

The Rise of the Novel
Spring 2025

Final Paper

Novel in/as Theory

Due: Turn-in window June 6-8 on Canvas (no hard copy needed)

Length: 7 pages

Weight: 25%

This term, we've practiced reading novels and theory together, looking for the theory in novelistic form, and the literary forms in theory.

This paper invites you to select 1.) **a novel or novella**, and 2.) **one or more theoretical and/or critical text(s)** to read alongside it. Ideally, the novel and theory should mutually shed light on one another, or complicate, contradict, or otherwise exploit the ambiguities of the other. Your task is to enter the critical conversation to produce a close and careful reading of the novel and the theory. Make sure to consider how the theory helps to draw forth meaning from the novel, but also how the novel pushes back against or otherwise engages or complicates the theory. Novels *theorize*, and literary theory is *literary*.

With this relatively short paper, like the midterm paper, you will need to be very careful to limit scope and create focus on what is most important so that you do not take on too much.

You may choose any novel from the second half of term, Part II, "Sentiment, Romanticism, Realism" (roughly 1748-1815), chosen from *Fanny Hill*, *A Sentimental Journey*, *Wild Irish Girl*, or *Emma*.

You may select any theoretical text(s) listed on the syllabus from Part I or Part II of our course, or that are on Canvas (for example, by Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller"; Frederic Jameson, from *Antinomies of Realism*; George Lukacs, *Theory of the Novel*; Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*; J. Paul Hunter, from *Before Novels*; Michael McKeon, *Origins of the English Novel*; Susan Manning, "Transatlantic Literary History and the Poetics of Character," from *Poetics of Character*; Ian Duncan, "History and the Novel after Lukacs"; Catherine Gallagher, "The Rise of Fictionality").

You may also choose a critical text chosen in consultation with me, but you should know it well and it should be applicable to the novel.

Your job is, as it always is, to say something interesting, counter-intuitive, bold. See the description of an "A" paper on the syllabus to remind yourself of your goal. The successful paper will argue a thesis that is counterintuitive and provide evidence for it by analyzing the relevant passages and language from the novel and components of the theory. The successful paper will not shy away from the ambiguity of its object of study but will rather exploit the difficulty of both the novel and the theory to make a point. The successful paper will explain what is important about its thesis. It will be able to answer the question, So What?

This paper requires a fresh and original title, an introduction, thesis, topic sentences, smooth transitions, textual examples and evidence (smoothly integrated quotations, if necessary), analysis and a conclusion. Papers need not be exhaustive, but they must be attentive.