

LITERARY CRITICISM: AN INTRODUCTION TO ELEMENTS OF THE ART AND CRAFT OF READING AND JUDGING LITERATURE.

Coordinator: Mary M. Rowan

The study group gains an overview of the art of literary criticism with applications to specific prose works. The two introductory sessions establish the classical foundations of the discipline and do not require assigned reading. During the subsequent weeks we explore Terry Eagleton's categories as they apply to *The Great Gatsby*, which will be read in advance and used throughout the course. The focus of the sessions will be the diagnoses of material provided by participants and the reference works cited in the syllabus and available in the coursepack. In Week 9, each participant will choose a favorite novel and apply to it some of the newly acquired techniques.

Readings:

Poetics by Aristotle

The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald

How to Read Literature by Terry Eagleton {Yale Univ. Press, New Haven and London, 2013}.

An IRP member since 2009, **Mary Rowan** has coordinated courses on Montaigne and Kerouac and co-coordinated the French 19th C. Novel. A retired professor of French language and Literature at CUNY, she continues to work on her main specialties in French literature of the 16th/18th centuries with emphasis on theater, travel literature, and women's writings.

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Week 1: The Origins of Genre

The Poetics of Aristotle. Rhetoric and oratory. Epic and lyric poetry. Elegy and pastoral. Aristotle and the perfect tragedy and comedy.

Week 2: The Sacred Subtext

The Hebrew Bible and the Synoptic Gospels and the New Testament. Exegesis and hermeneutics.

Preservation of ancient texts in monastic manuscripts and illuminations.

Forerunners: Dante, Plutarch and Boccaccio. Vergil in the Middle Ages. The Renaissance: renewal of study of ancient literature.

Masilio Ficino translates Plato into Latin.

Text : The Literary Guide to the Bible eds. Robert Alter/Frank Kermode

Week 3: Openings

The importance and impact of the beginning of a text on orienting the entire work.

Text : Openings, Edward Said
Eagleton, pp. 1-35

Week 4: Endings

Discussion: openings and closings. The varieties of conclusions and their effect on the entire work.

Text : The Sense of an Ending, Frank Kermode
Eagleton pp. 33-44

Week 5 : Character

An exercise in presentation and discussion of favorite characters.

Text : Aspects of the Novel, E.M. Foster
Eagleton, pp. 45-54 and Chapter 2 pp. 54-74

Week 6 : Plot

Return to Aristotle and the primacy of plot

Text : Reading for the Plot: Design in Narrative, Peter Brooks

Week 6 : Narrators and Narrative

Text : The Nature of Narrative, Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg
Eagleton pp. 82-100

Week 7 : Realism

Text: Studies in European Realism, Georg Lukacs
Eagleton, pp. 75-81

Week 8 : Interpretation

Form and content: modes of discourse and linguistic analysis.

Text : The Prison House of Language, Frederic Jameson
Eagleton pp. 117-147

Week 9 : Workshop

Applied interpretation to individual favorite novels chosen by study group members following techniques discussed in previous sessions.

Week 10 : Value

Originality vs. Imitation

Text : Mimesis, Eric Auerbach
Eagleton, pp. 175-206

Week 11 : Movements of Critical Interpretation from the 18th-20th Centuries

Philosophical, Classical, Romantic, Victorian, Realism, Naturalism, Surrealism. Types of traditional literary criticism: historical, biographical.

Week 12 : Workshop

Summing up and discussion