

**M.A. Methods and Theory: Reading Critical Theories**  
**Prof. Dr. Elisabeth Bronfen**  
**Thursdays, 14:00 – 15:45**

(1) Feb 21 – Introduction. \***Susan Sontag**, “Against Interpretation”

**Culture**

(2) Feb 28 – \***Walter Benjamin**, “The Task of the Translator” and “On the Concept of History”

(3) Mar 7 – \***Friedrich Nietzsche**, *Zur Genealogie der Moral* (excerpts)

(4) Mar 14 – *Special session*: How to write the seminar paper

(5) Mar 21 – **Sigmund Freud**, *Civilization and its Discontents*

(6) Mar 28 – *Special session*: Reading visual culture

**Gender**

(7) Apr 4 – **Virginia Woolf**, *A Room of One's Own*

(8) Apr 11 – \***Judith Butler**, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory” and “Burning Acts: Injurious Speech”

(9) Apr 18 – \***Shoshana Felman**, from *The Juridical Unconscious. Trials and Traumas in the Twentieth Century*: “Introduction”, “Forms of Judicial Blindness, or the Evidence of What Cannot Be Seen”

**Power**

(10) May 2 – \***Roland Barthes**, “Myth Today”

(11) May 9 – \***Michel Foucault**, *Society Must Be Defended* (chapter 3), \***Nietzsche**, “Vorwort” from *Götzen-Dämmerung*

(12) May 16 – \***Jacques Derrida**, *Rogues* (“Preface: Veni”, “The Free Wheel”, “License and Freedom: The Roué” and “The Rogue That I Am”)

(13) May 23 – \***Jean Baudrillard**, “Simulation and Simulacrum” (excerpt)

## **Texts**

All participants are expected to have read Jonathan Culler's *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford UP, 2000) as well as Terry Eagleton's *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Blackwell, 2008) by the beginning of term.

Texts marked with an asterisk\* will be posted on OLAT. However, students should procure their own copy of Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, Sigmund Freud's *Civilization and its Discontents*.

## **Course requirements**

### **Thesis paper**

All students must prepare a **preliminary discussion for each of the seminar sessions** (200 words), to be posted on OLAT by 9 a.m. on Wednesday of the respective week. This can entail a thesis, a series of questions, comments or associations; it will facilitate class discussion and allow us to see in what directions you have been thinking while preparing for the class sessions. This will also count towards your class participation and, thus, is compulsory for each session. Neglecting to hand in 11 such thesis papers will result in a fail.

### **Session Minutes**

All students must compile written minutes (Sitzungsprotokolle) for one of the class sessions. Please send these to my assistant Morgane Ghilardi **one week** after the respective session at the latest.

### **Essay**

All students should hand in an essay (4000-5000 words):

- The essay should discuss at least one of the theoretical texts from the seminar programme, but could involve a comparison of several theoretical texts discussed.
- A starting point for the development of your essay topic may be a theme, a particular concern or an overarching question linking several texts.
- Your essay must include a thesis statement and develop a coherent argument like any other literary essay.
- The essay can (but does not have to) include an application to a literary text.
- You are expected to do thorough research on your theoretical texts.
- The deadline for handing in your essay is 1 October 2019.
- Please hand in a hardcopy at the department office AND send an electronic version of the paper via e-mail to my assistant Morgane Ghilardi.

### **Seminar grade**

The final grade is based on the seminar paper. However, if you fail to hand in 11 preliminary discussion papers and the Sitzungsprotokoll you will fail the course, as they are part of the Leistungsnachweis, even if they are not part of the grade. Plagiarism is a serious offence and pertains to all assignments.

### **Tutorial**

The tutorial is taught by Mansi Tiwari, starting in the second week of term, time and place tba.