

**COMPARATIVE LITERATURE 707 / MAFL 707**  
**SEMINAR IN METHODS OF LITERARY CRITICISM:**  
**THE ETHICS OF THE IMAGINATION**

Spring Semester  
R 5:30-8:10  
Curtin 209  
3 Credits  
Class Website: [d2l.uwm.edu](http://d2l.uwm.edu)

Professor Peter Y. Paik  
Office: 786 Curtin Hall  
Office Hours: Tuesday 3:30-4:30  
e-mail: [pypaik@uwm.edu](mailto:pypaik@uwm.edu)  
phone: 229-6299

**Description**

What is the ethical significance of literary interpretation? Should ethics provide a guide for the reading of literary works (or other forms of cultural production)? Should we regard literature as an autonomous realm productive of its own particular advances and discoveries that challenge and reshape our understandings of the ethical and the political? Or should justice be the proper measure for evaluating aesthetic experience and political commitment? What are the criteria for distinguishing between good and bad readings, or responsible and irresponsible ones? We will start from Plato's quarrel against the poets and move on to contemporary theoretical debates over the role of ethics in the practice of interpretation.

**Requirements**

There will be two short papers (4-6 pages) and a final paper (12-15 pages), in addition to brief responses to the films and readings.

Please prepare a question for the readings before coming to class. Your question should not deal with factual matters but with the concepts and issues raised by the reading. This is also a good opportunity for you to bring up the most puzzling and difficult aspects of a text. Discussion will start after we go around the room and fielded at least one question from each participant.

**Grades**

Final essay	45%
Short papers	30%
Class participation	25%

**D2L**

I will e-mail you any changes to the syllabus and schedule of screenings over d2l. Assignments and other relevant materials will also be posted on the site, which you may print out at home or at the library.

**Required Texts** (available at Woodland Pattern Book Center, 720 East Locust, b/w Fratney and Pierce streets, tel. 263-5001):

- William Shakespeare, *The Tempest* – Norton Critical Edition. Ed. Peter Hulme and William H. Sherman. New York: W. W. Norton, 2004

- Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* – Norton Critical Edition. Ed. Paul B. Armstrong. New York: W. W. Norton, 2006
- Aimé Césaire, *A Tempest*. Trans. Richard Miller. New York: Theater Communications Group, 2002.
- Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985
- Course Reader – to be purchased at Ikon Copy in the Union. Contents marked by “\*”
- Other readings will be available on d2l and/or e-reserve.

Schedule:

- Jan. 26 Introduction  
Screening: *The Tempest*
- Feb. 2 Plato, *Ion* and selections from *The Republic* (d2l)  
Aristotle, *The Poetics* (d2l)  
Longinus, *On the Sublime* (d2l)  
Plotinus, “On the Intellectual Beauty” (d2l)  
Augustine, From *On Christian Doctrine* (d2l)
- Feb. 9 Sir Philip Sidney, “An Apology for Poetry” (d2l)  
Percy Bysshe Shelley, “A Defence of Poetry” (d2l)  
Giambattista Vico, *The New Science* (\*)  
Charles Baudelaire, From *The Salon of 1859*  
Oscar Wilde, “The Decay of Lying” (d2l)
- Feb. 23 Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgment* (\*)  
Friedrich von Schiller, From *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* (\*)  
Friedrich Schlegel, From *Philosophical Fragments* (\*) and “On Incomprehensibility”  
Friedrich Nietzsche, From *The Birth of Tragedy* (\*) and “Truth and Falsity in an Ultramoral Sense”
- Mar. 2 Simone Weil, “Morality and Literature” (\*)  
Jean-Paul Sartre, “Why Write?” (\*)  
Theodore Adorno, “Cultural Criticism and Society” (\*)  
Edward Said, “The World, the Text, and the Critic” (\*)
- Mar. 9 Martin Heidegger, “The Nature of Language” and “Words” (\*)  
Stanley Rosen, “The Quarrel between Philosophy and Poetry” (\*)  
Giorgio Agamben, From *The Man without Content* (\*)  
Erich Auerbach, “Odysseus’s Scar” (\*)
- Mar. 16 Jacques Derrida, “Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences” (\*)  
Paul de Man, “The Rhetoric of Temporality” (\*)  
Ihab Hassan, “Prelude” from *The Dismemberment of Orpheus* (\*)  
Stanley Fish, “Is There a Text in This Class?” (\*)

Karl-Heinz Bohrer, From *Suddenness* (\*)

Mar. 23 Break: read Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*

Mar. 30 Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain*

Apr. 6 Screening: *Apocalypse Now Redux*

Reading: Frank P. Tomasulo, "The Politics of Ambivalence: *Apocalypse Now* as Prowar and Antiwar Film"

Apr. 13 Emmanuel Levinas, "Substitution" (\*)

J. Hillis Miller, "Reading Doing Reading" from *The Ethics of Reading* (\*)

Simon Critchley, "The Ethics of Deconstruction: The Argument" (\*)

Geoffrey Galt Harpham, "Ethics and Its Others" (\*)

Alain Badiou, From *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil* (\*)

Catherine Pickstock, "Plato's Deconstruction of Derrida" (\*)

Apr. 20 Aimé Césaire, *A Tempest*

K. Anthony Appiah, "Is the Post- in Postmodernism the Post- in Postcolonial?" (\*)

Gayatri Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" and "The Politics of Interpretations" (\*)

Edward Said, from *Culture and Imperialism* (\*)

Apr. 27 Homi K. Bhabha, "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation" (reserve)

Donald R. Wehrs, "Sartre's Legacy in Postcolonial Theory" (d2l)

Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonialist Discourse" (reserve)

May 4 Ihab Hassan, "Postmodernism: A Self-Interview" (d2l)

Satya P. Mohanty, "Can Our Values Be Objective? On Ethics, Aesthetics, and Progressive Politics" (d2l)

Stanley Rosen, "Conversation or Tragedy," from *Hermeneutics as Politics* (\*)

Stanley Rosen, "A Modest Proposal to Rethink Enlightenment" (\*)

May 11 Catherine Pickstock, "The Univocalist Mode of Production" (\*)

John Milbank, "Only Theology Overcomes Metaphysics" (\*)

Evaluations