

FS 2022 – M.A. Seminar  
**Reading Literary and Critical Theory**  
Prof. Dr. Elisabeth Bronfen  
*Thursday 16.15 – 18.00*

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 24      **Meet and Greet.** Introductions and course organization

**CULTURE**

(2) Mar 3      **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 10      **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 17      **Sigmund Freud.** *Civilization and its Discontents* (*Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*)

**GENDER**

(5) Mar 24      **Virginia Woolf.** *A Room of One's Own*

(6) Mar 31      **Julia Kristeva.** From *Power of Horror*: "Approaching Abjection"\*

\*\*\*  
**Easter Break:** Please use this time to 1) prepare for the Special Workshop and 2) to develop a thesis for a possible essay to be discussed in the "How to Write a Critical Essay" session of the workshop.

(7) Apr 28      **Judith Butler.** From *Bodies that Matter*: "Introduction"\*

(8) May 5      **Donna Haraway.** From *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*: "Tentacular Thinking. Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulucene"\*

**POWER**

(9) May 7      **Special Workshop: Critical Perspectives on Race, Ethnicity, and Nation**

(10) May 12      **Shoshana Felman.** From *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 19      **Roland Barthes.** From *Mythologies*: "Myth Today", "The Face of Garbo", "Striptease", "The Great Family of Man"\*

(12) June 2      **Friedrich Nietzsche.** "On Truth and Lying in an Extra-Moral Sense" ("Über Wahrheit und Lüge im Aussermoralischen Sinn")\*

**Michel Foucault.** From *Society Must Be Defended*: Chapter 3\*

## *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*

Please note that this is the obligatory theory course for MA students focusing on literature; it is not mandatory for students focusing on linguistics.

### *Forum Posts*

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 argumentation skills. 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 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 send the summary 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. You may want to consult them 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, a series of relevant research questions 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 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 **August 31, 2022**. Please hand in a **hardcopy** to Prof. Bronfen and send a **PDF** version of the paper (incl. the *Selbstständigkeitserklärung*) via e-mail to my assistant Morgane Ghilardi (morgane.ghilardi@es.uzh.ch).

Plagiarism is a serious offence and pertains to all assignments.