

M.A. Methods and Theory: Reading Critical Theories
Prof. Dr. Elisabeth Bronfen
HS 2016, Wednesdays, 16:15 – 17:45

(1) 21 Sept – Introduction

Around 1900

(2) 28 Sept – Erich Auerbach, “The Brown Stocking”*, “Odysseus’ Scar”*

(3) 05 Oct – Walter Benjamin, “The Task of the Translator”*

(4) 12 Oct – Guest Lecture by Shoshana Felman on Barbara Johnson’s *A Life with Mary Shelley*
read: Barbara Johnson, “My Monster/My Self”*, Shoshana Felman “Afterword.
Barbara Johnson’s Last Book”*, “Afterword. Barbara’s Signature”*

(5) 19 Oct – Sigmund Freud, “The Uncanny”*. E.T.A. Hoffmann “Der Sandmann”*

(6) 26 Oct – Sigmund Freud, “Notiz über den ‘Wunderblock’”*, “Der Dichter und das
Phantasieren”*, “Der Familienroman der Neurotiker”*, “Zeitgemässes über Krieg und
Tod”*

Poststructuralism

(7) 02 Nov – Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*

(8) 09 Nov – Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended* (Chapter 3)*, *The Order of Things* (“Las
Meninas”)*

(9) 16 Nov – Jacques Derrida, *Différance**

Psychoanalysis

(10) 23 Nov – Julia Kristeva, “Approaching Abjection”*

(11) 30 Nov – Stanley Cavell, “The Uncanniness of the Ordinary”*. Nathaniel Hawthorne,
“Wakefield”*

(12) 07 Dec – Shoshana Felman, “Textuality and the Riddle of Bisexuality”*. Balzac “The Girl with
the Golden Eyes”*

(13) 14 Dec – Mladen Dolar, “‘I Shall Be With You on Your Wedding Night’: Lacan and the
Uncanny”*. Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (optional)

(14) 21 Dec – Barbara Johnson, “The Last Man”*

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) or Peter Barry's *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* (Manchester UP, 2009) by the beginning of term.

Texts marked with an asterisk* will be posted on OLAT. However, students should procure their own copy of Roland Barthes's *Camera Lucida* and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

Course requirements

Thesis paper

All students must prepare a **one-page preliminary discussion for each of the seminar sessions** (300-350 words), to be posted on OLAT by 9 a.m on Tuesday 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 12 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 Hannah Schoch hannah.schoch@es.uzh.ch **one week** after the respective session at the latest.

Essay

All students should hand in an essay (5000-6000 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 **20 February 2017**.
- Please hand in a hardcopy at the department office AND send an electronic version of the paper via e-mail to my assistant Hannah Schoch.

Oral participation

A seminar allows you to develop and test ideas by entering into a debate with others, so we encourage you to make use of this opportunity.

- Active participation – making contributions, asking questions etc. – will make it easier for you to get to grips with the challenging material.
- Ideally you will use the class discussions in order to work towards the topic of your final essay by testing your ideas on the other participants.
- Participating actively requires adequate preparation for each individual session. This entails carefully reading and rereading the texts, taking systematic notes, formulating questions, writing excerpts and summaries of all the texts, including definitions of key concepts, contexts and connections to other texts on the seminar programme, throughout the semester.

Seminar grade

The final grade is based on the seminar paper. However, if you fail to hand in 12 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 offense and pertains to all assignments.

Attendance

If you cannot attend a session, please notify me or my assistant as soon as possible.

Tutorial

The tutorial is taught by Gian Peter Ochsner (gian.peter.ochsner@access.uzh.ch), starting in the second week of term, time and place tba. The tutorial is highly recommended. It will provide you with the opportunity to discuss the theoretical texts, define critical concepts and develop ideas for your essays in a smaller group.