

TERM: Spring 2026
COURSE NUMBER: ENGL 6605.01
COURSE TITLE: Contemporary Critical Theory
SECTION TIMES/DAYS: T 4:30-7:00 pm
INSTRUCTOR: Harris

COURSE DESCRIPTION/PRINCIPAL TOPICS:

This course surveys trends in 20th and 21st century literary theory. In the first half of the class, we will explore a range of theoretical approaches in order to develop a set of tools that will open the doors of textual and cultural perception. We will find that literary theory incorporates concepts from other disciplines and reflects shifting views about language, human subjectivity, and the world. The class will provide backgrounds and overviews of different approaches, and then delve into theoretical essays and books. A goal of this course is to demonstrate the uses of literary theory and the pleasure of conceptual thinking about literature.

The course will conclude with a focus on 'the geologic turn' and 'planetary turn' in the Humanities broadly understood. We will explore work in areas including Environmental Humanities, Anthropocene studies, Geo-Humanities, and Eco-theory, and study nature writing, literature and art situated in the 'geologic now.'

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- Study a range of methodological approaches to literary theory.
- Apply different theoretical methods to textual interpretation.
- Understand critical theory as a resource and tool for promoting social justice.
- Develop a broad understanding of Geo-Humanities.

CLASS LEVEL RESTRICTION:

Graduate Only

RECOMMENDED/PREREQUISITES:

N/A

COURSE ATTRIBUTES:

- ☐ Critical Methodology
- ☒ Contemporary Critical Theory
- ☐ Major Writer / Genre / Literary Period
- ☐ Literature Elective
- ☐ Theory Elective
- ☐ Creative Writing Seminar
- ☐ Rhetoric / Composition Theory and Practice
- ☐ Linguistics OR Reading Theory