

Literary History: A Systematic Approach

The aim of this course of lectures is two-fold: On the one hand it will present a systematic overview of the historical development of English and American literature which should come in handy as background knowledge for all kinds of seminars and for preparing exams. On the other hand it will discuss the criteria and premises on which the construction of literary or cultural histories is inevitably based. Thus, students will be alerted to the cultural factors which have governed the writing of literary history in the past, and the lecturer will try to be as explicit as possible with regard to the construction principles underlying his story.

Lecture 1: What Is Literary History?

1) Course Overview

Two (Hi)stories:

Part 1: Poetry/Subjectivity/Modernity

Part 2: A History of the Novel

Conclusion

2) What Is Literary History?

3) Literary History and Media History

1) Overview

23rd Oct **Lecture 1:** What Is Literary History?

30th Oct **Lecture 2:** Received Opinion about English Literary History and the
Basic Outline of a Systematic Approach

Part 1: Poetry/Subjectivity/Modernity

6th Nov **Lecture 3:** Poetic Subjectivity as a Marker of (Early) Modernity
(c. 1550-1700)

13th Nov **Lecture 4:** The Backlash of Neoclassicism (c. 1700-1780)

20th Nov **Lecture 5:** The Romantic Synthesis: Subjectivity, Individuality and the
Problem of Cultural Validity (c. 1780-1832)

27th Nov **Lecture 6:** The Evolution of Poetic Difficulty: Romanticism into
Modernism (c. 1832-1930 and beyond)

4th Dec **Lecture 7:** Poetry Today?

Part 2: A History of the Novel

11th Dec **Lecture 8:** The Rise of the Novel (c. 1680-1750)

18th Dec **Lecture 9:** Crisis? What Crisis? (c. 1750-1800)

8th Jan **Lecture 10:** The Conventions of Realism (c. 1800-1900 and beyond)

15th Jan **Lecture 11:** Turn of the Century, 'Turn of the Novel':
Modernism, Aestheticism, Avantgarde
(c. 1900-1945/1968/1989?)

22nd Jan **Lecture 12:** Postmodernism (c. 1945/1968/1989?- ...)

29th Jan **Lecture 13:** A Brief History of English Drama

5th Feb **Lecture 14:** Literature and Literary History Today:
The Uses and Limitations of a Systematic Approach

12th Feb **Written Exam**

2) What is Literary History?

What is Literature? (Culler 2000)

- imaginative writing (fictional vs. factual writing)
- language that draws attention to itself, that is made strange, that differs from 'normal' language use
- a non-pragmatic discourse that serves no immediate practical use
- works referring to other works of literature, autonomy/intertextuality

> Problems of Demarcation (1): The canon? (cf. Krystal 2014)

Markers of Literariness

Text:

- foregrounding of language (linguistic patterning)
- integration of language (structure, work of art: 'wholeness-convention')
- fictionality (de-referentialization, de-contextualization)

Context:

- literature as a self-organized, evolving context (intertextuality, reflexivity)
- literature as an aesthetic object (suspended communicative function)

A History of Literary History (Patterson 1995)

1) extrinsic approaches

- "objective" history vs. "subjective" literature
- "history" authorizes what "literature" can "say"

2) intrinsic approaches

- reaction against the privileging of the historical insistence on the autonomy of literature, history relegated to the "background"
- formalist concepts of literary evolution

3) new extrinsic approaches

- literature as a social practice
- social functions ↔ literary conventions
- continuity between literature and other writings
- "literature" (writing) authorizes what "history" can "say"/"be"
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> Problems of Demarcation (2):

"Is Literary History the History of Everything?" (Simpson 1999)

3) Literary History and Media History (cf. Faulstich 1994, 26-40)

media history as	-annals -social history -history of media systems -history of technology -history of products/works -history of institutions -history of important persons -history of media successes -history of media functions -history of producers/audiences -political history (27f.)
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Phases of Media History:

A	- 1500	'human' media (small groups) theatre, oral trad., manuscripts
B	- 1900	print media (individual ► mass media) letters, pamphlets, books, newspapers etc. photography, phonography
C	- 2000	electronic media (mass media) telegraph/telephone, film, radio, television, audio/video
D	-?	substitution media computer (digitalization, multimedia), internet

Principles of Media History:

- 1) accumulation of media > changes of function
- 2) increasing dynamics (Phase A: 30000 – 40000 years, Phase B: 400 years, Phase C: 100 years, Phase D: ?)
- 3) mediation between human beings and reality becomes ever more inclusive and complete

Bibliography Lecture 1:

- Culler, Jonathan, "What Is Literature and Does It Matter?" In: J.C., *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000: 18-41.
- Faulstich, Werner, ed. *Grundwissen Medien*. München: Fink, 1994.
- Krystal, Arthur, "What Is Literature? In Defense of the Canon." *Harper's Magazine* (March 2014): 89-94. <http://harpers.org/archive/2014/03/what-is-literature/> (Oct 20, 2014)
- Patterson, Lee, "Literary History." In: Frank Lentricchia, Thomas McLaughlin (eds.). *Critical Terms for Literary Studies*. Chicago/London: U of Chicago P²1995: 250-262.
- Simpson, David, "Is Literary History the History of Everything? The Case for 'Antiquarian' History." *SubStance* 88 (1999): 5-16.
<http://www.rc.umd.edu/praxis/contemporary/simpson/simpson> (Oct 20, 2014)