Literary texts are not inert but organic. Reading a text means entering into a conversation with, among others, the author, competing literary critics, and other readers. This course will serve as an introduction to some of the major approaches and shifts in literary theory and will allow students to apply a variety of critical approaches to any given text with the awareness that there is no one way – or “correct way” – to read a text.

Required texts:

William Faulkner’s *As I Lay Dying* (Norton Critical Edition)
Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*
Anne H. Stevens’ *Literary Theory and Criticism: An Introduction*
Various readings available through Blackboard (BB)

Tentative Course Schedule (subject to change):

30th Aug: Introduction
1st Sept: Read Richter’s “Falling into Theory: An Introduction” (p1-30) -- Blackboard
6th Sept: Stevens’ Chapter 1
8th Sept: Stevens’ Chapter 8
13th Sept: *As I Lay Dying*
15th Sept: *As I Lay Dying* and Critical Reception (153-170)
22nd Sept: Calvin Bendient’s “Pride and Nakedness: *As I Lay Dying*” (262-275) & Doreen Fowler’s “Matricide and the Mother’s Revenge: *As I Lay Dying*” (315-328)
27th Sept: Patrick O’Donnell’s “Between the Family and the State: Nomadism and Authority in *As I Lay Dying*” (329-335) & Richard Gray’s “[A Southern Carnival]” (336-347)
29th Sept: Library Day Meet in the Media Classroom and Bring Your Laptops
4th Oct: Stevens’ Chapter 9
6th Oct: Theresa M. Towner’s “Black Matters on the Dixie Limited: *As I Lay Dying* and *The Bluest Eye*” (Blackboard)
11th Oct: *Beloved*
13th Oct: *Beloved*
18th Oct: *Beloved*
20th Oct: *Beloved*

Annotated Bibliographies Uploaded to Class Blog

Students will demonstrate their working knowledge of a variety of critical approaches through a collaborative construction of an end-of-term digital essay utilizing WordPress. The class will be divided into two groups—using either Morrison or Faulkner’s text—and each group will generate the following components of the “essay.”

Each component will have a research as well as a writing element. Students will do an individual annotated bibliography project early in the term in preparation for this project. (We will build in class time for a library workshop on doing effective research). This piece of writing will be publicized on-line, which means the audience might include people outside the academy.

You may choose to include a visual or two—but they are not necessary. We will discuss this further in class on the day we look at the examples listed below.

http://blog.uvm.edu/scalexan-vsf/

http://badger.uvm.edu/omeka/exhibits/show/fpk-2014/introduction
Annotated Bib Assignment:

In preparation for the Digital Critical Dialogue project, you will do an annotated bibliography. What this means is you will have to go to the library and find five articles on either Toni Morrison or William Faulkner; you will list each text following MLA format; you will also generate a 200-word annotation or summary of each text. You may use one article from the class materials. The articles cannot all be based on the same approach or lens; instead, you need to find at least three different approaches to these texts. I have scheduled a research workshop day at Bailey-Howe to help you get started on this.

You should look at following excellent guide for preparing the annotated bibliography: http://guides.library.cornell.edu/annotatedbibliography

Use MLA and Project Muse: JSTOR archives older journals, which might mean the available articles are dated or not applicable.

The reference librarians will be happy to help you; in addition, Patricia Mardeusz, the reference librarian for literature at BH library, is the liaison for the English Department and is familiar with English 100 and all that it entails (patricia.mardeusz@uvm.edu).

Once completed, the annotations will be uploaded to the Digital Critical Dialogue platform.

Rhetorical Discernment: Knowing Your Audience:

Short Paper Assignment

Starting with the idea that theoretical approaches represent a variety of lenses and agendas through which to engage with a text, this assignment asks you insert yourself into this ongoing scholarly debate. Choose two theoretical lenses and imagine a conversation between two different literary critics, both of whom want to convince the other that her particular approach
is “the way” to read this text. Both of your “voices” are familiar with the language of theory and criticism, which means you don’t have to define your terms overtly. Consider focusing on one or two sections/chapters/moments in the novel instead of trying to discuss all the complexities of either of these two texts.

If you are working on the Morrison digital critical project, you will focus on Faulkner in this assignment; if you are working on Faulkner, then your paper will focus on Morrison.