

Each response for this 3-day take-home examination will be marked holistically, with no specific percentage of marks for any one aspect within each response. The marker will thus be making an overall judgment of the quality of each answer as a whole. Weaknesses in one area may be compensated for by particular skill in another, and vice versa. Independence of thought and evidence of analytical ability will be rewarded. Significant problems in structure, analysis, and/or language can result in lower grades.

Details for each response will be provided after each prompt below.
Part I consists of two responses (25% each), while Part II consists of one essay (50%).

Take-home Exam (3 days, Inspira)

Begins: 5 Dec., 11:00 a.m.

Ends: 8 Dec., 11:00 a.m.

I. Identification and explanation (50%)

*Select **TWO** of the following passages. Identify the author and source. Explain in your own words what the passage is about, particularly key terms and concepts. Explain how these ideas relate to the broader project or argument of the author in this source. Each of your responses should be 1-2 pages in length (total 2-4 pages). One page is approximately 2,300 characters, including spaces.*

A.

“In reading a text, one must open it out both to what went into it and to what its author excluded. Each cultural work is a vision of a moment, and we must juxtapose that vision with the various revisions it later provoked – in this case, the nationalist experiences of post-Independence India.

In addition, one must connect the structures of a narrative to the ideas, concepts, experiences from which it draws support.”

Edward Said, “Narrative and Social Space” from *Culture and Imperialism* (1993)

Key Terms: Imperialism, contrapuntal reading, ideology/”vision of a moment”

+ successful answers will explain the connection between British novels and imperialism

+ Good answers need to explain what Said means by “what its author excluded” – an A or B answer will give an example

+ Answers must explain Said’s sense of the connection between imperialism and British novels

+ A or B answers will give some sense of how Said understands ideology, even if the answer does not use this term

B.

“The distinction between expression and performativeness is crucial. If gender attributes and acts, the various ways in which a body shows or produces its cultural signification, are performative, then there is no preexisting identity by which an act or attribute might be measured; there would be no true or false, real or distorted acts of gender, and the postulate of a true gender identity would be revealed as a regulatory fiction.”

Judith Butler, “Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity” from *Gender Trouble* (1990)

Key terms: performativity, parody/pastiche (drag), gender

Key arguments: gender is a performance unconnected to any essence; Butler uses drag as an example of a certain kind of critical parody

To get above a C, the answer must take account of:

+ the difference between Butler’s account of gender and Rubin’s sex/gender system,

+ the way in which Butler thinks about parody (and pastiche),

OR,

+ Butler’s argument with feminisms that assume a stable, predetermined subject.

An A answer should reference this last point above: understanding gender as performative has implications for feminist politics

C.

“This moment was that in which language invaded the universal problematic; that in which, in the absence of a center or origin, everything became discourse – provided we can agree on this word – that is to say, when everything became a system where the

central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely present outside a play of differences."

- **Jacques Derrida, "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences,"** from *Writing and Difference*. Trans. Alan Bass. University of Chicago Press, 1978.
- **key terms:** center, language (signifier, signified), decentering
- **Successful answer must answer the question: 'What is the play of differences'?**
- **key argument:** the movement of language necessarily undoes any fixed center or anchor

An A or B answer should give a good sense of Derrida's relationship to structuralism.

An A answer should say something about the influence or importance of Derrida's decentering of discourse.

II. Essay (50%)

Write a precise and focused essay about how **one** of the three following literary texts can be approached from multiple theoretical perspectives:

Larsen's *Passing*

Rich's "Diving Into the Wreck"

Lahiri's "When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine"

Choose one of these texts and write a 5-7 page essay that makes insightful connections between the text and **three** theoretical essays. Two of these essays need to be from the syllabus (i.e. Morrison, Spivak, Marx, etc...), and one needs to be an essay from the Parker anthology that is NOT on the syllabus (i.e. Nietzsche, de Man, Jameson, etc...).

A successful essay will give a **detailed** and accurate account of the theory being utilized, and it will be specific about how the theoretical concepts or ideas lead to interpretive insights about the literary text in question. It is imperative that your essay fully explain the theoretical terms and/or concepts it takes from each of the three theoretical texts. Your essay does not need to have a central analytic thesis. It does need to be clear about what relationship it posits between the one literary text and each of the three theoretical texts. (This might end up being three different relationships.)

If you use ideas drawn from elsewhere, be sure and cite them properly.

Your essay should be 5-7 pages in length. One page is approximately 2,300 characters, including spaces.

- specific minimum requirements must be met (one literary text, three theoretical texts, clear connection between theoretical approach and literary text, page length) in order to receive a passing grade
- Two key tasks:
 1. Display knowledge of key ideas and concepts from the three theoretical texts
 2. Make an insightful connection between these ideas/concepts and the chosen literary text
- stronger essays will demonstrate particularly sophisticated understandings of the theoretical texts and/or develop particularly effective analyses of the chosen literary text
- weaker essays (but still passable) must at least be able to identify aspects of the literary text that could be relevant to the theoretical concepts

In grading, particular emphasis is place on the following aspects of the essay prompt:

“A successful essay will give a **detailed** and accurate account of the theory being utilized, and it will be specific about how the theoretical concepts or ideas lead to interpretive insights about the literary text in question.”