

FRN 571 / ITL 571 / PHI 508.2:

CONTEMPORARY EUROPEAN THOUGHT AND CULTURE

FALL SEMESTER 2006

Prof. Hugh J. Silverman

Mondays 6:15-9:15 p.m. / Humanities 1051

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Office Hours: Tuesdays - 3:00 - 5:00 and by appointment

FOCUS AND PURPOSE:

Designed as an introduction to contemporary European thought and culture – cutting across cultural, political, and traditional boundaries.

Some of the main trends and orientations of thought in European cultural theory with respect to the nature and function of the work of art, poetry, language, literature, texts, reading, interpretation, cultural and political understanding, the role of foreigners, strangers, and the uncanny, the status of modernity and how postmodern thinking articulates its limits.

Emphasis will be placed on phenomenology, hermeneutics, structuralism, poststructuralism, semiotics, psychoanalysis, deconstruction, and postmodern theory since the 1930s – particularly in Germany, France, and Italy.

REQUIREMENTS:

Attendance:

Each member of the seminar is expected to attend each week.

Quizzes:

Two unannounced quizzes will relate specifically to the readings due for a particular day.

Each will include one question that will demonstrate a careful reading of the text assigned for that day.

Seminar papers: Two papers (about 7-9 pages in length).

The first paper should deal the readings for the first half of the seminar. This

paper should compare two of the cultural theorists whom we have read in the first part of the course. The paper should show how the two theorists would agree and differ on a specific topic, such as the "work of art," "poetry," "the text," "literature," the relation between art and politics, or art and experience, or art and a specific event, or how they would take up a literary, cinematic, or other text and interpret it differently.

The second paper should build on the first, introducing a third theorist (from the latter portion of the semester) in relation to what you developed in the first paper. Hence it should be an extension of what you wrote in the first paper.

Protocols: each member of the seminar will prepare a protocol for one or two of the seminar sessions (depending on the number of seminar participants). The person responsible for a particular week will write up an account of what transpired in class the previous week and will make a copy for each of the members of the seminar prior to the beginning of class.

The protocol for a particular week will be discussed at the outset of the seminar. This will give everyone an opportunity to review what transpired in the previous session and to raise any lingering issues or topics that were not sufficiently treated when first presented.

GRADING:

The two papers will be worth 60%, the two quizzes 20%, and the protocol 20%. Each member of the seminar is expected to read the material assigned for the indicated date and come prepared to discuss the texts in class.

DATE	TOPIC	READING	CH	TEXT	YEAR
Sept. 11	<i>INTRODUCTION to some main trends in contemporary European cultural theory</i>	TEXTUALITIES, PART I	CH. 1-5		
Sept 18	<i>Heidegger on the Origin of the Work of Art</i>	HEIDEGGER: POETRY LANGUAGE THOUGHT		"The Origin of the Work of Art"	[1935-36]
Sept 25	Heidegger on the role of poets, poetry, and language in cultural understanding	HEIDEGGER: POETRY LANGUAGE THOUGHT		"What are Poets For?" "Language"	[1946] [1950-51]
Oct 2	CLASSES NOT IN SESSION				
Mosaic Conference – Winnipeg, Canada					
"Following Derrida: Legacies" (Oct 4-7)					
Oct. 9	Sartre on writing and literature in their cultural and political situation	SARTRE: WHAT IS LITERATURE?		What is Writing? Why Write? For Whom does one Write? The Situation of the Writer..	[1947]
SPEP Conference – Philadelphia (Oct 12-14)					
Oct. 16	<i>Merleau-Ponty on indirect language and</i>	THE MERLEAU-PONTY AESTHETICS		"Cezanne's Doubt "	[1947] [1951-

	<i>the experience of painting</i>	READER		"Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence"	52]
Oct. 23	Merleau-Ponty on visibility in the arts	THE MERLEAU-PONTY AESTHETICS READER		"Eye and Mind"	[1960]
<i>Merleau-Ponty Circle – George Mason University (Oct 26-28)</i>					
Oct. 30	Barthes on the text, textuality, and textual reading	BARTHES: THE PLEASURE OF THE TEXT		"The Pleasure of the Text"	[1971?]
paper due on October 30					
Nov. 6	Kristeva on the semiotic and the symbolic	THE PORTABLE KRISTEVA	Part I & II	"My Memory's Hyperbole" "From 'Revolution in Poetic Language'" "Desire in Language"	[1984] [1974] [1980]
Nov. 13	Kristeva on horror and strangeness in politics and psychoanalysis	THE PORTABLE KRISTEVA	Part IV	From "Powers of Horror" From "Strangers to Ourselves"	[1980] [1989]
Nov. 20	Derrida on Limits and the Logic of Supplementarity	DERRIDA: ACTS OF LITERATURE	Chs. 1-2	"Interview" "Dangerous Supplement"	[1967-92]

thanksgiving recess

Nov. 27	Derrida on Law and the Law of the Genre	DERRIDA: ACTS OF LITERATURE	Chs. 3-6	"Mallarme," "First Session," Before the Law," "The Law of Genre"	[1967-92]
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Dec. 4	Derrida on the Outside of Language and the Text	DERRIDA: ACTS OF LITERATURE	Chs. 8-11	"Signsponge," "Shibboleth," "Aphorism Countertime"	[1967-92]
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Dec. 11	<i>Vattimo on the Avant-Garde and the End of Modernity</i>	THE END OF MODERNITY		Selections to be announced	[1985]
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paper due on December 11

Dec. 18 [week of final exams]	<i>Perniola on art in the age of postmodernity</i>	ART AND ITS SHADOW		"Art and its Shadow" (incl. Forward)	[2000]
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REQUIRED	AUTHOR/EDITOR	TEXT	PUBLISHER
FRN / ITL 571 /PHI 508.2		CONTEMPORARY EUROPEAN THOUGHT AND CULTURE FALL 2006	
REQUIRED			
Heidegger		Poetry, Language, Thought	Harper & Row
Sartre	Unger, ed	What is Literature?	Harvard UP
Johnson, ed.		The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader	Northwestern UP
Barthes		The Pleasure of the Text	Hill and Wang
Kristeva	Oliver, ed	The Portable Kristeva	Columbia
Derrida	Attridge, ed	Acts of Literature	Routledge
Vattimo		The End of Modernity	Johns Hopkins UP
Perniola		Art and its Shadow	Continuum
RECOMMENDED			
Silverman		Inscriptions: After Phenomenology and Structuralism	Northwestern UP
Silverman		Textualities: Between Hermeneutics and Deconstruction	Routledge
Silverman, ed		Cultural Semiosis: Tracing the Signifier	Routledge