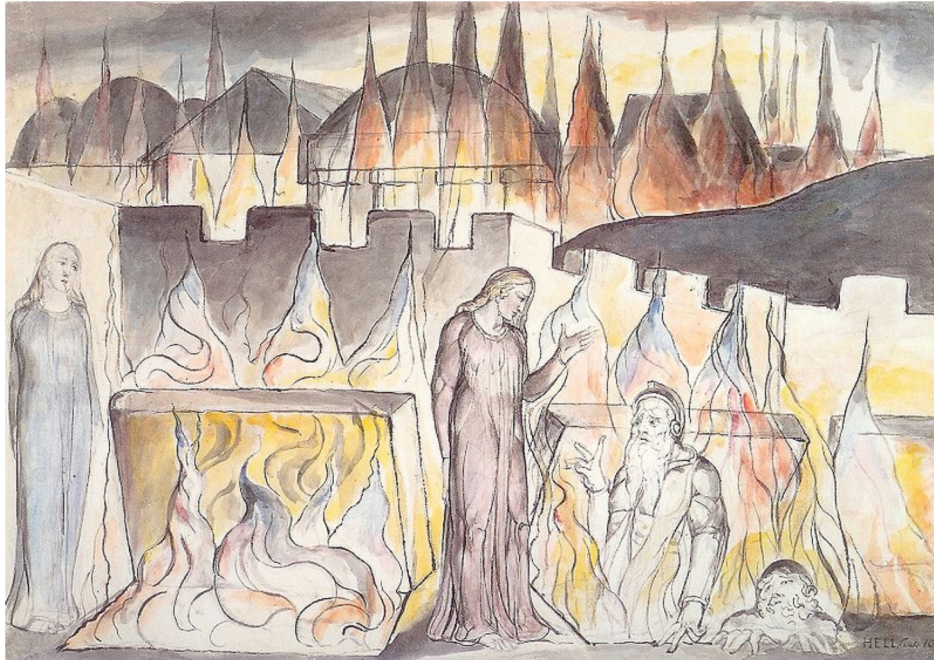


ENG 3011, Section 07A4

The Theorists

What Hurts: The Historicist Theorists



Professor Phillip Wegner

Tuesday 5-6 (11:45 a.m.-1:40 p.m.); Thursday 6 (12:50-1:40 p.m.)
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In one of the most significant works of literary theory published in the twentieth century, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (1981), the

U.S. scholar Fredric Jameson opens his book by declaring that its "moral," and even "the one absolute and we even say 'transhistorical' imperative of all dialectical thought" will be "Always historicize!" What Jameson means by this slogan—that is, what does it mean to always historicize, or to think literature historically?—will be at the center of our concerns in this course, as we read works from the great historicist literary critics and theorists from the half century leading up to Jameson's book and following in the last thirty years in its wake. Historicist approaches are at the heart of a diverse range of traditions of literary theory, including Marxism, historical materialism, philology, New Historicism, feminism and queer theory, postcolonial criticism, and globalization studies, and we will touch on many of these in our readings this semester. As you shall discover, historicism remains a vital tradition of contemporary literary scholarship, both here at UF and beyond, and one of our most important tools for thinking about and intervening in our increasingly global world.

Readings

Georg Lukács, *The Historical Novel* (1937)

Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (1940/1965)

Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: the Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (1946)

Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (1973)

Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (1977)

Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (1981)

Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism* (2000)

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990)

Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (1993)

Nancy Armstrong, *How Novels Think: The Limits of Individualism 1719-1900* (2006)

Franco Moretti, *Distant Reading* (2013)

I believe pagination is standard across all editions of these books, so any used copies should be fine. However, there is some additional material in the later editions of Auerbach and Sedgwick, and if you do not have these let me know. Please note that while electronic editions are also permitted, you will be expected to have the readings physically present in class for each meeting they will be discussed, and will be required to refer to, read from, and discuss specific passages during the class meeting. Any supplemental readings will be made available on Sakai or in other forms.

Aims and Methods

1. One of the central aims of this course is to expand your intellectual horizons to encompass new critical approaches and new questions. However, for such a journey to have any meaning, you first need an intellectual home, a disciplinary base, from which to begin. This means there are some basic requirements for participation in this course. This is an *upper-division* English major course, and thus assumes you

have completed, at least, the requirements for a lower-division composition *and* English major courses. During the semester, you will be asked to demonstrate, in both your oral *and* written contributions to the class, proficiency in the kinds of critical and analytical skills expected of advanced literary and cultural studies majors. While it will be a plus to have previously completed ENG 3010, The Theory and Practice of Modern Criticism, it is not a prerequisite for enrolling in the course; and while some understanding of the study of history will also be beneficial, history courses are similarly not prerequisites. The readings themselves are drawn from a range of different intellectual and national traditions. They are extensive and sometimes difficult. You will be expected to keep up with them, and to respond to them in a variety of oral and written forms. Finally, I require on the part of each and every student an open-mind and a willingness to carefully and seriously engage with the ideas we will be discussing, even (and indeed especially) when they challenge pre-established assumptions and expectations that we bring to the study of literature. If you have any questions about whether this course is right for you, please come and speak with me soon.

2. Readings should be completed before the class meeting in which they are to be discussed. This means that from the first meeting, you should be reading continuously, getting well ahead of our discussions. Moreover, I do expect lively participation on everyone's part in the class discussion. If conversation lags, expect occasional quizzes or other short in-class writing assignments.

3. Attendance and participation in class discussion are indispensable parts of our work. You will sign a class attendance roster circulated at the beginning of each meeting. It is vitally important that you arrive on time and attend the entire course meeting. If you will have any difficulty in doing so, or have an obligation that will force you to miss, be late, or depart early from any single class meeting, I ask that you come and speak with me. Any non-emergency, non-medical absence, not cleared in advance, will result in a lowering of the final course grade. Moreover, if you miss an excessive number of class hours, whatever the reason, you will have been considered not to have completed the requirements of the course, and hence will not receive a passing grade. Finally, late arrivals and/or early departures from class meetings will be counted as absences.

4. Students may use computers or other electronic platforms for accessing readings and/or taking notes. However, Wi-Fi connections should be turned off unless otherwise instructed, and students are not allowed to surf the web, work on other assignments, read novels, play games, view other pages, or engage in any other such activities during course discussion. Cell phones also should be turned off or silenced as soon as class begins. Violations of this policy will be counted as unexcused absences for that class meeting. If you have any questions about proper use of these devices please come and see me.

5. The first written assignment for the course will be to keep a series of reading notes. These will take a variety of forms during the course of the semester:

sometimes, I will ask you to offer summaries of the argument, highlight what you find to be some of the most interesting points, and raise any questions that you have, referring to specific page numbers in the text. At other times, I will ask you to focus on specific problems—say the definition of a term, a discussion of outside sources or short secondary readings, a comparison of the argument of one theorist with another, a brief application of some of the major ideas in the readings, and so forth. While these notes are intended to be informal in nature and help us focus and develop our discussions, I expect them to demonstrate a rigorous and sustained engagement with the readings: they are neither opportunities for expressing your initial responses to the readings nor self-analysis (expressions of taste or opinion reveal far more about you than the readings themselves). Your reading notes will be collected each week at the beginning of the meeting. Missed or late submissions (including at the end of the meeting in which they are collected) will result in a lowered final course grade. In addition, on occasion, I may ask some of you to share your reading notes, in either written or oral form, with the other members of the class.

5. As I am hoping that our work in this class will be a collective and collaborative endeavor, as the semester gets underway I will divide you into a number of smaller groups (the size of each group will depend upon final course enrollment). The aims of these groups will be two-fold. First, on occasion we may break up into these smaller groups during class time to discuss a specific issue or problem. Secondly, and more importantly, each group will be responsible for being the class "expert" on one or more of the readings (we will assign each group readings in advance). This means that you will spend a little more preparation time with those readings, be expected to raise some specific questions or introduce some particular issues and/or offer a brief introduction, and generally be on call as the go-to people for our discussion. Your engagement during these sessions will be considered as part of your participation grade.

6. The major writing assignment will consist of two formal papers, 6-8 and 7-10 pages in length. Presentation will count toward the grade of the paper: for example, each paper is expected to be double-spaced, with one-inch margins, and in a reasonable 12-point or smaller font, and use a consistent bibliographic and reference format. You will also be required to present specific supporting evidence for your claims, in the form of citations from the work, page numbers included. Each paper will focus on the course readings and will address a set of questions, issues, and themes developed in our discussions. These will be your major opportunity to demonstrate both your skills as an advanced prose writer and your grasp of both the readings and our discussions in class. Approximately two weeks before each paper is due, I will provide you with questions that will help focus your discussion, and you will be required to develop each of your papers in response to them. Any paper that does not meet the basic requirements listed above—including, but not limited to, using a consistent format; meeting at least the minimum length requirement; including specific citations from the readings; and making explicit connections to and engaging specifically with the prompts and class

discussions—will be seen as not fulfilling the assignment, and will be returned for revision and a late grade.

Papers are due on the dates noted; late papers, including any returned to the student for revision, will receive lowered grades, unless other arrangements have been made in advance.

7. No final or midterm examinations.

8. Grades will be based on the conscientious completion of all of the above requirements. I will ask that you sign a brief confirmation note indicating that you have read the syllabus and understand all of these requirements. Please feel free to ask any questions in class or on an individual basis.

9. Finally, communication is crucial to everything we are going to do in the next four months. Thus, if you are unsure about any of the course requirements, or run into any kind of difficulty, academic or otherwise, as the semester progresses, please come and speak with me as soon as you can. I will try to be as accommodating as possible, but I cannot help you if you do not let me know what is going on. Also if you have any general questions, or just feel like continuing the discussion begun in class, I encourage you to drop by during my scheduled office hours, or to make an appointment to see me.

Grading Criteria

Attendance (see above)

Participation: 15%

Reading Journals: 30%

Two formal Essays: 55%

UF Policy Statements

1. The Disability Resource Center in the Dean of Students Office provides information and support regarding accommodations for students with disabilities. For more information, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>

2. UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty. For more about UF policies regarding harassment, see: <http://www.hr.ufl.edu/eo/sexharassment.htm>

3. All students must abide by the Student Honor Code. For more information about academic honesty, including definitions of plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/student-honor-code.aspx>

Tentative Discussion Schedule

1. **August 22 - first meeting**

2. **August 27 - Introduction: What is Historicism?**
Readings: Phillip E. Wegner, ""Detonating New Shockwaves of Possibility: Alternate Histories and the Geopolitical Aesthetics of Ken MacLeod and Iain M. Banks"" (2013), Intro, sections 1 and 2 (Sakai)
 Paul Hamilton, Introduction to *Historicism* (1996)) (Sakai)

August 29 - Introduction: What is Historicism? (continued)
Readings: Edward Said, "Introduction to the Fiftieth Anniversary Edition of *Mimesis*"

3. **September 3 - Erich Auerbach** (Germany, 1892-1957)
Readings: *Mimesis*, with special focus on Chapters 1-3, 8-9

September 5 - NO CLASS

4. **September 10-12 - Auerbach continued**
Readings: *Mimesis*, with special focus on Chapters 17-20

5. **September 17-19 - Mikhail Bakhtin** (Russia, 1895-1975)
Readings: *Rabelais and His World*

6. **September 24-26 - Bakhtin continued**

7. **October 1-3 - Georg Lukács** (Hungary, 1885-1971)
Readings: *The Historical Novel*, Chs. 1-3

8. **October 8-10 - Raymond Williams** (Great Britain, 1921-1988)
Readings: *The Country and the City*; Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, Ch. 2

9. **October 15-17 - Fredric Jameson** (U.S., 1934-)
Readings: *The Political Unconscious*

PAPER #1 Due October 17

10. **October 22-24 - Jameson continued**
11. **October 29-31 - Stephen Greenblatt (U.S., 1943)**
 and Catherine Gallagher (U.S., 1945) -
 Readings: *Practicing New Historicism*
12. **November 5-7- Edward Said (Palestine, 1935-2003)**
 Readings: *Culture and Imperialism*, Chapters 1 and 2
13. **November 12 - Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (U.S., 1950-2009)**
 Readings: *Epistemology of the Closet*
- November 14 - NO CLASS**
14. **November 19-21 - Nancy Armstrong (U.S., 1938)** -
 Readings: *How Novels Think*
15. **November 26 - Franco Moretti (Italy, 1950)** -
 Readings: *Distant Reading*
- November 28 - NO CLASS (Thanksgiving break)**
16. **December 3 - Final Meeting: lingering issues, concluding meditations**
- December 6 - FINAL PAPERS DUE**

