement has been adopted by the Department of English for inclusion in all syllabi: In English Department Courses, instructors will comment on and grade the quality of student writing as well as the quality of ideas being conveyed. All student writing should be distinguished by correct grammar and punctuation, appropriate diction and syntax, and well-organized paragraphs. The Department of English reaffirms its commitment to the differential grading scale as defined in the SJSU Catalog ("The Grading System").

Grades issued must represent a full range of student performance:

- A = excellent;
- B = above average;
- C = average;
- D = below average;
- F = failure.

Within any of the letter grade ranges (e.g. B+/B/B-), the assignment of a +(plus) or -(minus) grade will reflect stronger (+) or weaker (-) completion of the goals of the assignment.

### Program Learning Outcomes (PLO)

Upon successful completion of an undergraduate degree program in the Department of English and Comparative Literature, students will be able to:

1. Read closely in a variety of forms, styles, structures, and modes, and articulate the value of close reading in the study of literature, creative writing, or rhetoric.
2. Show familiarity with major literary works, genres, periods, and critical approaches to British, American, and World Literature.
3. Write clearly, effectively, and creatively, and adjust writing style appropriately to the content, the context, and nature of the subject.
4. Develop and carry out research projects, and locate, evaluate, organize, and incorporate information effectively.
5. Articulate the relations among culture, history, and texts, including structures of power.

---

### Department Information:

**Department Name:** English and Comparative Literature

**Department Office:** FO 102

**Department Website:** [www.sjsu.edu/english](http://www.sjsu.edu/english) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/english>)

Department email: [english@sjsu.edu](mailto:english@sjsu.edu) (<mailto:english@sjsu.edu>)

Department phone number: 408-924-4425

## Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

---

Upon successful completion of English 101 you will be able to:

- 1. Identify, trace, and discuss key movements and methodologies within literary theory. Recognize how these ways of thinking emerge from specific historical and cultural contexts and positionalities.**
  1. You will explore prominent theoretical movements from the twentieth and twenty-first century as well as the ways that they respond to and build on one another while also articulating their distinct values and approaches (Discussion Posts & Theory-In-Action Assignment).
- 2. Apply these methodologies to literary texts and other forms of media as you develop and practice your close reading skills.**
  1. You will use theory as a framework, or methodology, through which to engage in textual analysis and, likewise, you will explore the way that works of art and literature theorize in their own right (All class activities and major assignments).
- 3. Use literary theory and criticism to develop original interpretations and participate in ongoing conversations within Literary Study and beyond.**
  1. You will familiarize yourself with the ever-evolving discourses of particular theoretical schools and will conduct your own research and analysis to contribute to these discussions (Close Reading Paper and Final Project).
- 4. Practice writing and researching across genres and forms within the discipline with a particular audience and purpose in mind.**
  1. You will explore the value of theory not only to literature but also to other forms of art and media and to our lived experiences. You will then practice sharing your insights across different forms of writing, including public-facing writing, such as op-eds or blog posts, and more traditional scholarly formats, such as the annotated bibliography or analytical paper (all writing assignments with particular emphasis on Theory-In-Action Assignment).

### A Note on the 1-Unit Enhancement

Because this is a 4-unit course, students can expect to spend a minimum of twelve hours per week preparing for and attending classes and completing course assignments. This course will have integrated into the syllabus the following 1-unit enhancement: Higher Level Critical Thinking.

## Course Materials

---

### Major Course Texts

You are required to get access to the following texts, both of which are available at the SJSU Bookstore. If you are able, I encourage you to rent or purchase a print copy that you bring with you to class.

- [The Norton Critical Edition of F. Scott Fitzgerald's \*The Great Gatsby\*, edited by David Alworth](https://www.norton.com/books/9780393656596) (<https://www.norton.com/books/9780393656596>)

- [Any edition of Lois Tyson's \*Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide\* \(<https://www.routledge.com/Critical-Theory-Today-A-User-Friendly-Guide/Tyson/p/book/9780367709426?srsId=AfmBOoq86FBLuqqKEq8VIXy9vs64sQV0dBidbBYG2Or7H3wTcazDkAkV>\)](https://www.routledge.com/Critical-Theory-Today-A-User-Friendly-Guide/Tyson/p/book/9780367709426?srsId=AfmBOoq86FBLuqqKEq8VIXy9vs64sQV0dBidbBYG2Or7H3wTcazDkAkV)

All other course readings will be available on Canvas.

### English Department Library Liaison

You may contact Peggy Cabrera ([peggy.cabrera@sjsu.edu](mailto:peggy.cabrera@sjsu.edu)) if you would like additional research support for your writing assignments in this course, or if you're interested in learning more about pursuing a career in library science.

## Course Requirements and Assignments

---

All assignment instructions and grading criteria will be discussed in class and posted on Canvas prior to the deadline.

### Participation (15%)

I encourage you to participate in class discussion not only by sharing your thoughts and asking questions but also by actively listening and creating space for others to share. I understand, however, that we all process knowledge in different ways and that our level of comfort participating in the classroom may be influenced by our own relationships to power and privilege and by our educational experiences. Every day students will be asked to participate in a short introductory assignment that will fulfill their participation for the day. *Participation assignments will not be excused unless there is an emergency or extenuating circumstance that you communicate with me. However, each student's lowest three participation grades will automatically be dropped.*

### Discussion Posts (4 total; 20%)

In these discussion posts, you will select a theoretical movement and describe the central claims and concepts of that theory by drawing on relevant course readings. You will also practice applying that theory to analyze literature. Finally, you will respond to two of your peers' work.

### Theory-In-Action Assignment (20%)

You will select a theory of your choice and explore its significance not only to Literary Study but also to the way we see and know the world. You will explore these ideas in a public-facing genre of your choice (an op-ed piece; a comic, zine, or infographic pamphlet; or short educational video for either teaching or social media). Your work should emphasize the practical significance and uses of your chosen theory.

### Close Reading Practice + Paper (25%)

In the close reading practice, you will develop a tentative research question, argument, and a draft of a body paragraph to begin brainstorming ideas and getting feedback. You will then use that feedback to develop your final paper. In your paper, you will draw on relevant theory and criticism to develop an original

argument about F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* that you will support with textual evidence and close reading and analysis. This series of scaffolded assignments allows you to engage in writing as a *process* and offers a space for you to practice using theory, criticism, and close reading to analyze literature.

### Final Project (20%)

For your final project, you will have the opportunity to showcase your knowledge and application of literary theory and criticism through one of two options: (1) an argumentative paper on a text of your choice that draws on theory to develop an interpretive framework or (2) a semi-reflective, semi-argumentative synthesis that puts multiple theories in conversation with one another.

## ✓ Grading Information

---

### Grading Breakdown

Participation 15%

Discussion Posts (4 total) 20%

Close Reading Practice + Paper 20%

Theory-in-Action Assignment 20%

Final Project 25%

### Extensions & Late Work

I am willing to work with you if you anticipate that you may need extra time to submit your best work in an assignment. In order to avoid last-minute stress, please email me in advance of an assignment deadline to discuss an extension. If an emergency or other extenuating circumstance arises that makes this impossible, please contact me, and we can work out a solution. If late work is submitted, it will be graded at my discretion and may receive a deduction.

## University Policies

---

Per [University Policy S16-9 \(PDF\)](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on the [Syllabus Information](https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php>) web page. Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

## Course Schedule

---

Please note that this schedule, including specific readings and assignment deadlines, are subject to change to meet the needs of the class. Additional work will never be assigned, however, and all changes will be communicated in advance.

When	Topic	Notes
Week 1: Jan. 23	Course Introductions	Thursday 1/23 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Course Introductions</li> </ul>
Week 2: Jan. 28 & 30	What is Literary Theory?	Tuesday 1/28 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jonathan Culler's "What is literature and does it matter?" from <i>Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction</i></li> <li>• Come prepared to discuss a work of literature that is meaningful to you and why (~1-2 min.)</li> </ul> Thursday 1/30 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jonathan Culler's "What is theory?" from <i>Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction</i></li> <li>• Lois Tyson "Everything you wanted to know about critical theory but were afraid to ask" from <i>Critical Theory Today</i> pp. 1-10</li> </ul>
Week 3: Feb. 4 & 6	(Re)reading <i>The Great Gatsby</i>	Tuesday 2/4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• David J. Alworth's "Introduction" pp. xv-xxxv</li> <li>• F. Scott Fitzgerald's <i>The Great Gatsby</i> Ch. I &amp; II pp. 3-28</li> </ul> Thursday 2/6 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• F. Scott Fitzgerald's <i>The Great Gatsby</i> Ch. III-V pp. 28-64</li> </ul> Friday 2/7 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion Post #1 due by 11:59 p.m.</li> <li>• Comment on two peers' post before next class</li> </ul>
Week 4: Feb. 11 & 13	Concluding <i>The Great Gatsby</i> & Introduction to New Criticism	Tuesday 2/11 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finish F. Scott Fitzgerald's <i>The Great Gatsby</i> Ch. VI-IX pp. 64-117</li> <li>• Barbara Will's "Reading <i>The Great Gatsby</i> in Uncertain Times"</li> </ul> Thursday 2/13 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lois Tyson's "New Criticism" from <i>Critical Theory Today</i> pp. 129-157</li> </ul>



When	Topic	Notes
Week 5: Feb. 18 & 20	New Criticism/Formalism	<p>Tuesday 2/18</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cleanth Brooks' "The Formalist Critics"</li> <li>Excerpt from W. K. Wimsatt and M. C. Beardsley's "The Intentional Fallacy" pp. 468-471</li> </ul> <p>Thursday 2/20</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dan Coleman's "A World Complete in Itself: <i>Gatsby's</i> Elegiac Narration" from The Norton Critical Edition of <i>The Great Gatsby</i></li> <li>*Optional Reading* Todd F. Davis &amp; Kenneth Womack's "Travelling through the Valley of Ashes: Symbolic Unity in F. Scott Fitzgerald's <i>The Great Gatsby</i>" from <i>Formalist Criticism and Reader-Response Theory</i> pp. 93-106</li> </ul>
Week 6: Feb. 25 & 27	New Historical & Cultural Criticism	<p>Tuesday 2/25</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lois Tyson "New Historical and Cultural Criticism" from <i>Critical Theory Today</i> pp. 267-297</li> <li>*Optional Reading* Jonathan Culler's "Literature and Cultural Studies" from <i>Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction</i></li> </ul> <p>Thursday 2/27</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Joseph Vogel's "'Civilization's Going to Pieces': <i>The Great Gatsby</i>, Identity, and Race, from the Jazz Age to the Obama Era" from The Norton Critical Edition of <i>The Great Gatsby</i></li> </ul> <p>Friday 2/28</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Close Reading Paper due by 11:59 p.m. via Canvas</b></li> </ul>
Week 7: March 4 & 6	Psychoanalytic Criticism	<p>Tuesday 3/4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lois Tyson's "Psychoanalytic Criticism" from <i>Critical Theory Today</i> pp. 1-48</li> </ul> <p>Thursday 3/6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sigmund Freud's "Creative Writers and Daydreaming"</li> </ul>
Week 8: March 11 & 13	Marxist Criticism	<p>Tuesday 3/11</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lois Tyson's "Marxist Criticism" from <i>Critical Theory Today</i> pp. 51-76</li> </ul> <p>Thursday 3/13</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Karl Marx "Wage Labor and Capital" from <i>Literary Theory: An Anthology</i> pp. 665-</li> </ul>

When	Topic	Notes
Week 9: March 18 & 20	Marxist Criticism	<p>Tuesday 3/18</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Andrew Newman's "High School and 'The <i>Great Gatsby</i> Curve'" in The Norton Critical Edition of <i>The Great Gatsby</i></li> </ul> <p>Thursday 3/20</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No in-class meeting.</li> <li>Submit Discussion Post #2 by 11:59 p.m.</li> <li>Comment on two peers' posts before next class.</li> </ul>
Week 10: March 25 & 27	Feminist Criticism	<p>Tuesday 3/25</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lois Tyson's "Feminist Criticism" from <i>Critical Theory Today</i> pp. 79-125</li> </ul> <p>Thursday 3/27</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Judith Butler's "Performative Acts of Gender Constitution" from <i>Literary Theory: An Anthology</i></li> </ul>
March 31- April 4	Spring Break	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rest and relax!</li> </ul>
Week 11: April 8 & 10	Feminist Criticism	<p>Tuesday 4/8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Frances Kerr's "Feeling 'Half Feminine': Modernism and the Politics of Emotion in <i>The Great Gatsby</i>"</li> </ul> <p>Thursday 4/10</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No in-class meeting. Work on Theory-in-Action Assignment</li> <li>Theory-in-Action Assignment due by 11:59 p.m. via Canvas.</li> </ul>
Week 12: April 15 & 17	LGBTQ+ Criticism	<p>Tuesday 4/15</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lois Tyson's "Lesbian, Gay, and Queer Criticism" from <i>Critical Theory Today</i> pp. 302-339</li> </ul> <p>Thursday 4/17</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Myra Hird's "Naturally Queer" from <i>Literary Theory: An Anthology</i></li> </ul> <p>Friday 4/18</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discussion Post #3 due by 11:59 p.m.</li> <li>Comment on two peers' post before next class</li> </ul>

When	Topic	Notes
Week 13: April 22 & 24	Critical Race Theory	<p>Tuesday 4/22</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lois Tyson's "African American Criticism" from <i>Critical Theory Today</i></li> </ul> <p>Thursday 4/24</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meredith Goldsmith's "White Skin, White Mask: Passing, Posing, and Performing in <i>The Great Gatsby</i>" from The Norton Critical Edition of <i>The Great Gatsby</i></li> </ul>
Week 14: April 29 & May 1	Postcolonial Criticism	<p>Tuesday 4/29</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lois Tyson's "Postcolonial Criticism" from <i>Critical Theory Today</i> pp. 398-440</li> </ul> <p>Thursday 5/1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism"</li> </ul> <p>Friday 5/2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discussion Post #4 due by 11:59 p.m.</li> <li>Comment on two peers' post before next class</li> </ul>
Week 15: May 6 & 8	Course Reflections & Evaluations	<p>Tuesday 5/6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Final Project Workshop</li> </ul> <p>Thursday 5/8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Course Reflections &amp; Evaluations</li> </ul>
Finals: May 20		<p>Tuesday 5/20 1-3 p.m.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will be meeting as a class for the final although there is no final exam.</li> <li>Final projects due before start of class</li> </ul>