

FS 2021 – M.A. Seminar
Reading Literary and Critical Theory
Prof. Dr. Elisabeth Bronfen
Thursdays 14.00 – 15.45

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 made available on OLAT.

(1) Feb 25 Meet & Greet: introductions & course organization.

CULTURE

(2) Mar 4 **Friedrich Nietzsche**, excerpts from *On the Genealogy of Morality* (*Zur Genealogie der Moral*)* & **Michel Foucault**, “Nietzsche, Freud, Marx”*

(3) Mar 11 **Walter Benjamin**, “The Task of the Translator” (“Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers”)* & “On the Concept of History” (“Über den Begriff der Geschichte”)*

(4) Mar 18 **Sigmund Freud**, *Civilization and its Discontents* (*Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*)

GENDER

(5) Mar 25 **Virginia Woolf**, *A Room of One's Own*

(6) Apr 1 **Julia Kristeva**, *Power of Horror*, “Approaching Abjection”*

(7) Apr 15 **Judith Butler**, *Bodies that Matter*, “Introduction”*

(8) Apr 22 **Donna Haraway**, *Staying with the Trouble. Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, “Tentacular Thinking. Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulucene”*

POWER

(9) Apr 29 **Toni Morrison**, *Playing in the Dark*

(10) May 6 **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) May 20 **Roland Barthes**, *Mythologies*, “Myth Today”*

(12) May 27 **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”)*

(13) June 3 **Wrap Up – 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

Forum Posts

All students must write a forum post **for 10 of the seminar sessions** (approx. 400 words), to be posted on the OLAT forum by 9 a.m. on Wednesday of the respective week. Each post should entail a **thesis**, but could also contain a series of questions, comments or associations. It should present an argument; indeed, it should 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. The point is not to read out what you have written but, using what you have developed in writing, to enter into a dialog with the other members of the class. The forum posts will count towards your portfolio and, thus, are compulsory. Please note that forum posts that are not posted on time will not be counted towards your points, i.e. portfolio grade.

Theory Summaries

All students must also compile a detailed summary of a text (1000-2000 words) for one of the class sessions that presents the key concepts and arguments of the text. Please send it as a PDF to my assistant Morgane Ghilardi (morgane.ghilardi@es.uzh.ch) **one week after the respective session at the latest**. The summaries will be uploaded to OLAT.

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.
- If you would like to discuss your thesis and outline before writing your essay, you can get in touch with Prof. Elisabeth Bronfen or one of her assistants, Morgane Ghilardi and Mansi Tiwari.
- Plagiarism is a serious offense. All tasks have to meet academic standards with regard to citation and originality.
- The deadline for handing in your essay is **October 1, 2021**. The essay should be typed in a 12p serif font, double spaced, and have a title page. Hand in your essay as a PDF (incl. *Selbstständigkeitserklärung*) to morgane.ghilardi@es.uzh.ch.

Tutorial

The tutorial is taught by Nastacia Schmoll starting in the second week of term via Zoom (details will be communicated via email).