

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

- (1). 20.09 – Introduction, **Susan Sontag**, “Against Interpretation”*
- (2). 27.09 – Writing the Essay

Translations of Culture

- (3). 4.10 – **Walter Benjamin**, “The Task of the Translator”* and “*On the Concept of History*”*
- (4) 11.10 – **Pierre Bourdieu**, “The Forms of Capital”*, “Introduction”* from *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, and a short excerpt from **Karl Marx**, *Theories of Surplus Value**
- 18.10. – no class
- (5) 25.10– **Sigmund Freud**, *Civilization and Its Discontents**

Feminism and Gender

- (6) 01.11 – **Virginia Woolf**, *A Room of One’s Own*
- (7) 08.11 – **Shoshana Felman**, “Textuality and the Riddle of Bisexuality”* and **Honoré de Balzac**: “The Girl with the Golden Eyes”*
- (8) 15.11 – **Judith Butler**, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory”* and “Burning Acts: Injurious Speech”*

Structuralism and Poststructuralism

- (9) 22.11 – **Michel Foucault**, *Society Must Be Defended* (chapter 3)* and **Paul Ricoeur**, “The Conflict of Interpretations”* from *Freud and Philosophy*
- (10) 29.11 – **Jacques Derrida**, *Rogues* (“Preface: Veni”, “The Free Wheel”, “License and Freedom: The Roué” and “The Rogue That I Am”)*
- (11) 06.12 – **Roland Barthes**, “Myth Today”* and examples from *Mythologies**
- (12) 13.12 – **Jean Baudrillard**, *Simulation and Simulacra* (excerpt)*
- (13) 20.12 – **Stanley Cavell**, “The Uncanniness of the Ordinary”*, **E.A. Poe**, “The Black Cat”*, “The Purloined Letter”* (optional)

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 copies of Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* and of Sigmund Freud's *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*.

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 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 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 March 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 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.

Tutorial

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