

Fall 2022

COL 525SEM: Theories of Embodiment in the 20th and 21st centuries : Aporias, Contentions, Transformations

Anne Berger

Monday 12:30pm-3:10pm

Clemens 904

Class# 23478

From the life sciences to cultural theory, from philosophy to politics, the human body has been the focus, object or target of unprecedented attention in the 20th and 21st centuries. Psychoanalysis, phenomenology, cultural anthropology, gender theory, neurosciences, ecocriticism, have all provoked important shifts in the epistemology of the body. They have enriched our understanding and experience of embodiment, while upsetting traditional Western dualisms and partitions, beginning with the nature/culture and body/mind divides. From the so-called natural body to the trans or cyborg body, from the speaking body of psychoanalysis to the joyful body of second-wave feminism, from biopolitics to body art, from the human organism to the ecology of the living, this course will revisit some chapters in the history of these shifts. Special attention will be paid to the ways in which they have affected gender theory or have been compounded by it, in an attempt to ascertain their stakes for both feminist and postfeminist thought and politics.

COL 525SEM: Frankfurt School

Richard Cohen

Wednesday 4:10pm-6:50pm

Clemens 708

Class# 23382

In the 20th century aftermath of Stalinist oppression in the Soviet Union and the stability, prosperity and spread of Capitalism almost everywhere else, a group of progressive scholars of politics and culture associated into what has come to be called the "Frankfurt School" - including Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse, Walter Benjamin, Erich Fromm and the Eugen Habermas - initiated a profound critical reassessment of Western social, cultural and politics values, rethinking Marxist orthodoxy, deepening the critique of Capitalist ideology, and re-evaluating the import and impact of technology and mass culture. Today's globalization, ubiquitous capitalist commodification, administrative mentality, standardization and surveillance – unprecedented in human history - renders

their analyses and diagnoses even more relevant. We will examine selected readings from key works of the above authors.

COL 542: PROUST AND THE LITERARY EXPERIENCE

Maureen Jameson, Fernanda Negrete - Co-instructors

Thursday 2:00pm-4:40pm

Baldy 112

Class #22395

Reading Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu* is a unique experience. Its title indicates a process and an uncertain journey, driven by a lost object that refuses to materialize. Under these conditions, the narrator exposes readers to the domains of sensation, memory, and the address, pinpointing the irreducible gap between a subject's intimate life and what can be said and presented to others.

Through close-reading workshops in English and French, as well as critical discussions that engage major commentators of the Recherche, this seminar invites participants to begin the Recherche or to regain this experience in 2022, which marks the centennial of Proust's death. Participants may read in French or English and discussions will be in English, engaging with the original text's specificity and with the challenges of translation.

French students will read the first four volumes of the **Folio Classique** edition or the corresponding volumes of the 1987 **Pléiade** edition. Non-French speakers will use the **Modern Library** edition. Detailed information about these options is available under "Works" on the [Proust Research Guide](#), a widely used scholarly resource curated by UB Humanities Librarian and seminar collaborator Dr. Mike Kicey (<https://research.lib.buffalo.edu/proust/works-in-french#s-lg-box-wrapper-22465687>).

Class registration links

- FR 526 JAME (extensive): [#21783](#)
- FR 526 JAMI (intensive): [#21784](#)
- COL 542A: [#22395](#):

COL 646SEM: Reading Theory

David Johnson

Friday 4:10pm-6:50pm

Room TBD

Class# 24060

The “Reading Theory” Seminar is integrally related to Comparative Literature’s long-running Philosophical Reading Group, which has been active for nearly twenty years. The Seminar is dedicated to reading—in an open, non-authoritarian, nonhierarchical environment—a major text from the continental tradition (understood broadly to include not only European works but also diasporic texts from Africa, Persian Gulf, the Indian sub-continent, the Americas, the Caribbean). We read slowly, approximately 15-30 pages per week. The object is to account for—and thus be responsible to—every syntagm of a given text understanding that in any text, every syntagm interprets and translates another syntagm. As a group, the seminar seeks to read sympathetically, accounting for the logic and stakes of the text, and critically, putting pressure on logical and lexical tensions. At the end of the semester, everyone who has participated in the seminar is eligible to propose texts for the following semester and to vote on them. No one person has veto power. Participants thus decide, as democratically as possible, what the seminar will read the following semester. All participants (students and faculty alike) are required to “kick off” at least one session of the Seminar. The format and expectations of the kick-off are described during the first meeting of the semester. Students in Comparative Literature, English, and Romance Languages and Literatures may enroll in the Reading Theory Seminar for extensive credit only. All others who wish to earn credit should speak directly to the instructor about seminar requirements (dj@buffalo.edu). In recent semesters, the Philosophical Reading Group has read Jacques Lacan's *Écrits*, Martin Heidegger's *Introduction to Metaphysics*, and Edmund Husserl's *Crisis of the European Sciences*. For a complete list of the texts the PRG has read since 2000 or for information about the text for fall 2022, which will be determined no later than 20 May, please contact the instructor.

COL 711: The Law of Subjectivity: Through the Rabbinic and Christian Literature to the Biblical Law Today

Sergey Dolgopolski

Monday 6:30pm-9:10pm

Clemens 708

Class#A 20666 Class#B 20667

The seminar addresses the formation of the modern notions of subjectivity through its elements: subject-agent and subject-ness. Course work articulates retrojections of these elements into interpreting Biblical/literary texts in their interrelationships from Late Antiquity -- through the tacitly elided Middle Ages -- to the modern literary and theoretical discourse dominated, as it has been, by initial embrace and consequent rejectio (“de-centering”) of the subject and subjectivity. The programmatic move of the course is beyond both comparative theology and political theology towards an archeology of subjectivity in Christianities, Judaisms and Islams. That means (1) to advance *beyond* analyzing common theological themes and concepts in Jewish, Muslim and Christian corpora of thought through late antiquity and

middle ages to modernity; (2) to move *beyond* the formative role of these themes and concepts outside of the traditional themes of theology, i.e. in the secular political and literary discourses; (3) to pave a way *towards* displaying the creation of new philosophical and rhetorical concepts in Church fathers, rabbis and Muslim theologians, leading as they do to the modern sense of “subjectivity,” consciousness, recollection and memory. That move also means looking for philosophy and literature beyond the tradition of Aristotelianism, (Jewish, Muslim and Christian alike) from which the notion of the modern “subject” allegedly stems. These less traditional places include Church fathers and the corpora of the two Talmuds in conversation with Syriac and Arabic Aristotelianism. In this new framework of inquiry, the course will re-access such modernist thinkers of western literature in relation to Bibles: Auerbach, Rosenzweig, Taubes, Derrida, Heidegger, Foucault and De Libera. The guiding question of the analysis will be heterogeneous conceptual developments in these corpora, consolidating as they do in the formation of a notion of subjectivity (subject-agent) in modern philosophy and literature alike.

COL 723: Poetry, Event, Computation

Krzysztof Ziarek

Wednesday 12:30pm-3:10pm

Clemens 708

Class#A 23188 Class#B23189

Against the backdrop of computation and AI, the course will explore the poetic valence of language and event. Guiding us will be the question: what happens in reducing the event of being to information and computational manipulation? Our central concern will be with language, its poetic dimension, and its ambiguous (ir)reducibility to information. What happens to the non-repeatable singularity of the moment in the age of informational flatness and computational portability? What is the role of silence as “dis-information,” that is, as disrupting and freeing experience from its enframing into information? Readings will include poetic texts (Cage, Howe, Kim), philosophical reflection on technology, language, and aesthetics (Benjamin, Heidegger, Stiegler), as well as texts on the changing understanding of information (Pieter, Goguen, Weaver).

COL 724: Practices of Truth-telling: ‘Race’, Resistance, Refusal

Devonya Havis

Monday 3:30pm-6:10pm

Clemens 708

Class#A 23190 Class#B23191

Conditions governing what can be claimed as truth or falsity have always been sites of contestation. In recent years this already complex terrain has become even more fraught – especially for those communities whose racialized bodies are subjected to intimate, yet structural, violent constraint. This seminar will explore truth-telling as a ‘practice’ that not only disrupts an unjust status quo but also crafts possibility from impossibility. Utilizing the Blues, Jazz, narratives, and other vernacular phenomena, we will examine how such practices critique invidious processes of racialization and offer theoretical insights into fostering a world that can be otherwise. Toward this end we will read such thinkers as James Baldwin, Ralph Ellison, Saidiya Hartman, Zora Neal Hurston, and Michel Foucault, among others. The following provocations will be touchstones in our interdisciplinary investigations: What teachings are offered by persons who have needed to be skillful in crafting possibility from impossibility? How might we understand living under conditions of constraint as an existence that is more than oppression? How might such concepts as freedom and justice be transposed by those communities who have been historically marginalized? Course requirements: Class discussions; Rotating designated student discussion leaders for class meetings; preparation of a conference-style paper or theoretical case study of a discrete practice of truth-telling that invokes resistance/refusal.

COL 726: The Ends of Philosophy

Rodolphe Gasche

Tuesday 12:30pm-3:10pm

Clemens 708

Class#A 23631 Class#B23670

In this seminar we will explore the ends of philosophy in the double sense of its aims, as well as its completion, crisis, or death. The authors we will read on the claim that philosophy has come to its end include Karl Jaspers, Martin Heidegger, and Jacques Derrida. Wilhelm Dilthey’s essay “What is Philosophy?” will provide us with a philosophical account of the aims of the discipline.

Spring 2023

COL 112: Cross-Cultural Explorations: Encounters with Western, East Asian, and African Cultures

Faegheh Hajhosseini

Monday, Wednesday 3:30pm-4:50pm

Frczk 422

Class# 17444

The principal objective of this course is the study of the diversity of Western, East Asian, and African cultures from the Renaissance to the Modern Age. Although we will explore cultural diversity in its

various expressions in politics, religious thought, social customs, everyday beliefs, and scientific advances our primary focus will be the study of art, literature, and big ideas. One of the central concerns of this course will be different cultural and historical conceptions of the human and its relation to nature, politics, and science. In the first part of the course we will examine the different formations of humanism in the Western cultures from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment; from Romanticism to Marxism. In the second part of the course we will focus on the non-Western ideas of the human and humanity and their expression in religions, political organizations, and artworks. We will begin with Daoism and Confucianism and their impact on Chinese ethics, philosophy, politics, and culture during the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) Dynasties. We will also briefly discuss the Cultural Revolution and Maoism in 20th century China. We will follow the influence of Confucianism in Japanese culture and its confluence with Zen and the Shinto Revival. In the context of politics we will focus primarily on the Tokugawa Shogunate. In the context of the arts we will analyze the place of the human in nature as reflected in Japanese landscape paintings, poetry, and woodblock prints. We will conclude our course with the discussion of the devastation of colonialism and the struggle for independence in Africa. We will analyze the influence of traditional (for example, masks and music) and modern African cultures (Fanon, Achebe, and Soyinka) in the contemporary world. This course is the same as [COL 112](#) and course repeat rules will apply. Students should consult with their major department regarding any restrictions on their degree requirements.

COL 200: "We the People": On Democracy and Justice in America

Donald Cross

Tuesday Thursday 9:30am-10:50am

Cooke127A

Class# 20857

This course explores issues central to democracy. First, it examines the relation between democracy's claim to protect and promote both universal freedom and universal equality. Second, it considers the unresolvable tension between popular sovereignty ("we") and individual rights ("I"). Third, it considers the limitation of democracy in its necessary calculus of citizenship, the dual question of both how to count and who counts. Fourth the course takes up the role of narrative (recounting and accounting, telling) in establishing citizenship and the tradition or legacy of democracy. The course focuses on detailed readings and discussions of founding and foundational documents of the United States' democratic experiment: declaration of independence, articles of confederation, constitution of the United States, debates on the constitution; writings of Jefferson, Douglass, Lincoln, Stanton and Anthony, Larsen, MLK, Morrison; and major supreme court decisions concerning citizenship, racial equality, reproductive rights, rights to privacy, same sex marriage. In sum, "We the people" asks what it means to be a citizen and why democracy is at once the worst and the best form of government. In sum, in its

consideration of the language of democracy--of citizenship and rights--"We the People" asks what it means when African-American novelist Toni Morrison remarks, in *Beloved*, that the story of slavery and of a mother's desire to "free" her daughter is "not" one "to pass on." What does it mean not "to pass on" the haunted narrative of our cultural and legal inheritance. This course involves an experiential learning assignment for which, should it take place off campus, students will be responsible for their providing own transportation.

COL233: Literature and Happiness

Megan Hirner

Tuesday, Thursday 3:30pm-4:50pm

Baldy 127

Class# 18396

We all want to be happy. But what is happiness? This course will investigate the answers given to this question. We will be reading, writing, and talking about a wide variety of short texts from different fields such as art and literature, journalism, neuroscience, philosophy, psychology, religion, and sociology. We will study visual media as well. Through literary and philosophical analysis, some of the questions we will try to answer will be the following: What makes us happy? Do we deserve to be happy? Can we create our own happiness? What is the relation between happiness, virtues, pleasure, and friendship?

COL 525 Proust and the Literary Experience II

Fernanda Negrete and Maureen Jameson

Thursday 2:00pm-4:40pm

Clemens 904

REC Class# 23118 SEM Class# 23119

Reading Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu* is a unique experience. Its title indicates a process and an uncertain journey, driven by a lost object that refuses to materialize. Under these conditions, the narrator exposes readers to the domains of sensation, memory, and the address, pinpointing the irreducible gap between a subject's intimate life and what can be said and presented to others. Through close-reading workshops in English and French, as well as critical discussions that engage major commentators of the Recherche, this seminar invites participants to begin the Recherche or to regain this experience in 2022, which marks the centennial of Proust's death. Participants may read in French or English and discussions will be in English, engaging with the original text's specificity and with the challenges of translation. Non-RLL graduate students please note: this class can be taken as intensive or extensive; the syllabus is the same for both sections but the workload differs. Please contact your Director of Graduate Studies and/or your advisor to discuss which section is best for your individual situation. The fall 2022 Proust course read the first half of *A la recherche du temps perdu*, and the spring

2023 course will read the second half. Students may enroll in the spring course whether or not they have taken the fall course.

COL 711: PLATO'S SYMPOSIUM (Core Seminar)

Rodolphe Gasche

Tuesday 12:30pm-3:10pm

Clemens 708

REC Class # 23516 SEM Class# 23517

It has been argued that the dialogue, "Symposium," is perhaps the most brilliant piece of Plato's dramatic art, but precisely because literary, it also is one of the worst understood. Yet as I intent to show in this seminar it is only by paying close attention to its literary and dramatic composition that not only the successive philosophical theses about the nature of love can be adequately brought into view, but also the different characters (*ethos*) of the protagonists, and especially, their distinction from the figure of the philosopher. In this dialogue we will seek to understand the order of the speeches on love as a function of a progressive de-sensualization of *eros* as primarily desirous love in Greek, and of the tone of the dialogue, before Socrates can elaborate a philosophical notion of love. As this progression proceeds with an increase of the speeches' artistry before Socrates's philosophical discourse on love, the question we will seek to answer also concerns the difference of philosophy from speeches wrought with art, and above all from rhetoric. The central part of the seminar will be devoted to a close reading of Socrates' speech on spiritual love, as ultimately the love for the eternal Good. In this context we will address issues such as the genealogy of Eros as a daimon, the desire for immortality, "the birth to fair discourse," knowledge, tragedy and comedy, and so forth, But what will be of special interest to us will be role that Diotima, a stranger (*he xene*) from Mantinea, and a women to boot, plays with respect to Socrates' discourse on love. That it is a stranger, and, furthermore, a woman who, at one time, had refuted and 'corrected' Socrates' conception of love by highlighting the highest manifestations of the love for the eternal good, is certainly not by accident, and deserves special attention. Her evocation, and Socrates' retelling of her speech in its entirety, has, undoubtedly, a dramatic function, but what will interest us is why a stranger who is also a woman is needed in the dialogue, to give the finishing touch to Socrates' discourse on love.

COL 712: Lacan, Deleuze, Derrida, et al. (Core Seminar)

Donald Cross

Thursday 12:30pm-3:10pm

Clemens 708

REC Class # 23519 SEM Class #23520

When Comte de Buffon announces that "style is the man himself" in the mid-eighteenth century, he gives

expression to the tendency – still prevalent throughout the humanities today – to associate style with identity. What motivates this longstanding association? What does the determination of style in terms of identity exclude? For instance, is style ever – as more than one philosopher suggests – a property reserved for humans alone? Do animals have no style? Is style a strictly conscious craft or, perhaps, does it open a relation to the otherness of the unconscious? Rather than “the man himself,” might style offer resources for rethinking sexual difference?

Buffon isn't the first to relate style to identity, of course, but his famous maxim launches an important heritage. After developing the stakes of Buffon's brief *Discourse on Style*, we'll turn to reformulations of Buffon's maxim in Jacques Lacan, Gilles Deleuze, and Jacques Derrida. Each reformulation pushes style away from “the man himself” and toward an increasingly radical idea of difference, and this displacement of style from “man” to “alterity” comes to crystalize what Lacan understands by “psychoanalysis,” Deleuze by “schizoanalysis,” and Derrida by “deconstruction.” Our focus on specific references to Buffon, in other words, will also serve as a general introduction to the work of Lacan, Deleuze, and Derrida.

While texts by Lacan, Deleuze, and Derrida will occupy most of the semester, we'll end with a recent work by Argentine writer, Luisa Valenzuela. The guiding hypothesis for the seminar holds that, by breaking the longstanding connection between style and identity in various forms (“humanness,” “consciousness,” “maleness,” etc.), each author reconceives style in terms of evermore extreme alterity, and Valenzuela's reworking of Buffon will not only help us to articulate the alterity of style in literature. In certain ways, she takes the alterity of style further than all of Buffon's other inheritors.

Primary texts: Buffon, *Discourse on Style*; Lacan, *Écrits* (selections); Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*; Derrida, *Spurs: Styles of Nietzsche*; Luisa Valenzuela, *El chiste de Dios* (“God's Joke”)

Course requirements: regular attendance, brief presentation, final paper (around 4,000 words).