



Subject: Crítica Literaria Contemporánea Aplicada a Textos Ingleses

Lecturer: Dr. José Antonio Álvarez Amorós
Credits: Six credits
Type: Optional
Semester: Second semester

Subject description The optional subject Crítica Literaria Contemporánea Aplicada a Textos Ingleses (second semester) and the compulsory, core-curriculum subject Crítica Anglosajona (first semester) have been designed as complementary. The subject Crítica Literaria Contemporánea Aplicada a Textos Ingleses emerges from the fact that the history of English 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 that by 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, 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 19th and 20th centuries. Therefore, in the present session, we will study the critical ideas of William Wordsworth, Matthew Arnold, William B. Yeats, Virginia Woolf and T. S. Eliot, though marginal references may also be made to William Hazlitt, Samuel T. Coleridge, Charles Lamb, Thomas Carlyle, E. M. Forster, etc.

Aims By the end of the second semester students of Crítica Literaria Contemporánea Aplicada a Textos Ingleses should have achieved the following aims:

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

(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 critical movement within the temporal and cultural limits established in the previous section.

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. English Romantic Criticism: Wordsworth's naturalistic diction

The German models. The irrational view of the literary phenomenon. The supersession of Neoclassical rules and the naturalness of the new poetic diction ("the very language of men"). The thematic revolution of Romanticism. Poetry as "spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling."

2. 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.

3. British Symbolist Criticism in an Irish Context: William B. Yeats

The name and nature of Symbolism. Influences on the formation of Yeats's idea of Symbolism: French and native components. The study of Blake and the theory of the two realms. Symbolism as spiritual revelation. Types of symbols and of symbolisms.

4. Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Group: Feminism and the Criticism of the Novel

The doubtful cohesion of the Bloomsbury Group. Virginia Woolf as a critic of the novel. Mental states and the role of impressionism in the new novel. The conception of the *common reader*. The historical sense and the passage of time. Feminism and an early critique of patriarchy in literature and society. Women in literary history.

5. 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 American New Criticism.

Set Readings Critical texts by William Wordsworth, Matthew Arnold, William B. Yeats, Virginia Woolf, and T. S. Eliot 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:

Abrams, Meyer H. *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and Critical Tradition*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1979.

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

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

Wellek, René. *English Criticism, 1900-1950* and *American Criticism, 1900-1950*, vols. 3, 4, and 5 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.

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 Literaria Contemporánea Aplicada a Textos Ingleses 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 Contemporánea Aplicada a Textos Ingleses 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 by the end of the Easter vacation. The deadline for the submission of this report will be the date of the June exam for Crítica Literaria Contemporánea Aplicada a Textos Ingleses. Please note that no reports will be accepted after that date, the next submission period being the September resit for each session!
- Please make sure that you are correctly matriculated in Crítica Literaria Contemporánea Aplicada a Textos Ingleses before you take any exam. Marks obtained by students who are not officially matriculated will not be stored away for future *convocatorias*.