

# MLL 210

## Research Methods and Literary Criticism

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Office Hours: T 8-10 am  
Or by appointment

### Introduction:

The intention of the course is to present to students the steps to generating successful research projects. It intends to present materials and techniques that assist students understanding the ways to find, evaluate and use information, both in text and electronic means to conduct research in languages other than English. Students are exposed to the most current trends in critical analysis of language, literature and culture. By the end of the course students will apply what they have learned in the first and second parts of the course to produce a formal essay. The course is intended for MLL majors mostly.

### Prerequisites:

- Completion of GE area A
- An active Cal Poly email address

### Required Texts:

Literary Theory. A Very Short Introduction, Jonathan Culler  
MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 6<sup>th</sup> Ed. Joseph Gibaldi, Ed.  
Research notes and assignments. William Martínez, Ed.  
Critical readings packet, William Martínez, Jr. Ed.

### Grades:

Grades will be earned in the following manner:

Assignments	300
Essay summaries	400 (4 at 100 pts each)
Final essay	200
Active participation	100

Grades are distributed as follows. There is no curving for this class.

A: 100-94%   B+: 89-87%   C+: 79-77%   D+: 69-67%   F: 59% or less  
A-: 93-90 %   B: 86-84%   C: 76-74%   D: 66-64%  
B-: 83-80%   C-: 73-70%   D-: 63-60%

### **Homework:**

During the first part of the course (aprox. 4 weeks) you will complete a series of assignments designed to take you through the process of doing effective research both in traditional texts (books, journals, newspapers) as well as electronic texts (ejournals, ezines, the web, electronic data bases, etc) You will submit these assignments via email exclusively before the start of class following the assigned work. I will not accept work that gets to me after the beginning of class. That is to say that I will not accept any late work, under any circumstance. Please make sure that you have the means to be able to turn assignments in this manner.

### **Essay summaries:**

In the second half of the course you will be presented with find introduction to critically thinking about literature, language and culture as well as four main trends in literary theory. You will be responsible to summarize the assigned articles PRIOR to the day we begin discussing each one. You will write a 1 ½ to 2 pages, double spaced paper. Please make sure to make TWO copies, one for you and one to turn in. The summaries must contain:

- a) An initial paragraph with a quick summary of the theme (thesis) of the article. You may cite directly or indirectly from the article in this section.
- b) A second paragraph that identifies the key terms that need to be understood, as you see them, so that the article makes sense
- c) A third paragraph where you can give your own personal take on what you read. How do you evaluate the reading? What is its relevance to you vis-à-vis your understanding of it? Do you have an opinion about it? If so, what is it?
- d) A title that clearly states what the content of your essay-summary is about

Summaries will be turned in, as drafts, at the end of class discussion . You will then, having the benefit of lecture, re-write and evaluate your own summary, correcting and changing as you see fit. You will add a forth paragraph summarizing what you have learned from the reading and discussion and turn that in the following class period for a grade. Since this work will take two class periods to complete, no late work will be accepted and your grade will be suffer for incomplete assignments,

### **Final Essay**

Instead of a final exam, you will write an essay that applies a part of a theoretical model seen in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the course and that follows the process learned in the first half of the course. You will be given the choice of writing on literature, linguistics and or culture. The essay shall be between 6-8 pages in length, not counting bibliography. You will submit the essay on the Friday of the last week of class, to my office (not the MLL office) no later than noon.

**Note: If you fail t submit a final essay you will receive a grade of “F” in the course. Extensions will be given only for documented medical emergency.**

### **Participation**

The course is intended for your benefit, not the professor. This it requires that you come to class fully prepared, with readings already done and assignments due completed, and that you fully and actively participate in any discussion/ practice activity while in class. Sitting passively will not count towards earning participation points.

It is your job to read and to be ready to ask questions. My job will be to answer said questions and to guide you through the more difficult theoretical ideas and to demonstrate for you how to apply these to your own research.

## **Course Schedule**

- Week#1      Administrative. Getting started with research. How do you determine the type of research needed for any assignment?.
- Week #2      Accessing information. What can the library afford me in doing research? Where can I find...?. Information in electronic databases
- Week #3      Using the Web as a research tool. How to evaluate information obtained? What to look for in both print and electronic sources?
- Week #4      The ethical implications of doing research. How to cite just about anything? Some tips on reading for content more effectively.
- Week #5      What is Theory? What is literature? Why does it matter? Culler, Chapters 1,2
- Week #6      Theoretical model: Structuralism and Post-structuralism. Culler, Chapters 3-4. Essay: "Structuralism and Poststructuralist." Essay summary #1
- Week #7      Theoretical Model: Marxist Criticism and Feminism. Culler, Chapter 8. Essay: "The Laugh of the Medusa." Essay summary #2
- Week #8      Theoretical Model: Semiology. Culler, Chapter 5. Essay "Intento Lectoris. The State of the Art." Essay Summary 3
- Week #9      Theoretical Model: Reader Response. Culler, Chapter 6. Essay: "Overinterpreting Texts." Reading summary 4
- Week #10.      Conclusions. Preparing for the Senior Project. Culler, Appendix Final Essay Due