**UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH**

***Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory***

**FRIT 2710; GER 2110; RUSS 2110**

Thursday 2.30-4.55, CL 204 Nancy Condee [condee@pitt.edu](mailto:condee@pitt.edu)

Office hours: Mondays 1.00-3.00 and by appointment CL 1419 (Slavic)

**COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES.** In this course for beginning Humanities graduate students, we survey major movements and concepts in literary and cultural theory of the 20th and 21st centuries. These theories provide a range of ways to think about the interpretation of literature, film, and other cultural artifacts. A secondary aspect of this course focuses on the profession of literary study. Assignments include regular responses to the readings, a short paper, and sustained contributions to class discussion. All readings are available in English (those able to read the original texts are encouraged to do so).

**BOOKS FOR PURCHASE (3 total):**

Gibaldi, Joseph. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. 6th edition. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2003.

* **One** of the two following books:

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish*. New York: Vintage Books, 1995. 159 pp.

---. *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*. New York: Vintage, 1990. 325 pp.

* **One** of the following two books:

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 2006.

Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.

**Recommended:**

Eagleton, Terry. *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (anniversary edition). Minneapolis: U Minneapolis P, 2008.

Knellwolf, Christa and Christopher Norris, ed. *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*. Vol. 9. Twentieth-Century Historical, Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

## EVALUATION. Participants are graded on the basis of the following five items:

1. 10 seminar response papers 30 %
2. 2 seminar weeks (selection of questions, discussion, etc.) 30 %
3. Seminar discussion (in general beyond assigned projects) 10 %
4. Conference presentation 10 %
5. Final paper 20 %

**GRADING SCALE**

A+ 97-100 % B+ 87-89 % C+ 77-79 % D+ 67-69 % F 0-59 %

A 94-96 % B 84-86 % C 74-76 % D 64-66 %

A- 90-93 % B- 80-83 % C- 70-73 % D- 60-63 %

**REQUIREMENTS**

**Responses** (30 % of final grade; 10 total): each week you will write a response to one or more of the weekly readings on the syllabus. Some guidelines for these exercises:

**Logistics:**

1. Responses should be 400-600 words, due by email by ***5.00 pm each Wednesday*** before class.
2. Use MLA style in formatting your paper; consult Gibaldi as you write.
3. Since these papers serve as preparation for class, late responses (after 5.00 pm) are not accepted.
4. You may opt out of responses for one selected week with no penalty.
5. Papers will be graded on a check, check-plus, check-minus basis.

**Advice:**

1. Choose wisely: you should not try to cover all of the texts assigned in a given week.
2. Keep your focus on the theory; use a cultural text only judiciously to illustrate your point.
3. Do not philosophize: address one specific question.
4. Use citations only when unavoidable.
5. Consider how the text is contradictory or takes on a different valence in a larger or different context.

**Specific seminar week** (30 %): You will pick two times to run approximately an hour of the seminar, usually together with a partner. By ***5.00 pm Wednesday*** before the class (the same time as the response paper is due), you two will circulate four questions on the reading, then lead the discussion the following day. This is *not* an oral presentation: Seminar leader # 1 should talk at the beginning for no more than two minutes; together, you should spend almost all of the time in dialogue with students. Seminar leader # 2 will summarize the main points of the discussion and provide a closing comment. This will require you to know your text very well and to have a list of additional questions on which to base your discussion.

**In-class discussion** (10 %): Come prepared to discuss the assigned texts. Here are some of the things the instructor expects you to know:

## Who is the author? How does the assigned work fit into the author’s larger body of writing?

1. What are the keywords; key ideas; significant quotations; foundational texts invoked?
2. Can you give some kind of “opening salvo” (initial impression of the text)?

**Conference presentation** (10 %): this is an edited version of your final paper (12 minutes maximum), presented on the last day of class (Thursday, 12 December). More information to follow.

**Final paper** (20 %): Roughly 9 pages double-spaced (2000-2500 words) on a topic selected in consultation with the instructor. Your paper must be thesis-driven, introduced in a way that makes sense to peers who have read the same work this term, and clear about some kind of conclusion. Translations should be supplied in the notes. The paper should be formatted in MLA style: **12 point font, 1” margins, with text, notes, and works cited.**  Papers that do not follow MLA format will be returned ungraded and no credit assigned. Your final paper should be submitted by **5.00 pm Thursday, 12 December.**

**SMALL-PRINT LOGISTICS (3 policies)**

1. **Academic Integrity policy:** Students should familiarize themselves with the University Policy on Academic Integrity (<http://www.pitt.edu/HOME/PP/policies/02/02-03-03.html>). Plagiarism will result in an automatic F, with no chance of make-up.
2. **Cell phone and laptop policy:** Electronic devices are turned to the “off” setting during class. Laptops are discouraged; consult with the instructor if you must use them for note-taking.

## Disability policy: Students with a disability that requires special teaching or other modifications should notify the instructor and the Office of Disabled Student Services (412-648-7890 Voice or TDD; 216 William Pitt Union) and schedule an appointment no later than the Add/Drop date. The student may be asked to provide documentation of the disability to determine the appropriateness of accommodations.

## ATTENDANCE. More than one unexcused absence will affect the final grade. Absent participants are responsible for acquiring notes and handouts. Work assigned in an absence will not be given a later deadline without prior agreement. Students who miss more than three seminars will not pass the course.

**TEXTS.** Most texts are distributed by PDF. Check with the instructor in anticipation of upcoming assignments.

**SCHEDULE** (all assignments are due on the date indicated)

**CLASS # 1 (29 August)**: Introduction to the course; terms of the syllabus, etc.

**CLASS # 2 (5 September): de Saussure, Signs, and Structuralism 55**

What is a sign? What is a structure? What does structuralism offer and what are its limitations?

* Roman Jakobson and Claude Lévi-Strauss, “Charles Baudelaire’s ‘Les Chats.’” (18 pp.) PDF
* Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (excerpts): pp. 65-81; 90-99 + 100 (27 pp.) PDF
* Claude Lévi-Strauss, “The Structural Study of Myth” (10 pp.) PDF

**CLASS # 3 (12 September): From Structuralism to Post-Structuralism; Death of the Author 90**

Why does Structuralism come under assault? What is a text? What is an author?

* Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” 1968 (7 pp.) PDF
* Barthes, “From Work to Text,” 1977 (7 pp.) PDF
* Barthes, “Myth Today,” 93-149, 1957 (56 pp.) PDF
* Michel Foucault, “What is an Author?” 1969 (20 pp.) PDF

**CLASS # 4 (19 September): The Critique of Saussure (Bakhtin and the Dialogic) 33**

How is language “dialogic”? What is heteroglossia? What is discourse?

* Mikhail Bakhtin, *Discourse in the Novel* (extract) (12 pp.) PDF
* Ken Hirschkop, “Mikhail Bakhtin: Historical Becoming in Language, Literature, and Culture.” *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*. Vol. 9. 145-54 (9 pp.) PDF
* Valentin Voloshinov, “Critique of Saussurian Linguistics” (13 pp.) PDF

**CLASS # 5 (26 September): *Différance*, Deconstruction 79**

What’s “wrong” with a binary opposition? What is “deconstruction”? What is a deferred sign? Is there anything outside the text?

* Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, “587 BC–AD 70: On Several Regimes of Signs” (*A Thousand Plateaus*) (38 pp.) PDF
* Jacques Derrida, “Différance” [(25](http://hydra.humanities.uci.edu/derrida/diff.html%20and%20PDF%20(25) pp.) PDF
* Derrida, “Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences” (16 pp.) PDF

**CLASS # 6 (3 October): Reception and Reader Response 76**

How does the reader make meaning?

* Stanley Fish, “Interpreting the ‘Variorum’” (20 pp.) PDF
* Wolfgang Iser, “Interaction between Text and Reader” (12 pp.) PDF
* Hans Robert Jauss, “Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory” from *Toward an Aesthetics of Reception* (44 pp.) PDF

**CLASS # 7 (10 October): Myth, Ideology, Culture 127**

What is ideology and how does it influence the reading act? What does it mean to be interpellated? What is “hegemony” and how does it influence the consumption of culture? How is culture a sign?

* Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” (60 pp.) PDF
* Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (35 pp.) PDF
* Terry Eagleton, “What is Ideology?” (31 pp.) PDF
* Antonio Gramsci, “Hegemony.” *Literary Theory: An Anthology*. Rivkin and Ryan (1 p.) Ch. 7 PDF

**CLASS # 8 (17 October): Discourse and Power 159/325+ 6**

What is discourse? How does it relate to power? How does it relate to sexuality? To watching and being watched? How can discourse be “reversed”? What is the significance of Foucault’s ideas about power?

* Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces.” (6 pp.) PDF
* Either Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (159 pp.) or *The History of Sexuality* (325 pp.).

**CLASS # 9 (24 October): Psychoanalytical Approaches to Literature and Culture 144**

How does psychoanalysis relate to reading and interpretation? What is the unconscious? What is trauma? What is the mirror stage? What is the “abject”?

* Cathy Caruth, Chapter 3 (“Traumatic Departures: Survival and History in Freud [*Beyond the Pleasure Principle*; *Moses and Monotheism*]”). *Unclaimed Experience*. 57-72 (14 pp.) PDF
* Sigmund Freud, from *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* <http://www.bartleby.com/276/1.html> 118 pp.
* Julia Kristeva, “Approaching Abjection” (5 pp.) PDF
* Jacques Lacan, “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience” (7 pp.) PDF

**CLASS # 10 (31 October): Library presentation**

The library session will be organized in consultation with Dan Pennell, Hillman Bibliographer ([pennell@pitt.edu](mailto:pennell@pitt.edu); 412-648-7791). Location is not yet determined (CL 204 or Hillman).

**CLASS # 11 (7 November): Performativity, Sex, Gender 135**

What do sex and gender mean? What is gender performance? What does it meant to “queer” something?

* Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (Preface, Chapters One and Three) (66 pp.) PDF
* Donna Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century” (39 pp.) PDF
* Eve Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* 1-27 + Notes (30 pp.) PDF

**CLASS # 12 (14 November): Nation and Orientalism 240 or 368**

What is orientalism? What is a nation? How do the concepts of “nation” and “orientalism” intersect? What is the relation between “east” and “west” and how does this inform practices of reading and interpretation?

* Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (240 pp.) or Edward Said, *Orientalism* (368 pp.). **or** **58 pp. PDF**

**CLASS # 13 (21 November):** consultations with students on final papers

**28 November: Thanksgiving Break**

**CLASS # 14 (5 December): Race and Post-colonialism 74**

How can race be thought of in a post-structuralist framework?

* Homi Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse” (9 pp.) PDF
* Frantz Fanon, “The Fact of Blackness” (22 or 30 pp.) PDF
* Gayatri Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” (23 pp.) PDF
* Imre Szeman, “Cultural Studies and the Transnational.” In *New Cultural Studies: Adventures in Theory* (20 pp.) PDF

**CLASS # 15 (12 December): Presentations (12 minutes)**

Written version of final paper (8-10 pages, MLA style) due by email no later than 5.00 pm on 12/12.