

HS 2022 – M.A. Seminar  
**Reading Literary and Critical Theory**  
Prof. Dr. Elisabeth Bronfen  
*Thursday 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) Feb 23      **Online Meet & Greet:** Introductions & course organization.

**CULTURE**

- (2) Mar 2      **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) Mar 9      **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) Mar 16      **Sigmund Freud.** *Civilization and its Discontents* (*Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*)

**GENDER**

- (5) Mar 23      **Virginia Woolf.** *A Room of One's Own*
- (6) Mar 30      **Julia Kristeva.** *Power of Horror: "Approaching Abjection"*\*
- (7) Apr 20      **Judith Butler.** *Bodies that Matter: "Introduction"*\*
- (8) Apr 27      **Donna Haraway.** *Staying with the Trouble. Making Kin in the Chthulucene: "Tentacular Thinking. Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulucene"*\*

**POWER**

- (9) May 4      **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) May 11      **Roland Barthes,** *Mythologies: "Myth Today"\**, "The Face of Garbo"\*
- May 24      Farewell-Lecture: *Taking a Bow. Abschlüsse und Neuanfänge bei Shakespeare*
- (11) May 25      **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) June 1      **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 Wednesday 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.

### *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.
- Questions about the essay have to be addressed to Prof. Bronfen before the end of term; we will also be using the last session of the class to discuss the writing of the essay.
- The deadline for handing in your essay is **August 7, 2023; there will be no deadline extension**. Please get **a hardcopy to Prof. Bronfen**. Either **bring it to the secretary's office** or **send it by post** to: Prof. Dr. Elisabeth Bronfen, Ottikerstrasse 18, 8006 Zürich. **Do not send your paper as an e-mail attachment.**