

## LITS3301 ISSUES IN CRITICISM

**SEMESTER II, 2011-2012**

### EXAM ADVICE

This exam is devoted to Module Two: Rhetorical Criticism. Of course, some things discussed in Module One may be relevant to what we did in Module Two, so it might be important to bear some of those in mind as well, but your main focus should be on Module Two.

You are required to answer two questions in all chosen from the following seven.

The first four questions all focus on rhetorical approaches to *literary* theory. The last three focus on rhetorical approaches to non-literary disciplines, specifically history, science and anthropology, respectively.

I would advise you to prepare *at least* three of the questions below because it always makes sense to have at least one 'back-up.'

1. This question is devoted to Wayne Booth's The Rhetoric of Fiction.
2. This question is devoted to Kenneth Burke's "Semantic and Poetic Meaning," "Literature as Equipment for Living" and "Symbolic Action in a Poem by Keats."
3. This question is devoted to the introduction to Harold Bloom's The Anxiety of Influence.
4. This question is devoted to chapters 2 and 3 of Henry Louis Gates' The Signifying Monkey.
5. This question is devoted to the introduction to Hayden White's Metahistory.
6. This question is devoted to Joseph Gusfield's "The Literary Rhetoric of Science."
7. This question is devoted to Clifford Geertz's "Thick Description."

### General Advice

You should familiarise yourself with the topic studied in this module by:

- A) consulting the relevant PhilWeb page devoted, in this case, to rhetoric; and
- B) studying some of the secondary sources listed there;
- C) carefully, in the case of each theorist,
  - I) studying the primary sources in question in conjunction with my own summaries / notes;
  - II) trying to recall the argument advanced in each essay; consulting relevant secondary sources for the light that these may shed on

the views of the theorist in question (for suggested readings, consult the relevant PhilWeb pages); and

III) comparing and contrasting the point of view of particular theorists.

D) Remember that in each question, the goal is not merely to paraphrase the argument of a particular theorist but to marshal that information in order to answer the particular question asked.

E) One way to get a handle on a particular theory is to consider the implications of the argument in question for your own work as a theorist and critic: how has it changed how you think about the nature of human identity, or the nature of knowledge, or the criticism of literature, etc.? How has it also accordingly changed what you do as a literary critic?

F) Another way to grasp a theory is to study a practical application of it. For example, if you are trying to come to grips with Freud's model of the psyche and the applicability of psychoanalysis to literary criticism more generally, it might be useful to read Marie Bonaparte's famous psychoanalytic study of Edgar Allan Poe.

G) Last but not least, remember that the secret in doing well in any exam is to anticipate the kind of questions which may be asked. To this end, prepare thoroughly: study the PAST EXAM PAPERS in this course and try, in the case of each topic and each theorist, to recall my emphases (and even hints), to put your finger on the main issues at stake and, thus, to figure out the kind of question which may be asked of you.