

HS 2022 – M.A. Seminar
Reading Literary and Critical Theory
Prof. Dr. Elisabeth Bronfen
Wednesday 16.15 – 18.00

This is the obligatory theory course for MA students in focusing on literature; it is not mandatory for students focusing on linguistics. Please note that all participants are expected to have read Jonathan Culler's *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford UP, 2000) by the beginning of term. Texts marked with an * will be posted on OLAT.

- (1) Sept 21 **Online Meet & Greet:** Introductions & course organization.
Please note, this will be a **Zoom Meeting**. All other sessions will be in person.

CULTURE

- (2) Oct 5 **Ralph Waldo Emerson.** "Circles"*
Friedrich Nietzsche. Excerpts from *On the Genealogy of Morality* (*Zur Genealogie der Moral*)*
Michel Foucault. "Nietzsche, Freud, Marx"* (→ Please focus on the second theme discussed in the latter half of the essay)
- (3) Oct 12 **Walter Benjamin.** "The Task of the Translator" ("Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers")* & "On the Concept of History" ("Über den Begriff der Geschichte")*. (→ Please focus on sections 1,6,9,13,14,16-18)
- (4) Oct 19 **Sigmund Freud.** *Civilization and its Discontents* (*Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*)

GENDER

- (5) Oct 26 **Virginia Woolf.** *A Room of One's Own*
- (6) Nov 2 **Julia Kristeva.** *Power of Horror: "Approaching Abjection"**
- (7) Nov 16 **Judith Butler.** *Bodies that Matter: "Introduction"**
- (8) Nov 23 **Donna Haraway.** *Staying with the Trouble. Making Kin in the Chthulucene: "Tentacular Thinking. Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulucene"**

POWER

- (9) Nov 30 **Shoshana Felman,** *The Juridical Unconscious. Trials and Traumas in the Twentieth Century: "Introduction", "Forms of Judicial Blindness, or the Evidence of What Cannot Be Seen"**
- (10) Dec 7 **Roland Barthes,** *Mythologies: "Myth Today"**, "The Face of Garbo"*
- (11) Dec 14 **Michel Foucault,** *Society Must Be Defended: Chapter 3**
Friedrich Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lying in an Extra-Moral Sense" ("Über Wahrheit und Lüge im Aussermoralischen Sinn")*
- (12) Dec 21 **Wrap Up –Discussion of Essays and Essay Writing**

Recommended Reading

Bennett, Andrew and Nicholas Royle. *An Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory*. Fourth Edition. Routledge, 2014.

Eagleton, Terry. *Literary Theory: An Introduction*. 2nd Revised Edition, Anniversary Edition. University of Minnesota Press, 2008.

Leitch, Vincent B, William E. Can, Laurie A. Finke (eds.). *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. Norton and Company, 2018.

Malpas, Simon and Paul Wake (eds.). *The Routledge Companion to Critical Theory*. Routledge, 2006.

Course Requirements

Thesis Papers

All students should prepare **a preliminary discussion for 8 of the seminar sessions** (+/- 400 words), to be posted on OLAT by 9 a.m. on Tuesday of the respective week. This should entail a thesis, but could also contain a series of questions, comments or associations. It should present an argument; indeed, help you practice your skills at argumentation. At the same time, it will facilitate class discussion and allow us to see in what directions you have been thinking while preparing for each session.

Theory Summaries

All students must also compile **a detailed summary of a text for one of the class sessions** (2-3 pages) that presents the key concepts and arguments of the text. Students should sign-up for a session on the OLAT forum at the beginning of the semester. Please upload the summary as a PDF to the appropriate OLAT Dropbox one week after the respective session at the latest. The summaries will be uploaded to the Materials folder. You may want to consult these summaries when preparing to write your own essay.

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 program 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. It can (but does not have to) include a critical reading of a literary text based on one or more theoretical texts.
- You are expected to do thorough research on your theoretical texts.
- Your essay should follow MLA style and formatting guidelines.
- Please discuss your essay outline/concept either with Prof. Dr. Elisabeth Bronfen or with one of her assistants before the end of the term.
- The deadline for handing in your essay is **February 20, 2023**. Please send **a hardcopy to Prof. Bronfen** and upload **a PDF** version of the paper (incl. the *Selbstständigkeitserklärung*) to the appropriate **OLAT Dropbox**.

Plagiarism is a serious offence and pertains to all assignments.