

Course Syllabus

ENG 6810 - Theories of Texts & Technology

W 6:00 p.m. - 8:50 p.m., Virtual Mode

Spring 2021

Jonathan Beever, Ph.D.

Course Description and Objectives:

The catalog description for this course states that “this course is intended to introduce you to general theoretical concepts and positions as a basis for the advanced study of Texts & Technology.” That very generous description opens the door to some big questions including “what is theory?” This section of ENG 6810 will explore answers to that question through readings from the core T&T list, put in conversation with a broader landscape of theoretical considerations.

Theory, whether critical, literacy, representational, social, scientific, normative, or of some other kind, serves as the foundation for the sorts of critical analyses, unpackings, reshapings, and explorations we do as scholars of contemporary problems. We apply theory as a lens through which we view a problem and as a mouthpiece through which we give new voice to that problem.

Students in this class will:

- Identify the structures of theory across various disciplines and their relation to applied and procedural topics,
- Engage in scholarly analysis of course texts and their position in interdisciplinary discourses,
- Improve interpretation, critical analysis and synthesis, and argumentation skills with regard to theory, and
- Cultivate a theoretical toolkit for future T&T work, including exams and dissertation work.

Format and COVID-19:

This course will take place in UCF’s new “v-mode,” initiated in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. V-mode courses are synchronous virtual courses, meaning that we will meet weekly at our scheduled time, but by digital conferencing rather than face-to-face. This mode is intended to keep one another, and therefore those with whom outside of the classroom with whom we interact, safe and healthy. Given the international pandemic and local challenges, I will maintain course guidelines similar to those implemented last semester: namely:

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- Our weekly Zoom meeting will take place at the scheduled class time. Recordings of class session will be made available as soon as possible following the class session. Participation in the live meeting is required; however, credit for missed sessions can be earned with no justification needed by simply viewing the session later.
- Given the intensity of the Zoom format, live course meetings may vary in length depending on weekly discussion topics. Follow-up discussion with colleagues and/or me by email or Slack is encouraged, regardless of length of the session.
- During Zoom calls, video participation is encouraged but not required. The requirement to participate in discussion can be satisfied through text chat or audio connection. If you need to step away during the course session, you should feel free to do so with no penalty.
- Students will need a reliable internet connection and Zoom-compatible device for course sessions. Please reach out to Dr. Beever if you foresee difficulties satisfying this need.
- Given the unique stressors related to the pandemic and ongoing social unrest, late work will be accepted up to the date of the next assignment deadline. As assignments build on one another, they should be completed in order.
- In the event of a personal medical emergency, you may request additional flexibility and accommodation from me. I will do my best to be helpful.
- Remember that this format for our course is in place primarily to keep one another well and safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. Please reach out to me if you need other resources to maintain your own safety and wellness.

Office Hours:

Office hours will be held on webcourses chat. I will guarantee to be available “live” during official office hours from 3:00pm-4:00pm on Wednesdays and will work with you to find a mutually agreeable time to meet in other formats as needed. If I cannot make an office hour, I will make an announcement by email and will reschedule individual appointments as needed.

Instructor Contact:

Dr. Jonathan Beever
Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy and Texts & Technology Program
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Required Texts & Materials:

- Barthes, Roland (1977). *Image-Music-Text*. Trans. S.H. Barthes. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.
- Baudrillard, Jean. ([1981]1994). *Simulacra and Simulation*. Trans. Sheila Faria Glaser. University of Michigan Press.
- Chun, Wendy Hui Kyong. (2008). *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics*. MIT Press.
- Haraway, Donna. (1991). *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*. Taylor & Francis.
- Kuhn, Thomas S. ([1962]2012). *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. University of Chicago Press.
- Other readings and multimedia content provided through our UCF webcourses site.

Assignments and Expectations:

1. Academic Activity Verification (0%)

This mandatory activity is required by UCF to document your activity in this course at the beginning of the semester. You will complete a one-question quiz to satisfy this requirement.

2. Participating Attendance (20%)

This is a discussion-based course and benefits greatly from your thoughtful preparation and participation. Your participating attendance is required, and can be satisfied either by engaging with the class live (preferable) or viewing the recorded session later (acceptable).

On-camera participation is recommended but not required. We all will have moments of interruption and I expect us each to be understanding of one another. That said, your participation (by chat, voice, or video) is required.

Since class will be held by Zoom, **you must comment in the chat window during class** in order to be recorded as present.

3. Argument summaries (weekly) (20%)

Argument summaries should be focused on clear and concise analyses of the major arguments or claims, along with the central concepts and ideas that support them. Treat these summaries as extended annotations in the sense that they should serve as reminders for you later in the term of what each reading was about, connections among them, and questions, comments, or concerns you

had as you read. Since these summaries are for your benefit, and some readings are going to be more interesting to you than others, I am not setting a word or page length for this assignment.

These summaries will be due each Tuesday night before class by 11:59pm, so that I will have time to read through them as I prepare for Wednesday's discussion.

While reading is a necessary condition for coming to class prepared, I understand that these are interesting times. Therefore, you must complete these summaries for at least 75% of the class sessions.

4. Critical Synthesis (15%)

Critical syntheses are intended to let ideas breathe. We'll move quickly through some dense reading and complex theoretical concepts and positions. Scholarly work is half understanding those ideas and half putting them in critical conversation.

For these assignments, which will be due periodically throughout the term, your goal is to identify and work within critical spaces – gaps (not the stores) or seals (neither the mammals nor the singer) – among authors leading up to each of these assignments. You'll write 500-1000 words as clearly and concisely as you can bringing two concepts or positions together and pushing the synthesis forward. You may choose to do this by applying theoretical concepts to a problem of interest to you. Ending with a critical question rather than a constructive question is ok.

You will use your syntheses to guide discussion in class.

5. Paper proposal with annotated bibliography (10%)

Treat your proposal for your final paper as if it were a conference paper proposal. Your proposal should be between 3-5 short paragraphs, including a few references to central works on which you will draw, and emphasize your central claim or thesis.

This assignment will differ from an actual conference proposal in at least one important way: I am requiring annotations for your reference list. Annotations should do at least two things. They should foremost tell us why you included it as an entry - why is it important for your argument? Second, they should tell us something about the content - main thesis, approach, important premises, etc. I don't expect that should take you more than 2 short paragraphs or approximately 100-200 words total for each. The majority of references should be to peer-reviewed sources. Citation format should be appropriate to the field of your topic.

6. Peer review of paper proposals (5%)

As if paper proposals were conference proposals, you will each be asked to complete two double-blind peer reviews of those proposals. These will provide constructive feedback for the author, and develop important peer-review skills.

7. Final paper (20%) and lightning presentation (5%)

Your final project for this class will have two parts. First, your final paper will focus on applying a theoretical concept or position to a problem in a literature-informed way. This application should advance new insights on that problem.

The paper should be formatted following guidance from a theory-supporting journal venue in your area of research, including in terms of length, citation format, and audience. Identify this venue in a footnote on the first page.

Note that I am not requiring paper drafts as a formal assignment in this class. I encourage you to work with me, your peers, scholarly-minded friends, or an attentive pet to make sure your paper is as clear as possible.

8. Javascript integration (5%)

The T&T program faculty have agreed to integrate technological skills and procedural knowledge literacy development in the core courses. Our course emphasizes javascript, as a popular programming language central to the behavior of web pages. Across the term, I will require you to document steps you've taken to develop this skill. Your grade for this assignment will be earned through evidencing at least some javascript functioning on the website you designed while building HTML/CSS skills in Introduction to Texts and Technology, or some other personal site.

There are many excellent learning resources online, including the W3Schools.com tutorial here, <https://www.w3schools.com/js/default.asp> (<https://www.w3schools.com/js/default.asp>), and the Javascript.info tutorial here, <https://javascript.info/> (<https://javascript.info/>), that can serve as self-paced exercises to get you to your goal. We will dedicate some amount of class time, contingent on need and interest, across the semester to this assignment.

Course Grading:

Letter	Percent	Letter	Percent
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Grade	Score	Grade	Score
A	90-100	C	68-75
B+	87-89	D+	66-68
B	80-86	D	60-65
C+	76-79	F	<59

Grades will be reported in webcourses.

Academic Integrity:

I trust it is unnecessary to say that plagiarism will not be tolerated. Plagiarism, or cheating of any kind on an examination, quiz, or assignment will result at least in an "F" for that assignment and may, depending on the severity of the case, lead to an "F" for the entire course and/or the placement of a "Z" designator with your grade. Academic dishonesty will subject you to appropriate referral to the Office of Student Conduct for further action. See the UCF Golden Rule and <http://z.ucf.edu> for further information.

Beyond plagiarism, we will uphold professional conduct expectations ([T&T Handbook, p. 20](#) (https://tandt.cah.ucf.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/40/2020/08/2020.Student.Handbook.TT_Final_.pdf)).

And beyond upholding norms, we will strive proactively to foster a constructive ethical culture through our work in this class.

Course Accessibility Statement:

It is my goal that this class be an accessible and welcoming experience for all students, including those with disabilities that may impact learning. If anyone believes the design of this course poses barriers to effectively participating and/or demonstrating learning, please meet with me (with or without a Student Accessibility Services (SAS) accommodation letter) to discuss reasonable options or adjustments. Helpful information is found at SAS: Ferrell Commons 185; 407-823-2371; sas@ucf.edu (<mailto:sas@ucf.edu>). You are welcome to talk to me at any point in the semester about concerns, but it is best if we talk at least one week prior to the need for any modification.

Teach Act Statement:

The materials for this course are only for the fair use of students enrolled in this course for purposes associated with this course and may not be retained or further disseminated. The instructor receives no royalty payments for any materials used in this course.

Syllabus Subject to Change:

I anticipate that I will follow the schedule outlined here, but I may make adjustments based on your interests and what decisions we make together in class. All changes will be clearly announced in person and online. Remaining in the course after reading this syllabus will signal that you accept the possibility of changes and responsibility for being aware of them.