

Monday 30 May 2022: 12pm

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Tuesday 31 May 2022: 12pm

Part II Paper 16

THE HISTORY AND THEORY OF LITERARY CRITICISM

Answer **three** questions.

*Do **not** make any one writer or topic the central theme of more than one answer. In questions where a quotation is attributed, candidates are not obliged to refer to that author in their answer unless specifically required to do so.*

*Do **not** present the same material twice, **either** in this paper **or** in the examination as a whole.*

Irrelevant answers, or answers only tenuously related to the question, will be penalized.

In the case of handwritten scripts, illegible handwriting may place candidates at a disadvantage.

*Include your **number**, not your name, on submitted scripts.*

There will be a word-count range of 800-1200 per essay, which is intended to approximate to the amount that can be written by hand under normal examination conditions.

Examination responses should conform to the following presentation requirements: they should be in minimum 12pt type; should use a sans serif typeface (eg Arial or Calibri); should be 1.5 or double-spaced; and should be submitted as a word-processed document (in .docx or .rtf format).

1. Criticism of literature, no matter when it was written, builds upon the works of classical authors.
Make a case **both** for and against this argument by comparing writers and their critical work.
2. Since the end of the eighteenth century the study of rhetoric has been in decline. Is this a good or a bad thing for literary criticism or theory?
Your answer should make reference to works written **both** before the end of the eighteenth century and after.
3. Imitation is the basis for all literary art.
Discuss.
4. The sublime is in the eye of the beholder.
Compare a work or works that can be argued to support this view with a work or works that can be argued to refute it.
5. Examine the claim that aesthetics is completely distinct from, and therefore unengaged in, politics.
Your answer should address the following further claim, that such an account of aesthetics is historically contingent.
6. Literary criticism never escapes the dogged search for a text's meaning; literary theory seeks to expose this as a flaw.
Your answer may argue for or against this view.
7. Make a case for the significance of Biblical exegesis for the work of any literary critic or theorist.
8. Literary criticism or theory is most effective when couched in the form and style of the essay.
Discuss.
9. Romantic period accounts of 'the literary' open up engagements between writing and other art forms, such as the visual or musical.
Explore this observation.

10. Discuss the ways in which world historical events or processes leave their imprint on works of literary criticism or theory.
You might consider that the following, among many others, could be considered to be 'world historical events or processes': decolonisation, the first World War, 9/11, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the cold war, the end of Apartheid in South Africa, decarbonisation.
11. Examine the claim that literary theory from the start of the twentieth century up until today has failed to articulate a coherent philosophy of language.
12. Discuss how terms and concepts developed within psychoanalysis have been used to enrich literary critical or theoretical works.
13. New Historicism has been criticised for its use (or abuse) of the anecdote.
Explore the ways in which anecdotes provide material for literary theoretical exposition.
14. Texts are inescapably instantiations of ideology.
Discuss the ways in which literary criticism or theory has reflected on this claim.
15. Make a case for the requirement that all readings of texts attend to the category of 'voice'.
Your answer might, for example, draw inspiration from feminist, postcolonial or queer theory.
16. Humans are animals.
Explore the uses to which this observation has been put in any works of literary theory.
17. All artworks are susceptible to the analysis of their structures. Does such analysis destroy the work of art?
Your answer might draw upon literary theories engaged with social anthropology, social science, information science or semiotics.
18. Can we discern within the history of literature a history of affect or emotion?
Your answer should include a discussion of whether such a history would first need to articulate a *theory* of affect or emotion.

19. Literary theory was once preoccupied by the 'death of the author'. Today we are more likely to be concerned by the 'death of the planet'.
Discuss recent and emerging literary critical or theoretical works in relation to this alteration in focus.
20. Some types of literary theory are more technical than others. Is this a strength or a weakness?
Your answer might draw upon examples such as: deconstruction, stylistics, neuroaesthetics, quantitative literary analysis, poetics and prosody studies.
21. Literary criticism and theory is most relevant if it sees itself as a contribution to ethics.
Use this opinion as a prompt for the discussion of the work(s) of **any** literary critic(s) or theorist(s).
22. Why does poetry need defending?
Your answer should be focussed on the genre of the 'defense of poetry'.
23. Comment on the tendency within literary theory towards endless evolution: first there was structuralism which was 'replaced' by post-structuralism; first there was historicism which was 'replaced' by New Historicism; first there was formalism which was replaced by neo-formalism; modernism was replaced by postmodernism.
24. How have literary critics or theorists exposed or exploited **one** of the following dichotomies or pseudo-dichotomies:
- (a) centre/margin;
 - (b) inside/outside;
 - (c) metropolitan/cosmopolitan;
 - (d) mind/body;
 - (e) world/text;
 - (f) sex/gender;
 - (g) love/desire;
 - (h) country/city.

END OF PAPER