

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON

University of London

EXAMINATION FOR INTERNAL STUDENTS

For the following qualifications:-

M.A.

M.A. Comparative Literature: Modern Literary Theory – Take home Paper

COURSE CODE : CLIT0001

COLLECTION DATE : 07-JUN-05
(from 10am onwards)

SUBMISSION DATE : 9-JUN-05
(by 5pm)

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Modern Literary Theory Take Home Paper 2004-05

Collection Date: Collect 7 June 2005 from 10 am onwards (Foster Court, Room 316)

Submit 9 June 2005 by 5 pm (Foster Court, Room 316)

Answer TWO questions, beginning each answer in a fresh answer book. Answers should not be more than approximately 2,000 words. Footnotes and bibliographies are not required.

DO NOT SUBSTANTIALLY BASE MORE THAN ONE ANSWER IN THIS OR ANY OTHER ASSESSED PIECE OF WORK ON THE SAME MATERIAL.

FEEL FREE TO ILLUSTRATE YOUR DISCUSSION OF THEORETICAL ISSUES WITH REFERENCE TO SPECIFIC LITERARY TEXTS.

1. Consider the relationship between writing and theory with reference to specific texts that you have studied on the course.
2. How productive is it to apply Aristotelian modes of literary criticism to post-Aristotelian works of literature?
3. 'Temporality was long conceived as a process of degradation: the ancients were the best; after them, decadence began'. To what extent do you agree with this view of literary evolution?
4. EITHER (a) Compare the uses of the phrase 'tradition' in the critical writings of T. S. Eliot and F. R. Leavis.
OR (b) Is there cultural gain or loss in the creation of a literary 'tradition'?
5. EITHER (a) If, as Trotsky states, what serves as a bridge from soul to soul is not the unique but the common, how do Marxist approaches to literature help us to understand literary works across the gap of time?
OR (b) To what extent does the production and reading of literature fit with the Marxists' notion that the motive of all social life is ultimately a material one? You may answer with reference to both theoretical and literary texts you have studied on this course.
OR (c) 'Art is both the product of alienation and a fictional transcendence of it'. Discuss.
6. EITHER (a) Discuss Bakhtin's view that carnival celebrates 'a temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order' and consider what uses it may have for the analysis of literary texts.
OR (b) Discuss Bakhtin's theory that 'the speaking person in a novel is always an ideologue'. You should make specific reference to one or more novels.
7. 'Structuralism represents a powerful tool for analysing how texts mean, but a very weak one for analysing what they mean.' Discuss.
8. EITHER (a) 'Deconstruction is interested only in playing games with language; it is indifferent to history and politics.' Discuss.
OR (b) 'The idea that "there is no outside-text" accounts for both the strengths and the weaknesses of structuralist and post-structuralist writing.' Discuss.

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9. EITHER (a) 'We not only read texts, but are positioned by them, and it is this reciprocity that has made reading a focus for gender theorists.' Discuss.

OR (b) How far would you agree with the claim that 'the postmodern deconstruction of subjectivity is as problematic for women as the liberal construction of self' (Patricia Waugh)?

10. Foucault holds that, in the nineteenth century, what had been sexual acts became constitutive of identities. Discuss with reference to one or more literary texts.

11. Freud relied on notions of the primitive in order to develop his theories about the unconscious, homosexuality, and mourning and melancholia. Discuss some of the problems that arise from this reliance for psychoanalytic criticism.

12. EITHER (a) 'Postcolonial theory subverts the western notion of history.' Discuss.

OR (b) 'Postcolonial theory appears to allow the subaltern to speak, but this is more an appearance than a reality.' Discuss.

OR (c) 'Postcolonial theory invokes a non-western view of things, but it cannot escape the rhetorical strategies, the codes, even the publishing outlets, of the western academy.' Discuss.

13. Why might one want the author to be dead?

END OF PAPER