

# Government Degree College Baramulla

**SEMESTER 8**

**(MAJOR COURSE)**

**Department of English  
Research & Honors in English**

**Title: Trauma and Testimony in Literature**  
Credits (4+2): Theory 04, Tutorial -02)

**Code: ELRC2822M/ ELRR2822M**  
Contact hours: 60 (T) + 30 (T)

## **Course Objectives:**

- To introduce students to the study of trauma and its representation in literature.
- To examine literature as testimony to individual and collective experiences of violence, loss, and memory.
- To explore how trauma challenges conventional narrative structures and demands new modes of expression.
- To foster critical reading, ethical engagement with narratives of suffering, and the ability to connect theory with creative works.

## **Learning Outcomes:**

Upon completion of the course, students should be able to:

- Explain key concepts in trauma theory and psychoanalysis.
- Interpret how trauma is represented and reimagined in literary texts.
- Differentiate between psychological and historical trauma.
- Assess the ethical and aesthetic challenges of testimony in literature.
- Produce well-argued analytical responses integrating theory and textual analysis.

## **Unit I: Psychoanalytic Foundations and Introduction to Trauma and Literature**

- Introduction to trauma: meaning, scope, and its relevance to literary studies.
- Sigmund Freud and the concept of repetitive compulsion in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (Chapter III, pp. 17–25).

## **Unit II: Trauma Theory**

**Cathy Caruth**, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* Introduction (pp. 9-18):

- “The Wound and the Voice”
- “Double Wound”
- “The Story of an Accident”
- “Trauma and History”
- “The Voice of the Other”

## **Unit III: Poetry and Psychological Trauma**

• **Sylvia Plath** "Daddy", "Lady Lazarus", "Ariel"

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## Unit IV: Historical Trauma and Haunting

• **Toni Morrison:** *Beloved* (Novel)

### Tutorials (2 Credits)

#### Objectives:

- To enable students to engage deeply with trauma narratives through focused discussion and close reading.
- To develop comparative and analytical perspectives on trauma, testimony, and representation.
- To strengthen students' interpretive, writing, and presentation skills through guided assignments.

#### Learning Outcomes:

Upon completion of tutorials, students will be able to:

- Apply trauma theory to specific literary texts.
- Compare psychological and historical representations of trauma.
- Formulate critical perspectives on ethics and memory in trauma narratives.
- Present interpretive readings through discussions and presentations.

## Tutorials

### Unit I: Psychoanalytic and Theoretical Approaches

#### Topics Covered:

- Freud and the concept of repetition compulsion.
- Caruth's reading of trauma, narrative, and history.

#### Classroom Activities:

- Group discussion: "Trauma as an unclaimed experience."
- Assignment: Short essay on Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and its literary implications.

### Unit II: Literary Testimonies of Trauma

#### Topics Covered:

- Trauma and poetic voice in Sylvia Plath.
- Memory, history, and haunting in *Beloved*.

#### Classroom Activities:

- Presentation: "Speaking the Unspeakable - Trauma in Plath's Poetry."
- Group activity: The role of testimony and silence in Morrison's *Beloved*.

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## Suggested Readings

1. Caruth, Cathy. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.
2. Freud, Sigmund. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Translated by James Strachey, W.W.Norton, 1961.
3. Felman, Shoshana, and Dori Laub. *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. Routledge, 1992.
4. LaCapra, Dominick. *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001.
5. Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*. Vintage, 1987.
6. Plath, Sylvia. *Ariel*. Faber and Faber, 1965.