

ENGLISH 7310: CREATIVE CRITICISM

Prof. Deanna Kreisel
Fall 2026
Wednesday 4:00-6:30
Bondurant 112W

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Office Hours: M 12:30-3:30
Or by appointment

Course Description

In this course we will examine, and push against, the boundaries of academic literary criticism, and explore more experimental and creative modes of analyzing and writing about literature. The course will have four “strands” of investigation: 1. the history of literary criticism as genre; 2. examples of literary criticism through the ages; 3. recent creative and experimental interventions; 4. a core group of literary texts we will read together and use to practice creative criticism. Obviously these distinctions are wholly artificial, and many of our readings touch on two, three, or more of these strands. But we will do our best to talk about all of these modes of investigation at each seminar meeting.

Core Literary Texts (*required reading*):

- ⇒ The following books have been stocked for our class (tax-free) at Square Books; please buy them there as they have been kind enough to order them for us:
- Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* [ISBN 0156030411]
 - Nelson, *The Argonauts* [ISBN 1555977359]
 - Auden, *The Sea and the Mirror* [ISBN 0691123845]
 - Sharpe, *Ordinary Notes* [ISBN 9781250872241]
 - Nabokov, *The Annotated Lolita* [ISBN 9780679727293]
 - Sinno, *Sad Tiger* [ISBN 9781644214671]
- ⇒ The following books may be acquired anywhere you like (although it would be nice if you supported Square Books and ordered them there); just make sure to get these editions:
- Forster, *Virginia Woolf: The Rede Lecture* [ISBN 131660683X]
 - Shakespeare, *The Tempest* [ISBN 9781408133477]
 - Césaire, *A Tempest* [ISBN 1840021438]
 - Kramnick, *Criticism and Truth* [ISBN 9780226830537]
- ⇒ Please be sure to acquire these editions, so that we're all (literally) on the same page

Course Readings (*required*):

The bulk of the course readings will be stand-alone articles and book chapters in our [shared course Box folder](#) (Readings / Assigned Readings). Please consult this syllabus for the week's readings; you can locate them more easily in the Box folder by clicking on the “Name” arrow to alphabetize them by last name. **Please bring copies of the readings to class with you:** either printed out, or downloaded to a tablet or e-reader (*not a laptop*—see below).

Course Bibliography and Other Readings (*optional*):

The [course Box folder](#) also contains supplemental readings (including student presentation documents). I will maintain a [running bibliography](#) of other course materials you may wish to consult for further reading. Here you will find more writings about creative and experimental criticism, examples of creative and experimental criticism, etc. Please check back often as I will be updating this list as we stumble across more material. Please also feel free to add to this list as you come across useful readings (and add PDFs to the Box folder if you have them). The link allows you to view and edit the document.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Class Attendance and Participation

Both are expected.

2. Presentation

Every seminar participant will do one classroom presentation. For your presentation, you will do one of the following (your choice): 1. Present, by reading aloud, 4-5 pages of your own creative criticism for feedback and discussion; or 2. Find and present a work by another author of creative/experimental criticism (not on the syllabus) and present it to the class. If you are doing option 1, please send me your pages at least 24 hours before class. If you are doing option 2, your presentation should consist of a summary of the critical piece, and your own analysis and interpretation. For option 2, you are welcome to use presentation tools (such as PowerPoint) and/or provide handouts to organize your presentation. Your presentation (including feedback and discussion) should take no more than 15 minutes. Please email me your preferences for date and format by **5:00 p.m. September 1st**.

3. Course Google Document

We will maintain [a Google Doc](#) where we will collaborate to build working answers to two questions: *What characterizes "traditional" literary criticism?*; and *How can criticism be "creative"?* Please add your thoughts and ideas to the document after finishing each week's reading. Responses are due **Wednesdays at 1:00**. Additional instructions are on the document.

4. Final Project

For your final project, you will produce a creative/experimental work of literary criticism, focused on one of our core literary texts. (N.B. Under *very limited* circumstances, I *may* approve an alternative text for your final project. Those circumstances include my already being familiar with the text and feeling competent to assess criticism about it. Please see me well in advance of the due date if you want to propose an alternative text.) Your project need not be a formal written paper, although it may be. You are encouraged to explore other formats for your project, should you wish to do so. We will discuss the form, format, and parameters of your project later in the semester.

COURSE POLICIES

Communication

Email. My email address is at the top of the syllabus. Please feel free to email with quick questions, but for anything complex, weighty, or gnarly, I prefer that you make an appointment to talk to me in person.

Office Hours. I will hold office hours Mondays 12:30-3:30—no appointment necessary; just show up. Email me if you want to set up a different time to meet.

GroupMe. You are *required* to join the [course Group Me chat](#). This is the official place for general communication about what's going on in our course: changes in schedule, announcements, reminders, etc.



Attendance & Absences

Because this is a graduate seminar and we meet weekly, you are expected to attend class, to be on time, and to participate in discussion. Missing even a single week means missing a significant portion of our time together. That said, please do not come to class if you're sick! Your health is more important than a class meeting—stay home, rest, hydrate, and get better. Please send me an email to let me know you are (or were) sick, so that I know what's going on.

Incompletes

Should you wish more time for your final project, you may request an Incomplete in the course. All course requirements (including the final project) must be finished by **January 15th**. (This deadline is for your own good as well as mine! If we let your Incomplete drag on any longer you will have forgotten everything we worked on in class—as will I.)

Classroom Etiquette

Please silence your cell phone (or even better, turn it off) and put it away for our time together. I ask that you not use laptops in class, since the tapping is distracting and the screens keep us from engaging with one another. You are welcome to bring drinks to class. Unless it's an emergency please refrain from eating during our discussion. We will have one 10-minute break for snacking, restroom visits, etc.

Disability Access and Inclusion

If there are any aspects of the course that result in barriers to your inclusion and participation, or to accurate assessment of your achievement, please let me know as soon as possible. If you are registered with SDS, you must log in to your Rebel Access portal at sds.olemiss.edu/rebel-access-portal to request approved accommodations. If you are NOT registered with SDS, you must complete the process to become registered. To begin the registration process, please visit sds.olemiss.edu/apply-for-services.

Hateful Language

Some course readings may include expressions of hateful and dehumanizing language; such expressions might include racist terminology. While we will encounter these ideas on the page,

and will engage with the substance of these ideas in the course, our classroom will be free of hate speech of all kinds. I ask that you not use the N-word or any other slur in the seminar room, even if it appears on the page.

COURSE SCHEDULE

[“through” = “up to and including”]

- August 26** Class Introduction and Syllabus
Reading: Auyong, “What We Mean By Reading”; Hollingshead, “Humanists Have Done Nothing Wrong”
- September 2** Reading: Wikipedia, “The Sokal Affair”; Guillory, “The Sokal Affair and the History of Criticism”; Emre, “Has Academia Ruined Literary Criticism?”; Chu, “Criticism in a Crisis”; Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own* through Chap. 3
- September 9** Reading: North, *Literary Criticism*, Introduction & Chap. 1; Arnold, “The Function of Criticism at the Present Time” and “Culture and Anarchy” excerpts; Woolf, “How Should One Read a Book?”; Ruddick, “When Nothing Is Cool”; Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own* finish
- September 16** Reading: Graff, *Professing Literature*, Chap. 8; Wimsatt and Beardsley, “The Intentional Fallacy”; Solnit, “Woolf’s Darkness”; Forster, *Virginia Woolf: The Rede Lecture*
- September 23** Reading: North, *Literary Criticism*, Chap. 2; Wilde, “The Critic As Artist”; Bartlett, *Who Was that Man?* excerpts; Nelson, *The Argonauts* through p. 73
- September 30** Reading: North, *Literary Criticism*, Chap. 3; Woolf, “The Modern Essay”; Emre, “Two Paths for the Personal Essay”; Arn, “Dot Dot Dot Dot: Against the Contemporary American Essay”; Nelson, *The Argonauts* finish
- October 7** Reading: North, *Literary Criticism*, Chap. 4 and Appendix; Eliot, “Tradition and the Individual Talent” and “Hamlet and His Problems”; Shakespeare, *The Tempest*
- October 14** Reading: Guillory, *Professing Criticism*, Chap. 2; Wimsatt and Beardsley, “The Affective Fallacy”; Rosenblatt, “Efferent and Aesthetic Reading”; Auden, *The Sea and the Mirror* through Part II
- October 21** Reading: Guillory, *Professing Criticism*, Chap. 3; Sontag, “Against Interpretation” and “On Style”; Foucault, “What Is An Author”; Barthes, “The Death of the Author”; Auden, *The Sea and the Mirror* finish

- October 28** Reading: Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading"; Warner, "Uncritical Reading"; Sharpe, *Ordinary Notes* through p. 175; Césaire, *A Tempest*
- November 4** Reading: Felski, "Context Stinks!"; Elias, "Context Rocks!"; Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse* excerpts; Sharpe, *Ordinary Notes* finish; Nabokov, *Lolita*
- November 11** Reading: Dabash, "Introduction: Cultures of Argument"; Bérubé, "An Audacious Argument for Modesty"; Nabokov, "The Art of Literature and Commonsense"; Smith, "Rereading Barthes and Nabokov"; Sinno, *Sad Tiger* through p. 110
- November 18** Reading: Kramnick, *Criticism and Truth*, Chap. 2, Chap. 4, Chap. 5, Coda; Harding, "Have We Forgotten How to Read Critically?"; Sehgal, "The Case Against the Trauma Plot"; Sinno, *Sad Tiger* finish
- December 2** Presentation of final project topics and feedback
Reading: Chu, "Authority"; Vanderburg, "Crise en Abyme"; Morgan, "Criticism Is Literature"; Rooney, "Why Criticism Continues to Matter"