

**HS 2019 – M.A. Seminar**  
**Reading Literary and Critical Theory**

Prof. Dr. Elisabeth Bronfen

*Thursdays, 14:00 – 15:45*

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 **asterisk\*** will be posted on OLAT.

- (1) **Sept 19** Introduction. **Susan Sontag**, "Against Interpretation"\*
- (2) **Sept 26** No class

**Culture**

- (3) **Oct 3** **Walter Benjamin**, "The Task of the Translator" ("Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers") and "On the Concept of History" ("Über den Begriff der Geschichte")\*
- (4) **Oct 10** **Friedrich Nietzsche**, *On the Genealogy of Morality* (*Zur Genealogie der Moral*) (excerpts)\*
- (5) **Oct 17** **Sigmund Freud**, *Civilization and its Discontents* (*Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*)
- (6) **Oct 24** SPECIAL SESSION: Reading Visual Culture  
**John Berger**, *Ways of Seeing*, Ch. 1-3\*

**Gender**

- (7) **Oct 31** **Virginia Woolf**, *A Room of One's Own*
- (8) **Nov 7** SPECIAL SESSION: How to Write the Seminar Paper  
**Prepare a thesis** for this session; you can always adjust the topic for the final paper.
- (9) **Nov 14** **Judith Butler**, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory" and "Burning Acts: Injurious Speech"\*
- (10) **Nov 21** **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"\*
- (11) **Nov 28** **Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick**, *The Epistemology of the Closet*: "Introduction: Axiomatic"\*

**Power**

- (12) **Dec 5** **Roland Barthes**, "Myth Today"\*
- (13) **Dec 12** **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")\*
- (14) **Dec 19** **Jean Baudrillard**, *Simulation and Simulacrum* (excerpts)\*

## Recommended Reading

Abrams, M. H., and Geoffrey Harpham. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. 9<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston: Wadsworth Publishing, 2008.

Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Manchester, New York: Manchester UP, 2009.

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

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

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

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

## Course Requirements

### Thesis Papers

All students must prepare **a preliminary discussion for 10 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. Please note that the thesis you will prepare for the “How to Write the Seminar Paper” session does not count towards the total number of thesis papers.

### Session Minutes

All students must also compile written minutes (*Sitzungsprotokolle*) for one of the class sessions (to be determined at the beginning of the course). 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 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.
- Please discuss your essay either with Prof. Dr. Elisabeth Bronfen or with one of her assistants in advance of writing it.
- The deadline for handing in your essay is **March 1, 2020**. Please hand in a hardcopy at the department office AND send a PDF version of the paper via e-mail to my assistant Morgane Ghilardi (morgane.ghilardi@es.uzh.ch).

Plagiarism is a serious offence and pertains to all assignments.

### Tutorial

The tutorial is taught by Jialu Zhu, starting in the second week of term. Time and place tba.