

LITS3301 ISSUES IN CRITICISM**SEMESTER II, 2012-2013****EXAM ADVICE**

This exam is devoted to Module Two: Rhetorical Criticism. Of course, many things discussed in Module One may be relevant to what we did in Module Two, but your main focus should be on Module Two.

You are required to answer TWO questions chosen from six questions in all.

The first three questions all focus on rhetorical models of literature and literary criticism. The last three focus on rhetorical approaches to non-literary disciplines, specifically history, anthropology and sociology, 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 is a general question on the application of rhetoric to the study of literature with reference to TWO of the following:
 - Burke, "Literature as Equipment for Living"
 - Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction;
 - Fish, "What Makes an Interpretation Acceptable?"
2. This question asks you to discuss one of the main sub-topics of literary theory (the author or literary form or literary history/intertextuality/canoncity or the reader or representation) by comparing Bloom's The Anxiety of Influence with Ong's "A Dialectic of Aural and Objective Correlatives."
3. This question addresses Gates' rhetorical model of African American language and literature in The Signifying Monkey.
4. This question is devoted to White's discussion in Metahistory of the various rhetorical strategies which historians use in order to make sense of the past.
5. This question is devoted to Geertz's attempt, in "Thick Description," to replace the dominant scientific model of anthropology with a rhetorical/hermeneutical approach.
6. This question is devoted to Joseph Gusfield's attempt, in "The Literary Rhetoric of Science," to apply the methods of the literary critic and rhetorician to sociology.

General Advice

You should familiarise yourself with the theorists and fields (e.g. anthropology) studied in this module by:

- consulting the relevant PhilWeb page devoted to that theorist or field;
- studying some of the secondary sources listed there;
- carefully, in the case of each theorist,

- studying the primary sources in question in conjunction with my own summaries / notes;
- 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
- comparing and contrasting the point of view of particular theorists.

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.

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?

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.

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.