

Fall 2023 Department of Comparative Literature Graduate Courses

COL 580: Introduction to Theory: On J. Derrida's "Introduction" to Husserl's "The Origin of Geometry"

David Johnson

Tuesdays 3:30-6:10 Clemens 708

Class #23359

This is not an introduction to theory in the sense either of a survey of theories or of a neophyte's way in to theoretical discourse. We will read Edmund Husserl's posthumously published "On the Origin of Geometry" (1939) and Jacques Derrida's first publication, his long "Introduction" to his French translation of Husserl's text (1962). In the 1980 defense for his "doctorat d'état," Derrida remarked that all of his subsequent research was anticipated in the Introduction. This seminar, then, will serve as an Introduction, *first*, to the importance of Husserlian phenomenology and what it offers for literary and cultural studies, particularly in its understanding of the constitution of ideal objects; *second*, to at least some of the issues that will occupy Derrida for the next 20 and even 40 years: ideality, repetition, language, literature, the imagination, writing, painting, survival or survivance, *univocité* and *équivocité*, among others. The outcome of a patient reading of Derrida's Introduction to Husserl will be the possibility of critically engaging with theoretical discourse and a more sophisticated sense of the stakes of Derrida's work. Requirements: weekly, engaged attendance; 1 15-minute presentation; 1 15-20 page research paper. (counts toward COL core seminar requirement; required for first-year students).

COL 690: Dissertation Writing Workshop

Kalliopi Nikolopoulou

Monday 3:30-6:10 Clemens 708

Class #15700

The Dissertation Writing Workshop (DWW) is a one-credit hour, **mandatory** course for all COL PhD students to be taken in the fall semester immediately following the completion of the Oral Examinations. The DWW serves two basic purposes: 1) facilitates the transition from seminars and exam preparation to the writing of the dissertation; 2) professionalization and job market preparation. Requirement for the DWW include the following: 1) production of a substantial and complete draft of a chapter of the dissertation, which will be presented to the workshop participants for comments; 2) presentation of a shorter version of the chapter (40 -50 minutes, approximately 20 pages) during the session in which the longer chapter will be discussed; 5) reading and discussion of other workshop participants' work. Dissertation directors and other faculty will be invited to attend the oral presentations of the student's work. The DWW meets the first week of the fall semester to organize the schedule of presentations and any other meetings. In most cases, the DWW will reconvene during the second half of the semester in order to critique the work of the workshop participants. Student grades depend on successful completion of all requirements. Failure to complete successfully the requirements results in the student's having to repeat the DWW in the following fall semester.

COL 704 REC/SEM: "Latina/x Abolitionist Feminisms."

Andrea Pitts

Wednesday's 3:30-6:10 Clemens 904

Class # 23519(Extensive) /23520 (Intensive)

Drawing from interdisciplinary fields such as Latinx studies, feminist theory, and critical prison studies, this seminar foregrounds the historical and contemporary work of U.S. Latina/x writers and activists to examine how each offers philosophical contributions to abolitionist feminist frameworks. The course thus focuses on published writings by Latina/x feminist authors, as well as materials from Latina/x activists from the 1960s until today whose philosophical praxis can be gleaned through their interviews, archival documents, and print media. Our research in the seminar will also distinguish between abolitionist approaches to carceral institutions, approaches which seek to eradicate the use of punishment and confinement as means to address social conflict, from reform projects, which seek to reduce prison

populations and rates of incarceration but stop short of calling for an end to incarceration itself as a social practice. Lastly, the course will underscore the rich history of multiracial and multiethnic coalitions forged against carceral systems, including specifically collaborative projects among Black, Indigenous, and Latina/x feminist organizers and writers. Through an examination of such coalitional efforts, students thereby investigate how various forms of abolitionist activism and theory have developed through the valuation and recognition of sites of difference, often across incarcerated/nonincarcerated lines and through the transgression of gender and sexual boundaries as well. (counts toward COL core seminar requirement)

COL 705 REC/ SEM:” Transformative Language of Art: Poetry, Technology, Power”

Krzysztof Ziarek

Wednesday 12:30-3:10 Clemens 708

Class #23490(Extensive) /23493(Intensive)

The course will focus on the transformative force of the “language” of arts, including poetic language. The transformative approach to the artwork will be explored as an alternative to the subject-based aesthetics and to the notions of expression and representation. As part of the inquiry, we will consider the juxtaposition between Western and Eastern (mainly Chinese) approaches to transformation and art, studied against the backdrop of power relations and contemporary technology (computation, AI). Readings and discussion will examine theoretical texts (Foucault, Heidegger, Hui, Irigaray, Jullien), poetry (Coolidge, Hejinian, Mullen, Stein) and artworks (including bio art and Internet art). (counts toward COL core seminar requirement)

COL 706 REC/SEM “World, Presence, Sense”

Rodolphe Gasche

Tuesdays 12:30-3:10 Clemens 708

Class #23293(Extensive) /23294(Intensive)

The aim of this course is to explore in depth Jean-Luc Nancy's conception of the being-together of beings, who, like human beings, are characterized by the singular plural, in his works devoted to the notion of a community without any projected communitarian end, and those in which he explicitly addresses the question of what is a "world," and its sense. We will be interested, in particular, in the theme of the present in his reflections on what constitutes a community, a world, and sense. The main texts that we will discuss are "The Forgetting of Philosophy," "The Sense of the World, and The Creation of the World, or Globalization (counts toward COL core seminar requirement)

COL 707 REC/SEM: “Thinking 'Race' Beyond Oppression”

Devonya Havis

Mondays 12:30pm-3:10pm Clemens708

Class 23295(Extensive) /23296(Intensive)

(counts toward COL core seminar requirement)

COL 708 REC/SEM: “Genocide, Witness, Representation: Specters of Rwanda”

Shaun Irlam

Thursdays 12:30-3:10 Clemens 708

Class #23356 (Extensive) /23357 (Intensive)

Genocide is a crime of magnitudes: a crime of mathematical magnitude and moral magnitude. Given the sheer enormity of this crime, the challenge is how to bear witness to it and represent it to posterity. As Rwanda approaches the 30th anniversary of the genocide, this course will explore the aporias posed by genocide through a selection from the accumulating literature of testimonies, memoirs, histories, fiction, documentaries and feature films about the Rwandan genocide. On April 6, 1994, a plane crashed into the grounds of the Presidential palace in Kigali, the capital of Rwanda, as it approached the airport. The plane had been shot out of the sky by assailants whose identity still remains unknown. On board was the President of Rwanda, Juvénal Habyarimana; he died in his own garden. This assassination finally pulled the trigger on the Rwandan genocide -- 100 frenzied days of slaughter that engulfed the nation and left an

estimated 800 000 to 1 000 000 Tutsi citizens and Hutu moderates dead. It was the swiftest and deadliest collapse of any postcolonial state in Africa, but the genocide has its roots deep in the country's colonial past, and in a certain sense the genesis of this small nation's troubles begin with the Book of Genesis This course seeks to understand this dark chapter of Africa's colonial history: the ancient ghosts that curse Rwanda and the grim lessons it yields that ought to haunt us still. The demons of ethnicity and the revenants of genocide teach us unforgettable lessons about the challenges and pitfalls facing the postcolonial state. We shall also explore the politics of representation and veracity raised by discourses of witness and testimony and analyze the broader challenges of comprehending and representing histories of trauma through various forms of cultural, aesthetic and creative expression associated with the Rwandan genocide of 1994. Texts will include survivor narratives, memoirs, historical analyses, works of fiction and several films. We shall also examine some of the structural and architectural elements embodied in the genocide memorials that dot the Rwandan countryside. (counts toward COL core seminar requirement)

COL 711 REC/SEM: ““Literature as Messiah”

Sergey Dolgopolski

Mondays 6:30-9:10 Clemens 708

Class # 19782(Extensive) / 19783(Intensive)

How literature and messiah relate to each other? We will draw on Erich Auerbach's answer to this question in order to explore and complicate relationships between testament, testimony, witness and literature in late antiquity and modernity. Auerbach sees the emergence of "European Literature" as a fusion of the "Homeric style" and "Biblical style". The former describes and makes explicit everything "past and present alike -- in the "foreground" The latter accounts for the significance of the ever dark/inexplicit past of the "background" for the readers" future to remain as promising as never fully detailed. Departing from this starting point, the seminar will comparatively explore the testament to the law in late antiquity (both in its Christian version in the New Testament and in its rabbinic version of a testament paralleling the Scripture in the Mishnah) in relationships to the "literature" first in Auerbach's sense and then in the broader theoretical context of contemporary discussions of tensions and dependencies between literature and testimony. Our guiding theoretical concern will be the role of the literary figure of a specific human and/or divine messiah in "literature" on the one hand and the "literature" as the intrinsically messianic form of reading and creating the human condition on the other.

Spring 2024 Department of Comparative Literature Graduate Courses

COL 730 REC/ SEM: "What is Philosophy?"

Rodolphe Gasche

Tuesday 12:30pm-3:10pm Clemens 708

Class #22982 (Extensive) 22983 (Intensive)

Rather than an introduction into philosophy, or a history of philosophy, this seminar seeks to explore an altogether different genre which asks "What is Philosophy?," a question that all introductions and histories already assume to have been answered. Among the rather limited number of the exemplars of this genre I single out the contributions by Georg Dilthey, José Ortega y Gasset, and Martin Heidegger. Georg Dilthey, a Neo-Kantian philosopher, is known for his claim to have completed the Kantian set of critiques by a critique of history, and for introducing in philosophy the distinction between the natural and the human sciences (Geisteswissenschaften). But he is also known as a major proponent of the philosophy of life, and it is in this context, in particular, that he became concerned with the question what philosophy is. Although he entitled his contribution from 1907 to the question what philosophy is "The Essence of Philosophy," it is clearly a response to that question, one to which Ortega's lectures on the subject matter and Heidegger's essay are in turn responding. In 1928 the Spanish philosopher Ortega lectured on "What is Philosophy?," first, in Buenos Aires, and then in Madrid a year later, while Heidegger's essay "What is Philosophy?" dates from 1955. In this seminar we will seek to explore the reasons that lead to the formation of this relatively recent genre of inquiry into philosophy, and what novel conceptions of

philosophy emerges from it. This will involve discussing the nature of questioning, and its relation to philosophy, the beginning of philosophy in Greece, and what its specific difference is compared to other theoretical formations.

The genre “What is philosophy?” has flourished with book length contemporary contributions by Deleuze and Guattari, Jean-Pierre Faye, Arthur Danto, and the very recently posthumously published work by Michel Foucault “Le discours de la philosophie.” This seminar will thus also shed some light on these recent developments. (counts toward COL core seminar requirement)

COL 731 REC /SEM "On Afro-Caribbean Theorist Sylvia Wynter, in Context"

Elisabeth Paquette

Thursday 12:30pm-3:10pm Clemens 708

Class #22984 (Extensive) 22985 (Intensive)

This course examines the rich intellectual essays of Afro-Caribbean theorist Sylvia Wynter. Born in Cuba in 1928 and having grown up in Jamaica, Wynter began publishing in the 1950s and she continues to publish today. Wynter can be conceived of as a systems thinker, offering large scale analysis of the organization of worlds, and importantly a critical analysis based on race. While interdisciplinary in her sources (history, dance, science, and literature) her essays are consistently and incredibly theoretical and philosophical in their composition. Within her corpus, we will engage with the themes of labour, gender, climate, and race. This course also seeks to read Wynter’s work in context. As such, Wynter’s essays will be paired with essays by various contemporary and preceding figures, such as Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, and CLR James. (counts toward COL core seminar requirement)

COL 733 REC / SEM “Diké, Justice, Cosmology”

Kalliopi Nikolopoulou

Monday 3:30pm-6:10pm Clemens 708

Class #22986 (Extensive) 22987 (Intensive)

The ancient Greek word *dikē* is often translated as “justice.” In turn, such translation entails that we think of it almost exclusively in sociopolitical or moral terms. Our seminar will focus on Aeschylus’s *Oresteia* to examine whether “justice” as a sociopolitical concept offers an insufficient translation of *dikē*’s cosmological determinations. This Aeschylean trilogy has been typically interpreted, at least since Hegel, as the successful passage from the archaic violence of nature to civic justice, but such a resolution is not as clear. What if civic justice continues to rely *necessarily* on the logos of nature—on a cosmology that includes both predation and regeneration—even though civic justice must also disavow this reliance? Alongside our primary source, the *Oresteia*, we will engage other related texts as time permits: Aristotle’s *Poetics*, some Heraclitus fragments, Walter Burkert’s *Homo Necans*, Hegel’s interpretation of Aeschylus in his *Aesthetic Lectures*, and Heidegger’s 1932 lecture “The Saying of Anaximander.”

Students will be expected to participate regularly, offer an oral presentation (10–15 minutes), and produce a seminar paper. (counts toward COL core seminar requirement)

COL 734 REC / SEM “J. M. Coetzee and the Enigma of the Other”

Shaun Irlam

Monday 12:30pm-3:10pm Clemens 708

Class #22988 (Extensive) 22989 (Intensive)

During the fractious life and times of apartheid, South African Nobel laureate, J. M. Coetzee articulated the predicament of subjects living in states of crisis and displacement, and in agonistic relations to oppressive sexual, racial and political circumstances. His novels explored different modalities of response to the moral challenges and horrors of apartheid. These texts have since been widely recognized to address more general challenges of the postcolonial condition and have collectively mustered a trenchant analysis of states of terror.

Through a broad selection of Coetzee's works, both fictional and non-fictional, we will examine the persistent issue of intelligibility and explore how the anthropological Other becomes a hermeneutic

aporia. In particular, guiding our discussions will be the question of the relation to the Other: whether these texts dodge confrontation with the Other or paradoxically, whether they articulate a relation to what lies *beyond relation*; whether the inscrutability of the Other becomes a point of departure, a reiteration of exoticism or an ethical means of preserving the radical alterity of the Other. The seminar will also examine Coetzee's more recent constructions of the self as Other and his deconstruction of memoir in his recent *autrebiographical* trilogy. We will also address Coetzee's Australian novels, his estrangement and othering of national identity, his emerging status as an "Australian" writer and his challenging trilogy of *Jesus* novels. We will conclude with *The Pole* (2023)

Among texts the class will address are *Dusklands*, *Waiting for the Barbarians* (and the film adaptation), *The Life & Times of Michael K.*, *Foe*, *Age of Iron*, *Disgrace* (and film adaptation), *Elizabeth Costello*, *Slow Man* and *Diary of a Bad Year*. In addition we shall read the "autobiographical" trilogy, *Scenes of Provincial Life* and well as the *Jesus* trilogy. (counts toward COL core seminar requirement)

COL 735 REC / SEM Deleuze and Derrida

Donald Cross

Tuesday 3:30pm-6:10pm Clemens 708

Class #23203(Extensive) 23204 (Intensive)

Gilles Deleuze committed suicide on 4 November 1995. Three days later, Jacques Derrida published a eulogy in which he admits an unsettling "proximity" to Deleuze's work. In this seminar, we'll approach this proximity – and the slight distance it implies – from a somewhat unexpected perspective. While Derrida himself places this proximity on the order of "theses," namely, we'll focus on "style." We won't ignore these theses, of course, but the question of style provides a strategic vantage point insofar as both Deleuze and Derrida describe their respective projects as attempts to forge a style. More than rhetorical devices or mannerisms, style becomes a resource for redefining thought. Whence a series of guiding questions. How, for Deleuze and for Derrida, does style puncture the traditional horizon of philosophy? What new lessons might style offer for literature, for poetics, for art in general? How does style help us rethink difference and especially sexual difference, time and alterity, the human and the animal, life and death, the unconscious and subjectivity, the machine, the event, or any of the many other themes threading throughout the work of both Deleuze and Derrida?

By raising these and related questions, this seminar will also serve as a general introduction to Deleuze and Derrida. Primary readings will include selections from key works by Deleuze (including but not limited to *Difference and Repetition*, *Anti-Oedipus*, *A Thousand Plateaus*, *What Is Philosophy?*, *Essays Critical and Clinical*) and by Derrida (including but not limited to *Of Grammatology*, *Writing and Difference*, *Margins of Philosophy*, *Spurs*, *Glas*). At times, we'll also grapple with some of Deleuze and Derrida's interlocutors in literature and poetry, in linguistics and psychoanalysis, in phenomenology and ontology, even in anthropology.

Requirements include regular attendance, a brief presentation (around fifteen minutes) and a final paper (roughly 4,000 words). (counts toward COL core seminar requirement)