

English 5303: Research and Critical Methods

Fall 2026

Course: Fall 2026

Class meets in: asynchronously

Days: N/A

Times: N/A

Instructor: Dr. Rosemary Briseno

Office: MAB 112-B

Office hours: M-Th, 2-4 pm

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"He who loves practice without theory is like the sailor who boards ship without a rudder and compass." ---Leonardo da Vinci



Course description

This course is an introduction to graduate research methods in literature and to the study of critical theory as applied to literature. The course develops advanced skills in literary research, scholarly inquiry, and critical analysis through the study and application of major theoretical approaches to literary texts. Students will learn to locate, evaluate, and synthesize scholarly sources; engage critically with existing literary scholarship; formulate research questions; and develop well-supported critical arguments. Representative theorists and readings may include selections from: Simone de Beauvoir, bell hooks, Judith Butler, Hélène Cixous, Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci, Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Frantz Fanon, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Stanley Fish, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Stuart Hall, and Gloria Anzaldúa. Emphasis is placed on research methodologies appropriate to graduate study, including the effective use of academic databases, primary and secondary sources, bibliographic research, and MLA documentation. Students will also examine selected critical and theoretical approaches and apply them to literary analysis. The course culminates in the development of an independent graduate-level research project demonstrating proficiency in scholarly research, critical methodology, and academic writing.

Required Texts Please ensure you acquire the correct editions whenever possible.

1) *Critical Theory Today* (ISBN 978-0367709426)

2) Additional readings, essays, A/V, and theoretical excerpts will be provided by the professor via Blackboard

Required Materials

You will need a reliable webcam and laptop or PC. You will also need to download the latest version of Respondus LockDown browser, which you can find on the SRSU Institution page.

Major Theoretical Approaches Covered

The course may include the following theoretical frameworks:

Feminist Theory
 Marxist Criticism
 Critical Race Theory
 Postcolonial Theory
 Reader-Response Theory
 Poststructuralism
 Deconstruction
 Queer Theory
 Cultural Studies
 Borderlands Theory

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

Upon completion of the course graduate students should be able to:

- 1) Identify and explain major schools of literary and critical theory**, including psychoanalytic criticism, Marxist criticism, feminist criticism, New Criticism, reader-response criticism, structuralist criticism, deconstructive criticism, cultural criticism, postcolonial criticism, and critical race theory.
- 2) Apply appropriate critical theories and methodologies to the interpretation of literary texts** and demonstrate how different theoretical approaches can produce differing interpretations of the same work.
- 3) Analyze the assumptions, terminology, methods, strengths, and limitations of major critical approaches** used in contemporary literary studies.
- 4) Conduct advanced literary research** using scholarly databases, library resources, bibliographies, primary sources, and peer-reviewed secondary scholarship appropriate to graduate-level study.
- 5) Locate, evaluate, and distinguish among scholarly sources** based on their authority, relevance, methodology, evidence, and contribution to an existing critical conversation.
- 6) Develop focused and researchable questions about literature** and use those questions to formulate original, theoretically informed arguments.
- 7) Synthesize multiple scholarly perspectives** to identify patterns, disagreements, gaps, and emerging questions within literary scholarship.
- 8) Integrate literary theory with scholarly research** to construct sustained critical interpretations supported by textual evidence and relevant secondary sources.
- 9) Employ MLA documentation and scholarly conventions accurately and ethically**, including appropriate quotation, paraphrase, citation, and preparation of a Works Cited or bibliography.
- 10) Evaluate and respond critically to existing literary scholarship** rather than merely summarizing secondary sources.

11) Produce graduate-level critical and research-based writing that demonstrates a clear thesis, logical organization, theoretical sophistication, effective use of evidence, and engagement with relevant scholarship.

Required Materials and Actions

In addition to the required textbooks, students must have regular access to Blackboard and their Sul Ross email account. Readings, announcements, lectures, assignment instructions, and updates will be distributed through Blackboard.

Students are responsible for checking Blackboard and university email regularly. Failure to monitor announcements, deadlines, and assignment instructions does not excuse missed work or incomplete assignments.

IMPORTANT NOTE ABOUT ONLINE, ASYNCHRONOUS COURSES

Success in an online asynchronous graduate course requires self-discipline, organization, intellectual engagement, and advanced time management skills.

Success in this course requires student to:

Log into Blackboard frequently

Read all assigned materials carefully and thoroughly

Maintain a consistent weekly work schedule

Participate actively in discussions and peer engagement

Meet all deadlines

Communicate professionally and respectfully

Practice academic honesty and scholarly integrity

Utilize university support resources when needed

Engage critically with course readings rather than relying upon summary

Graduate-level work requires sustained intellectual engagement and independent scholarly inquiry.

Discussion Forums

Discussion boards (DBs) in this course function as graduate-level mini essays and scholarly conversations. Students are expected to demonstrate critical engagement with assigned theoretical readings. **There will be 2-3 DBs assigned this semester.**

Each discussion board requires:

- One original response of no less than 1250 words incorporating textual evidence and theoretical terminology.

- Two additional responses to classmates of no less than 750 words each with the option of including cited material in the response
- A word count after each entry
- Use of MLA-style in-text citations where appropriate.
- Graduate-level analytical depth and professional academic tone.
- Discussion boards should move beyond summary and instead demonstrate theoretical interpretation, synthesis, critique, and scholarly engagement.

Absences

Sul Ross State University allows a maximum of **20% absences** in a course before an instructor drops a student for excessive absences. In this online course, "excessive absences" is defined as nonparticipation in the course for three (3) weeks or more. If I don't hear from you via email, Blackboard, phone call, or otherwise) you will be dropped. Any student dropped for non-participation will receive an F in the course.

Professor e-communication

I will communicate with the class through Announcements and by e-mail, not by Messages. Be sure to log in daily to check for Announcements on the course home page and to check your Sul Ross e-mail account regularly. You will find specific assignment details, due dates, and times in Tentative Assignments.

Required Format for Turning in Assignments

When using Blackboard to turn in assignments, please turn in all of your assignments in either Microsoft Word OR PDF formats. I will not accept work turned in using any other format.

Due Dates and Time

Unless otherwise notes, all assignments will be due on **SUNDAY before 11: 59 pm**. Unless otherwise instructed **do not email any work; submit ONLY to Blackboard in PDF or Word doc. Failure to do upload any assignment in the required format will result in a "0."** It is **your responsibility to ensure you have followed directions and upload the assignments in required format.**

Confirming Submission of Your Blackboard Assignments

If you see the assignment in your submission history, and if the link is attached, that means I received your work. I only accept attachments in Word or PDF only. It is your responsibility to check that you have uploaded your work in the correct form. If you don't upload your work in the correct form, you will receive a "0." The assignment might still be accepted but at -10 points off the final grade.

Tech Assistance

Not knowing how to upload your work properly via Blackboard is not an excuse for not turning in assignments late. Call 888.837.6055 or go to email blackboard.support@sulross.edu

available 24/7. Students can also contact the Lobo Technology Center (LTAC) at 888.837-2882 or email at techassist@sulross.edu Monday through Friday 7 am through 5 pm.

Makeup Work

It is your responsibility to turn in your work on or before the deadline (or revised deadline, whichever has been approved). If the assignment is not turned in by the deadline, the work will not be accepted.

Makeup work is granted at the professor's discretion. To be eligible for possible makeup work, you **MUST** contact me in a reasonable time **BEFORE** the deadline (not an hour before the deadline, not five mins before, and certainly not **AFTER** the deadline). If you have been granted an exception, please follow these rules:

- 1) Notify your professor before you will be absent, or if you suspect there might be an issue with turning in your work in on time---not 5 minutes before and not after, as notifying me after the due date, negating the makeup policy
- 2) If approved, you will have 7 days in which to complete and upload the missing assignment. In the meantime, a "0" will be used as a placeholder grade.
- 3) If you forget to submit the makeup work within the 7 days, the "0" stays.

If you contact me after the deadline, you will not be considered eligible to make up that assignment.

No Late Work Policy

Late work is not accepted for any reason due to **student negligence** (forgetting to turn in an assignment, forgetting to log in and reading Announcements, not knowing how to use Blackboard , etc).

Student integrity and responsibility

Web-delivered courses are similar to face-to-face courses in that students are expected to exhibit academic integrity by respecting the discussion of their colleagues in the class, presenting as their own work only content that they have generated, scrupulously attributing and documenting all outside sources in their papers and discussion, and, in general, adhering to the ethical standards of scholarship. As scholars. I expect you to be responsible for your own learning.

Academic Honesty

At the beginning of the semester, you will sign an **Academic Integrity Policy Statement**, which explains that the University has a responsibility to promote academic honesty and integrity and to develop procedures to deal effectively with instances of academic dishonesty. The policy form will represent that the student understands that they are solely responsible for the honest completion and representation of their work, for the appropriate citation of sources,

and for respect of others' academic endeavors. **Academic dishonesty is prohibited in all programs of the university and will not be tolerated.**

All work will be monitored for academic integrity.

I expect each student to strictly adhere to the rules and regulations regarding academic pursuits. The University expects all students to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is beyond reproach and to maintain complete honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of their classroom. The University may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty, including but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work, plagiarism, collusion, and the abuse of resource materials.

Please see page 82 in the SRSU Student Handbook: for complete information.

http://www.sulross.edu/sites/default/files//sites/default/files/users/docs/records_srsu/handbook_20122013-complete.pdf 1. "Cheating" includes:

Copying from another student's test paper, laboratory report, other report, or computer files, data listings, and/or programs, or allowing another student to copy from same.

Using, during a test, materials not authorized by the person giving the test.

Collaborating, without authorization, with another person during an examination or in preparing academic work.

Knowingly, and without authorization, using, buying, selling, stealing, transporting, soliciting, copying, or possessing, in whole or in part, the contents of an unadministered test.

Substituting for another student; permitting any other person, or otherwise assisting any other person to substitute for oneself or for another student in the taking of an examination or test or the preparation of academic work to be submitted for academic credit.

Bribing another person to obtain an unadministered test or information about an unadministered test.

Purchasing, or otherwise acquiring and submitting as one's own work any research paper or other writing assignment prepared by an individual or firm. This section does not apply to the typing of the rough and/or final versions of an assignment by a professional typist.

"Plagiarism" means the appropriation and the unacknowledged incorporation of another's work or idea in one's own written work offered for credit.

"Collusion" means the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing written work offered for credit.

"Abuse of resource materials" means the mutilation, destruction, concealment, theft or alteration of materials provided to assist students in the mastery of course materials.

"Academic work" means the preparation of an essay, dissertation, thesis, report, problem, assignment, or other project that the student submits as a course requirement or for a grade.

*****THIS COURSE HAS A ZERO TOLERANCE PLAGIARISM POLICY*****

As a simple guideline, if you submit your own work, you will avoid all serious types of plagiarism. Nevertheless, a responsible student should also consider the less obvious variants of plagiarism, especially when writing research papers that require citations. Instances of plagiarism, such as submitting an essay with sentences or passages cut and pasted from an online source, or a paper obtained from an online "paper mill," students in this course will automatically fail the assignment, receive a final grade of F, and be recommended for dismissal from the university. There is no excuse for serious plagiarism. I will also regard unattributed citations – verbatim copying of another's person's work without some indication of the source – as a serious form of plagiarism. In other words, don't insert any text in a paper that is not your own without also noting the source. You can email me with a question before an assignment is due, stop by my office during my office hours, or even parenthetically raise the question in your paper.

AI usage

Use of AI is NOT allowed in this course. Any student who uses any AI bot/app/ etc. to generate their essay, in part or in whole, will fail the course, be reported to the chair, then the dean, then provost. Additionally, patchwriting is also strictly prohibited (where the student goes online to find words/sentences/paragraphs from online, then make minor or substantial changes in word meaning and/or word order, and then pass it off as their own). The professor will recommend expulsion from the university with record. It's your responsibility to comply with principles of academic honesty; it's my responsibility to see that every student receives a fair and accurate grade. Therefore, all major written assignments will be completed using Turnitin.com, and will be proctored by Blackboard software. The student will not receive essay prompts ahead of time; rather they will be released the day of the assignment.

Here is my specific policy on plagiarism for this course:

The *first offense* of plagiarism, in part or in whole, will result in a failing course grade of "F," and the student will be recommended for dismissal from the university. The student has the right to appeal to the Dept. Chair, then Provost, and eventually to the Provost and VP for Academic and Student Affairs before imposition of the penalty. The decision of the Provost and VP for Academic Affairs is final.

ADA Accommodation/Disabilities Statement: Persons with disabilities that may warrant academic accommodations should contact me as soon as possible so that we may make arrangements to ensure the most hospitable and enhancing (cyber) learning environment as possible. Sul Ross State University is committed to equal access in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1973. It is the student's responsibility to initiate a request for accessibility services. Students seeking accessibility

Counseling and Accessibility Services Office

Ferguson Hall 112

Alpine, TX

(432) 837-8203

counseling@sulross.edu

8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Monday-Friday

Supportive Statement

I aim to create a learning environment for my students that supports various perspectives and experiences. I understand that the recent pandemic, economic disparity, and health concerns, or even unexpected life events may impact the conditions necessary for you to succeed. My commitment is to be there for you and help you meet the learning objectives of this course. I do this to demonstrate my commitment to you and to the mission of Sul Ross State University to create a supportive environment and care for the whole student as part of the Sul Ross Familia. If you feel like your performance in the class is being impacted by your experiences outside of class, please don't hesitate to come and talk with me. I want to be a resource for you.

Final Note

Graduate study in literary theory requires intellectual curiosity, close reading, independent inquiry, and sustained analytical engagement. Students are encouraged to approach theory not simply as abstract terminology, but as a set of interpretive tools that shape the ways literature, culture, identity, and power are understood. Consistent effort, careful reading, and active engagement with scholarly conversations will be essential for success in this course.

Graded Course Requirements

Two Major Essays (10–15 pages).....40%

Students will produce two graduate-level research essays applying literary theory to selected

literary or cultural texts in a timed essay format. These essays will be proctored and all anti-plagiarism tools will be used. **Essays must incorporate scholarly research and theoretical criticism from class. No outside research is allowed.** If there is a clear and compelling reason for why a specific resource should be used, the student must get pre-approval from the professor. Each essay must include: a clear theoretical framework (I should be able to figure out which theory or theories you are using); MLA documentation in the form of in-text quotations. No paraphrasing. No block quotes allowed.

Two to Three Discussion Boards.....30%

Discussion boards function as graduate-level analytical essays and critical scholarly conversations. The initial response must be no less than 1250 words; subsequent responses should be no less than 750 words. The initial response must include in-text citations relative to the assigned readings for that week. Students have the options to include citations in their responses to their classmates.

Annotated Bibliography.....30%

Students will maintain an ongoing graduate reading journal documenting responses to theoretical readings, questions, critical observations, interpretive developments, and applications of theory. Journal entries should: avoid summary, engage directly with theoretical concepts, include textual references and citations, explore tensions, contradictions, and applications of theory.

ENG 5300 Tentative Schedule

(subject to change. Students are required to check Announcements daily)

*all readings and assignments are embedded within the relative modules. You will not have to click elsewhere to find them. For example, readings for Weeks 1-3 can be found under Weeks 1-3: Foundations of Critical Theory and Inquiry in Blackboard (Bb). See below.

Weeks 1-3

Foundations of Critical Theory; What is Theory? What does it mean to question critically? In our textbook, please read “Everything about critical theory you wanted to know but were afraid to ask” and “Close Reading as Critical Inquiry.” **Academic Integrity Policy DUE 8/31@11:59 pm. Monday, 9/7 Labor Day Holiday** (no classes held)

Weeks 3-5

Marxist criticism; **DB#1, DUE 9/20@11:59 pm**; last day to drop a class without a record (no W recorded)

Weeks 5-8

New Criticism; **DB#2 DUE 10/11@11:59 pm**

Week 8-11

Feminist Theory and Gender Performance; 10/19-10/23, midterm; **Major Essay #1 DUE, 10/19@11:59 pm.** 11/6 last day to withdraw from a class (with a W).

Weeks 11-12

Postcolonial Theory; Borderlands Theory; **DB#3 DUE 11/20@11:59 pm**

Weeks 12-13

Reader Response Theory

Weeks 13-15 (FINALS WEEK)

Major Essay #2 DUE 12/7@11:59 pm. Final version of **Annotated Bibliography** also **DUE 12/4@11:59 pm.** Last class day 12/2; Dead Day 12/3. Grades for graduating students are due to the Registrar by 12/10@12 noon. Grades for everyone else, grades are due on 12/14@12 noon.

---END OF FALL 2026 SEMESTER---