

Comparative Literary Studies Program
Graduate Course Descriptions 2013-2014

Fall 2013

CLS 410: Intro Graduate Study

Class Meetings: T 2:00-5:00, Allison Hall 1021

Instructor: Susannah Gottlieb

Expected Enrollment: 10

CLS 413/SPANPORT 480: Topics in Latin American Lit and/or Iberian Lit: Brazil and the Ethnographic Imagination

Class Meetings: Th 2:00-4:50, Kresge 2-301 Instructor: Cesar Braga-Pinto Expected Enrollment: 10 Course Description: In his *Tristes Tropiques* (1955), Claude Lévi-Strauss refers to Jean de Léry's *History of a Voyage to the Land of Brazil* (1578) as the "breviary of the anthropologist." Since then, accounts of the native cultures of Brazil have played a central role in Western epistemics as well as in the construction of the modern Brazilian nation and aesthetics. This course is intended as both a thematic survey of Brazilian lettered culture and an investigation of the development of modern ethnography. Firstly, we will discuss the role of European accounts of encounters with the Brazilian landscape and indigenous peoples in the development of modern ethnography; then we will analyze how the Brazilian lettered elite responded to the image of Brazil that was constructed by Europeans as an exotic space, and how they incorporated it into their projects of nation building (from 19th-century Romanticism, to Modernist avant-gardes and beyond). Finally, we will discuss how indigenous cultures remain a heterogeneous space in the national and global imagination, and the political consequences of this contradiction in contemporary societies. Readings will include travel narratives, novels, poems, essays, ethnographic accounts and films. Essays by Montaigne, Jacques Derrida, Frank Lestringant, Michel de Certeau, Silvano Santiago, James Clifford, Krupat, Walter Mignolo, V. Crapanzano, Viveiros de Castro, among others.

NOTE: Reading knowledge of Portuguese, Spanish and/or French desired but not required

CLS 481/FRENCH 494: Studies in Theory: Foucault, Discourse, Power

Class Meetings: TH 3:30-5:50 Kresge 2-420 Instructor: Christopher Bush Expected Enrollment: 15

This course offers a graduate-level introduction to the work of Michel Foucault, emphasizing its on-going influence on contemporary literary and critical theory. The first half of the course focuses on the analysis of language in Foucault's early archaeological project and the ways in which its critical epistemology attempted to break away from both historicism and structuralism. The second half of the course focuses on the later Foucault's groundbreaking analyses of power in relation to prisons, sexuality, and war. Most of seminar will be spent analyzing major texts by Foucault himself, but there will also be readings by some of his most important interlocutors (including Lévi-Strauss, Nietzsche, and Freud) and by critics who have developed his ideas in influential new directions (including Greenblatt, Butler, Stoler, and Mbembe). Books will be ordered in both English and French, with French department students being required to read the texts in the original and other students encouraged to do so. Additional readings will be provided via Blackboard. *Please note there will be readings assigned for the first meeting. If you are unable to register prior to the first meeting, please contact the instructor for the assignment.

CLS 488: Special Topics in Comparative Literature: The (Anti)- Mimetic Affect

Class Meetings: M 2:00-5:00, Crowe 1-125 Instructor: Jörg Kreienbrock Expected Enrollment: 10

Course Description: From its beginnings in Plato's Republic, the notion of mimesis is characterized by highly ambivalent assessments. The mimetic faculty (Walter Benjamin) of man is considered to be the force behind all artistic production while at the same time threatening to corrupt and alienate.

The complex and multilayered meanings of mimesis make it impossible to write a consistent history of its transformations, reformulations, and revisions. And despite being a topic of intense philosophical speculation from the 4th century B.C. until today, it is almost impossible to detect a permanent, essential core. Whether in the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, Classicism, Realism, or (Post-Modernism), mimesis as artistic practice and theoretical reflection continues to re-actualize itself, triggering highly affective responses from rejection and open hostility to acclamation and celebration. Or, as Jacques Derrida remarks: "The whole history of the interpretation of the arts of letters has moved and been transformed within the diverse logical possibilities opened up by the concept of mimesis."

After briefly analyzing the discussions of art as imitation in Antiquity (Plato, Aristotle, Horace), this course will focus on transformations of mimesis in the aesthetic discourse of the late 19th and the 20th century from Nietzsche to Benjamin, Adorno, Heidegger, and beyond. Taught seminar-style in English.

Reading List: Plato, The Republic, Aristotle, Poetics; Horace, The Art of Poetry; Friedrich Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy; Walter Benjamin, The Origin of the German Mourning Play, "On the Mimetic Faculty"; Bertolt Brecht, "The Modern Theater is an Epic Theater"; Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art"; Erich Auerbach, Mimesis, Theodor W. Adorno / Max Horkheimer, Dialectic of Enlightenment; Hans Blumenberg, "Imitation of Nature: Toward a Prehistory of the Idea of the Creative Being"; Jacques Derrida, Dissemination.

Winter 2014

CLS 411/PHIL 415: Critical Practices: Studies in French Philosophy

Class Meetings: T 5-7:50pm

Instructor: Penelope Deutscher

Expected Enrollment: 10

Course Description: The course begins with Foucault's College de France lectures from 1975-1979, and then turns to the field of post-Foucauldian biopolitics, with a focus on two themes: biopolitics understood as an administration of "precarious life" or as "thanatopolitics" (Esposito, Mbembe, Butler, Berlant), and the role of post-Foucauldian biopolitics in contemporary theories of reproduction, sexuality and race (from Stoler to Dorlin and Puar). Those familiar with Foucault studies will be able to deepen their expertise through study of the College de France lectures which now dominate contemporary Foucault scholarship: we will read excerpts from Abnormal, Society Must Be Defended, and Security, Territory, Population. In the second half of the course, we debate new concepts developed in post-Foucauldian biopolitical theory: bare life, precarious life, thanatopolitics and immunity (Lemke, Agamben, Mbembe, Esposito), biopolitical citizenship and bioglegitimacy (Rose, Fassin) precarious life (Butler). We conclude with the role of post-Foucauldian biopolitical theory in contemporary sexuality and race studies. Graduate students will develop advanced expertise in Foucault and contemporary post-Foucauldian scholarship, particularly the field of biopolitical theory as developed in contemporary continental philosophy and its interlocutors. Graduate students will develop advanced expertise in the role of post-Foucauldian theory, and biopolitics, as it is developing in contemporary race, gender and sexuality studies

Prerequisite: students should have taken PHIL315: Reading Foucault or an equivalent and should also have some background familiarity in gender and or sexuality

Evaluation Method: By paper and (very) short class presentation.

Reading List:

Michel Foucault , History of Sexuality volume 1

ISBN: 978-0679724698 (background)

Thomas Lemke, Introduction to Biopolitics ISBN-10: 081475242X (background)

Students will read excerpts from some of the following:

Michel Foucault, Psychiatric Power, Abnormal, Society Must be Defended, Security, Territory, Population,

Roberto Esposito, Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy,

Giorgio Agamben, Homo Sacer ISBN-10: 0804732183

Ann Stoler, Race and the Reproduction of Desire

Puar, Jasbir Terrorist Assemblages Introduction: Homonationalism and Biopolitics,

Achille Mbembe, Necropolitics, "On Politics as a Form of Expenditure"

Lauren Berlant, "America, Fat, the Fetus," "Slow Death"

Judith Butler: Is Kinship Always Heterosexual?

Foucault and Farge, The Disorder of Families

CLS 414/ ENG 461: Comparative Study in Genre: Modernist Poetics, Transnational Culture

Class Meetings: W 2-5:00pm

Instructor: Harris Feinsod

Expected Enrollment: 12

Course Description: Much recent scholarship on poetry and poetics in the modernist and avant-garde traditions reconsiders modern poetry's cosmopolitan origins, global imagination, international networks, and transcultural diffractions. This scholarship has taken place under headings including "transnational poetics," "global modernism," and "comparative modernisms." This course has several objectives: first, to read major works of modernist poetry in English along with comparative interlocutors from several other language traditions; second, to survey recent critical approaches to a "transnational poetics" of modernism, including hemispheric American studies, diaspora studies, ecocriticism, and historiographies of cultural front internationalism and the post-WWII emergence of postcolonial aesthetics; third, and most broadly, to assemble an account of how to read the elements of poetic form against literary history's cosmopolitan horizons.

Reading List:

Poetry in English may include selections, volumes, essays and manifesti by William Carlos Williams, Langston Hughes, Claude MacKay, Mary Austin, D.H Lawrence, Ezra Pound, Wallace Stevens, Hart Crane, Mina Loy, Melvin Tolson, Muriel Rukeyser, and Kamau Brathwaite. Comparative interlocutors will include Vicente Huidobro, Oswaldo de Andrade, Oliverio Girondo, Pablo Neruda, and Aimé Césaire. We will also read Criticism by Paz, de Campos, Glissant, Jameson, Edwards, Ramazani, Perloff and others.

Spring 2014

CLS 412: Graduate Student Seminar

Class Meetings: T 3:00-5:00pm

Instructor: Caitlyn Doyle

Expected Enrollment: 15

Course Description: In this seminar, we will be focusing our attention on works of theorists and poets central to the field of comparative literary studies and critical theory. In our discussions, we will approach the texts closely and indicate striking points in their structure. Although the students are invited to work on their individual interests in respect to the readings, the seminar will be structured around two key terms: ambiguity and awakening.

CLS 413 / ENG 411: Comparative Studies in Theme: Ovidian Poetics**Class Meetings:** M 2:00-5:00pm**Instructor:** Will West**Expected Enrollment:** 12

Course Description: *Metamorphoses*, Ovid's book of changes, continues to be one of the most widely productive texts in the history of world literature. In this class we will consider this poem as a kind of paradigm for poesis, in which transformation is more prominent than creation, and development overshadows origin. We will look at the stories *Metamorphoses* tell—among them those of Narcissus, Arachne, Actaeon, Orpheus, Pygmalion—and how they tell them; we will look at how those stories have been read and changed in turn, by readers and rewriters, into natural science, ethical prescription, political lessons, psychoanalysis. We will also consider how *Metamorphoses* have splintered across genres and modes, like the epic, the novel, the lyric, the dramatic—and the visual, the operatic, the cinematic, the digital. We will not attempt anything like a history of reception; the subject is too vast and the description too orderly. Instead, we will try to account in part for the promiscuity and fecundity of the idea of being Ovidian, or of being metamorphic across a range of periods and texts. We will look to *Metamorphoses* not as the point of origin of a history, but as a kind of core from which other kinds of production have drawn matter and energy. Insofar as is possible we will draw on the particular areas of expertise of the seminar participants, but we may well consider work by Petrarch, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Freud, George Bernard Shaw, Rainer Maria Rilke, Ted Hughes, David Bowie, Roberto Calasso, and Mary Zimmerman.

CLS 481 / GER 401: Studies in Communication & Culture: German Literature & Critical Thought**Class Meetings:** M 2:00-5:00pm**Instructor:** Samuel Weber**Expected Enrollment:** 12

Course Description: The class will consist of a close reading of Hölderlin's translations of Sophocles' *Oedipus tyrannos* and *Antigone*, with reference to Hölderlin's "Remarks" on his translations. Hölderlin developed his understanding of historical difference (between Ancient Greece and Contemporary Germany) through his translation strategy, which did not hesitate to transform the Greek originals that he had at his disposal into what he felt would be more appropriate for a contemporary audience. Through a reading of specific passages the class will explore the implications of Hölderlin's transformative translation for his understanding of history as an interplay of differences. English translations of Hölderlin's translation and Remarks will be consulted, as well as both English and contemporary German translations of the plays under consideration.

Evaluation Method:

Class participation 25%

Presentations 25%

Final paper 50%

Reading List: Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, 3 vols, Hanser Verlag, edited by M. KnauppR. C. Jebb, *Sophocles: Plays, Oedipus tyrannos, Antigone*, (contains Greek text with English translation and extensive commentary by Jebb)

In English is available:

1. Hölderlin's *Sophocles*, translated by David Constantine (*Oedipus and Antigone*).
 2. Friedrich Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, Edited and translated by Jeremy Adler and Charlie Louth (Penguin Classics)
 3. Friedrich Hölderlin: *Essays and Letters on Theory*, translated and edited by Thomas Pfau (SUNY Press)
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CLS 487 / ENG 481: Studies in Literary Theory and Criticism: The Digital Age

Class Meetings: TH 2:00-5:00pm **Instructor:** Brian Edwards **Expected Enrollment:** 12

Course Description: The Digital Age (as we will use the phrase) means several things at once: it is shorthand for the era of globalization, and implies something about the technologies and their impact; it refers to that which follows the postcolonial period; a new episteme within which literature, film and other analogue arts are vestiges from an earlier epoch; a mode of reading. In this seminar, addressed to students in a variety of fields and disciplines in the humanities and humanistic social sciences, we will explore a number of critical works that in various ways might allow us to develop a framework within which to read critically creative works that emerge from the period since the early 1970s. Some of these works address questions of the digital, or the epoch, directly. Others do not, but may allow us to craft our own account. Centrally important to this seminar is to speculate upon, even develop, a method of reading and of interpretation sensitive to the massive changes that issue with the post-1973 turn. We will build our case by first reading some classic accounts of the connection between technologies (including print) and literary and cultural production. Then we will develop our understanding of the digital age by surveying work in a variety of fields and areas, including literary studies, critical theory, sociocultural anthropology, and media studies. We will read some literary works, mostly from the 21st century and with a heavier concentration from the Middle East, North Africa and the US, that play with, depict, emerge from, etc., conditions of the digital age. There will be substantial space for exploring students' own research projects and interests within the context of our collective discussion, and certainly for final research papers.

Reading List: Readings include works by Benedict Anderson, Emily Apter, Tarek El-Ariss, Hillary Chute, Anne Friedberg, Alexander Galloway, Miriam Hansen, Katherine Hayles, Friedrich Kittler, Bruno Latour, Benjamin Lee, Franco Moretti, Michael Warner. Primary works may include authors such as Ahmed Alaidy, Jennifer Egan, Dave Eggers, Magdy El Shafee, Wail Ghonim, William Gibson, Marjane Satrapi.