

Subject: Crítica Anglosajona
Session: 2008-2009 and beyond
Year: Third year

Lecturer: Dr. José Antonio Álvarez Amorós
Credits: Six credits
Type: Core curriculum
Semester: First semester

Subject description The subject Crítica Anglosajona emerges from the fact that the history of Anglo-American literature swarms with great writers who have also been great critics. Not only have they reflected on literature as a social, cultural and aesthetic phenomenon, but they have also expressed critical opinions on their own literary practice as well as on their contemporaries' and earlier writers', thus frequently contributing to the modification of the canon or the literary taste of a period. One can think, for instance, of Sir Philip Sidney, Ben Jonson, John Dryden, Alexander Pope, doctor Johnson, William Wordsworth, Samuel T. Coleridge, Matthew Arnold, William B. Yeats, Virginia Woolf, Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, etc. As it is impossible to cover all these names in a six-credit subject, I have chosen to focus on some great writer-critics of the transition between the 19th and the 20th centuries. Therefore, we will study the critical ideas of Matthew Arnold, Ezra Pound, and T. S. Eliot, though close attention will also be paid to New Criticism, a powerful critical movement developed in the wake of Eliot's early views and whose remote ancestor is Matthew Arnold and his clairvoyant aspirations to critical objectivity.

Aims By the end of the first semester students of Crítica Anglosajona should have achieved the following aims:

(a) They should be familiar with the ideas and methods of a set of choice English writer-critics and critical movements of the transition between the 19th and the 20th centuries—as listed above—as well as with their cultural and intellectual background and later influence. An effort will be made to relate literary achievements and critical positions and beliefs whenever this relation seems relevant.

(b) They should be able to recognize the ideological, philosophical, aesthetic, and methodological features of a critical text, showing themselves capable of ascribing it to a particular critic or movement within the temporal and cultural limits established in the previous section. It is expected that this skill will also improve the student's capacity to extract meaning from complex texts in other intellectual areas.

Syllabus Some of the contents indicated below will be taught entirely by means of classroom lectures; for others, however, reading material may be assigned individually and progress assessed in tutorial time.

1. Matthew Arnold and the Victorian Era

Art as social and ethical reformation. Literature as a substitute of religion. The critical theory of the "touchstones." Poetry as a criticism of life: from literary criticism to social criticism.

2. Ezra Pound and Avant-Garde Poetics

The supersession of the Victorian literary ideology in England: Imagism, Vorticism, and Modernism. Ezra Pound as a first-rate innovator. The relative values of literary creation and literary criticism. The dual role of literary criticism according to Pound: teaching and discriminating. The atemporal and cosmopolitan nature of poetry. Verbal austerity, visual precision, and the concept of "image."

3. T. S. Eliot and the Emergence of a New Criticism

Eliot's influence on the 20th-century literary taste and canon. The idea of poetic impersonality and the creative process. The unification and dissociation of sensibility. Belief and ideology in literature and criticism. Common speech as the staple of new poetry. The "objective correlative." The atemporal conception of literary tradition. Eliot as a forerunner of New Criticism.

4. American New Criticism and Its British Allies

The English roots of American New Criticism. Practical critics and new critics. The pedagogic dimension of the New Criticism as a key to its protracted influence. Literary programme and political programme: triumphs and failures. A-historicism and textualism: the New Criticism as a text-centred critical school. The four fallacies of traditional criticism. The heresy of paraphrase and the organic conception of the literary work. The new critical vocabulary.

Set Readings Critical texts by Matthew Arnold, Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, I. A. Richards, and Cleanth Brooks will be the basis for commentary and class discussion. Some of these texts can be obtained from my personal web site at <<http://www.ua.es/personal/jalvarez>> by clicking on "Lecturas obligatorias." Those texts which cannot be obtained from my web site will be made available in photocopy.

Secondary Reading A more specific further reading section can be found at <<http://www.ua.es/personal/jalvarez>> by clicking on "Bibliografía recomendada." This section contains full details of the books and essays mentioned in class, as well as additional reading for those students willing to pursue the subject in greater depth. For general reference students should consult, among others, the following items:

Blamires, Harry. *A History of Literary Criticism*. London: Macmillan, 1991.

Hall, Vernon. *A Short History of Literary Criticism*. London: Merlin, 1964.

Wellek, René. *The Later Nineteenth Century, English Criticism, 1900-1950, and American Criticism, 1900-1950*, vols. 4, 5, and 6 of *A History of Modern Criticism, 1750-1950*. London: Cape, 1986. A breathtaking achievement and the last single-handed effort to systematize the history of Western criticism from 1750 to 1950. These three volumes amply cover the temporal and cultural expanse encompassed by the syllabus. Volumes 5 and 6 constitute indispensable reading for all those students wishing to deconstruct the stereotype that there was no Anglo-American literary theory and criticism worth its salt prior to the 60s.

Wimsatt, William K., Jr. y Cleanth Brooks. *Literary Criticism: A Short History*. 2 vols. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1957; Midway Rpt., 1983.

Teaching method There will be three one-hour group meetings held weekly for lectures and discussion of critical texts. Ideally, students are expected to have read the set readings before discussion occurs. Background information and specific contents will be addressed first by means of lectures; then critical writings will be analyzed in order to establish a network of meaningful relationships between these writings and the theoretical contents of a particular lesson. Students are expected to participate actively, and this participation will influence the final mark. These activities will take **4,5** of the credits officially allotted to the subject.

The remaining **1,5** credits will be devoted to individual work. Apart from the set readings, students will be asked to read essays and book chapters closely related to the lessons on the syllabus or to complementary material, and write a report on them. The assignment of these specific readings and the assessment of the progress made by students will be carried out on an individual basis in tutorial time.

Method of assessment The assessment of Crítica Anglosajona will be carried out as follows:

Reading Test section (pass mark 12,5%)

- Reading test (25% of the final mark): factual questions and identification of passages from set readings.

Questions section (pass mark 37,5%)

- Short questions on the whole range of the material covered by the syllabus (25% of the final mark).
- Essay-like questions and/or text commentary on the material covered by the syllabus (50% of the final mark).

Apart from the formal exam comprising the parts indicated above, students will have to submit a written report on their individual reading assignment, which will be assessed on a *pass/fail* basis. More details about the layout and writing of this report will be given in class. Please note that in case of doubt students can be asked to attend a personal interview and explain how the report was written.

Please remember

- To pass Crítica Literaria Anglosajona you need to pass (a) the reading test and (b) the short questions and the essay-like questions independently, that is to say, you need to obtain at least 12,5% and 37,5% in the test section and in the questions section respectively. Of course, you also need to obtain a *pass* mark in the written report.
- You are strongly advised to write and submit the written report just after the Christmas vacation. The deadline for the submission of this report will be the date of the exam for Crítica Anglosajona. Please note that no reports will be accepted after that date, the next submission period being the July resit!
- Please make sure that you are correctly matriculated in Crítica Anglosajona before you take any exams. Marks obtained by students who are not officially matriculated will not be stored away for future *convocatorias*.