

Spring, 2013

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CL 385 unique 33940 TTH 1230 to 200p BUR 128

### The History of Theory: Building the Theory Canon

This course will trace the evolution of theory by introducing the sequence of questions which arose around how texts mean and what problematics they have been seen to pose. Rather than focusing on drawing an evolutionary map of the philosophies and theories that feed into today's literary studies (especially comparative literature), a series of "questions of the epoch" will be drawn. For each of these epochal question sets, a set of core texts will be read (drawn mainly from Hazard Adams' *Critical Theory Since Plato*, and its successor, *Critical Theory since 1965*). But then it will be up to individual students to assemble clusters of related texts that answer these questions (or refute them) from their own first national literature -- to take the questions that are at the basis of the theory project as known in comparative literature and see which ones have their analogues within national cultures.

The class will start with readings from the classic volumes on comparative literature, to establish the discipline's formulation of the theory canon and its uses. Thereafter, combinations of texts will be adduced that conform to the discipline's typology of texts and reading.

- The Classical Era (Plato, Aristotle): literature, modalities of communication as performatives; its function for the audience and the *polis*
- Medieval Era (including Middle Eastern commentary traditions): the question of textual authority, exegesis, the "arts of reading," and the status of texts as revelation
- Renaissance: the historicity of texts and the science of reading; art and taste
- Early Modern era: the correlations of textuality with aesthetics, and the philosophy of art and the genius (focus on the reader and on education of the mind)
- Modern Theory: Genre theory; modern textual hermeneutics; the ethics of literature; social-psychology of texts and power.

The goal of questioning the topography of "literature" and "text" studies as it shifts across eras is to foster students' ability to model how texts work, and to see the relations of canonicity to cultural practice.

Through the semester, students will evolve a portfolio of two or three questions that they pursue, defining their (and their national literature's) picture of comparative studies and the theory bases that would evolve the essentially Eurocentric and presentist canon of theory today toward a more inclusive theory project -- a practice of theory that helps elucidate the textual and cultural situation of the individual's area of literary studies.

READINGS:

*Comparative Literature in an Age of Globalization*, ed. Haun Saussy, 2006

*Comparative Literature in the Age of Multiculturalism*, Charles Bernheimer (1994)

Wellek and Warren, *A Theory of Literature* (various)

Hazard Adams' *Critical Theory Since Plato* (3rd ed), and *Critical Theory since 1965*

Supplemental materials on Blackboard website:

*Comparative Literature: A Critical Introduction*, Susan Bassnett (1993)

First edition of *Critical Theory since Plato*

GRADING:

Semester project

Step 1 = 20%

Step 2 = 20%

Step 3 = 10%

Text interpretations (2 @ 15%) = 30%

Theory essay final = 20 %

**CL 385: Spring 2013 -- Unique # 33940**  
**TTH SYLLABUS**

**READINGS:**

JHG = *Johns Hopkins Online Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism*, 2nd ed. online (2005)  
<<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/indexes/titles.php?id=422>>

SEP = Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy <<http://plato.stanford.edu/>>

CTSP = Adams, ed., *Critical Theory Since Plato* (3rd edition)

CTS65 = Adams and Searle, eds., *Critical Theory since 1965*

All readings on class Blackboard site as pdfs; one is just linked to blackboard, not available as pdf.

**PART I: Historical Backgrounds of Theory**

**Week 1: 15, 17 January**

**1. Defining "theory" in the context of comparative literature**

**TU Introduction to the course**

Lecture: Ontology, Epistemology, Ethics, and Aesthetics -- the disciplinary roots of CL Theory

**THU Evolution of the discipline: self-perception**

Read:

Wellek/Warren, *Theory of Literature*, Preface, Section 1: Definitions and Distinctions, Chapter 20 (note: use the old edition on Blackboard; Chapter 20 has been removed from more modern printings)

Berneimer, *Comparative Literature in the Age of Multiculturalism*, Part 1 (the three reports)

Saussy, *Comparative Literature in the Age of Globalization* (the report)

Reading goal: identifying disciplinary identities for CL -- what does the present situation leave out/leave behind in comparison to earlier models?

**Week 2: 22, 24 January**

**TU Evolution of the discipline: Creating a practice behind the artifice/artifact of "theory"**

Read:

CTSP: Introduction

Culler, *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction*

Lecture/discussion goal: the role of anthologies, teaching and institutional practices. The silent emergence of "theory" as a variety of knowledge/power practices with specific historical grounding. History of disciplines as historical metacritique.

NOTE: "Periods" each have a genesis in the scholarship. The following texts are important in this regard for the early history of "theory":

- Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*
- Burckhardt, *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*
- Auerbach, *Mimesis*
- M.H.Abrams defines Romanticism for the 20th century

For further information, check Rene Wellek, *Concepts of Criticism* (1963) and

*Discriminations* (1970), which both trace the usages of terms that come to be period

names. The history of record for theory is: René Wellek, *A History of Modern Criticism: 1750–1950* (8 vols.: vol. 1, *The Later Eighteenth Century*, 1955; vol. 2, *The Romantic Age*, 1955; vol. 3, *The Age of Transition*, 1965; vol. 4, *The Later Nineteenth Century*, 1965; vol. 5, *English Criticism, 1900–1950*, 1986; vol. 6, *American Criticism, 1900–1950*, 1986; vol. 7, *German, Russian, and Eastern European Criticism, 1900–1950*, 1991; vol. 8, *French, Italian, and Spanish Criticism, 1900–1950*, 1993)

## **2. The Fabrication of the Theory Canon: Classical Exemplars and the Power of Rhetoric**

### **THU Plato versus Aristotle: mimesis, phronesis, and art (skill/artifice of the performer)**

CTSP: Plato, Aristotle, Strabo

SEP: Aristotle

JHG: Plato, Aristotle, *Classical Theory and Criticism*: 1. Greeks and 2. Rhetoric

Reading Goal: Be sure you look at Strabo and the JHG "standard accounts." This historical conversation has been dehistoricized and taken as a tradition instead of a live argument about the kinds of knowledge encompassed in texts. Find at least two divergences between the texts and the standard accounts of them; use Strabo as a key to how Plato and Aristotle were read in disciplinary terms in their original contexts. Be sure you can define terms like *mimesis* that are part of the standard account.

### **Week 3: 29, 31 January**

#### **TU Disciplinary constellation, 1: rhetoric (oratory), performance, historicism/culturally situated epistemologies of texts as part of state practice**

JHG: Horace

CTSP: Cicero, Horace, Tacitus

Reading goal: Redefine the discipline of rhetoric in terms of performance and knowledge/power nexes. Be sure you skim all the excerpts.

#### **THU Disciplinary constellation, 2: The sublime, ethics of creation/performance, the nature of the artwork**

JHG: Longinus

SEP: Plotinus

CTSP: Pseudo-Longinus, Plutarch, Plotinus

Reading goal: these texts are read as part of a different disciplinary context, focusing on art content as revelation. Define the sublime, and what kind of a project is it (ontology, epistemology, what?)

### **Week 4: 5, 7 February**

## **3. Move to Textual Authority: New Knowledge Monopolies of the Christian Era**

### **TU Christian Era**

JHG: *Medieval Theory and Criticism* (see especially fourfold interpretation), *Philology, Biblical Theory and Criticism* (1), St. Augustine

SEP: *Medieval Theories of Analogy*, Boethius, *Medieval Semiotics*, St. Augustine

CTSP: Augustine, Boethius, Aquinas, Dante, Boccaccio

Reading goal: the Dante is the most important, because he outlines the fourfold path to interpretation. Here we find the roots of modern hermeneutics -- textual meaning and authority issues, as a reflection issue, not as direct revelation (this is *not*

Protestantism). Be sure you can talk about the status of textual knowledge and the role(s) of the reader.

**THU Renaissance: Poetics and the Start of Aesthetics (beyond the Rhetorical)**

SEP: Commentators on Aristotle (note that this is the essence of how Church Fathers were handled, as well), Aristotelianism in the Renaissance, Medieval Philosophy, Influence of Arabic and Islamic Philosophy on the Latin West

CTSP: Scaliger, Castelvetro (Aristotle commentary)

Reading goal: What is going on in the commentary tradition? What does this do to the authority of the reader?

**STEP ONE OF WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS DUE: identify the history texts**

**Week 5: 12, 14 February**

**4. Protestant Reformations, beyond *mimesis*: The origin of the Artist/Creator myth**

**TU The truth of poetry**

JHG: Renaissance Theory and Criticism, Historical Theory and Criticism

SEP: Giambattista Vico, Marsilio Ficino

CTSP: Sydney, Bruno, Mazzoni

Reading goal: This is the start of historical/philological readings/interpretation in the modern sense. That does that assertion mean? What are its projects?

**THU New historical education through the imagination: Revelation through poetry and hermeneutics**

CTSP: Tasso, Bacon, Vico

SEP: Francis Bacon, 18th Century British Aesthetics

Reading goal: Make sure you know Bacon's "idols" as a form of semiotics, and as part of the Protestant re-reading of Christian traditions.

**Week 6: 19, 21 February**

**5. Birth of the modern in Aesthetics: Enlightenment and Beyond**

**TU Genre theories: Rebirth of tragedy and Classicisms**

JHG: French Theory and Criticism: 1. Seventeenth Century, French Theory and Criticism: 2. Eighteenth Century

SEP: 18th Century French Aesthetics, Enlightenment

CTSP: Corneille, Dryden, Diderot

Reading goal: Understanding what is at stake is the Ancients and Moderns debate as a symptom of the idea of "classics" or "classicism." Defining the scope of "French aesthetics" as a particular project.

**THU Imminent truths of ideas not mimesis: The New Aesthetics of the imagination.**

JHG: British Theory and Criticism: 1. Early Eighteenth Century, British Theory and Criticism: 2. Late Eighteenth Century, Edmund Burke

SEP: The Concept of the Aesthetic, 18th Century British Aesthetics, John Locke, David Hume, Edmund Burke

CTSP: Hume, Locke, Pope, Addison, Burke, Young, Reynolds, Blake

Reading goal: the "standard accounts" of the Eighteenth Century in England and Germany do *not* mention the degree to which this is a poetics problem. "Classics" imply the use of a vernacular, which then ends up with problems of provenance (as in Ancients and Moderns). Poetics thus become critical -- there are reams of work on hexameters and classical poetics that *expand* the Ancients and Moderns debate. Define the scope of "British aesthetics" and set it apart from French, if necessary. Note the boundaries between philosophy and poetry.

**Week 7: 26, 28 February**

**TU German turn: Education/Bildung**

JHG: German Theory and Criticism: 1. Sturm und Drang/Weimar Classicism, German Theory and Criticism: 2. Romanticism, Immanuel Kant, J.E. Lessing

SEP: 18th Century German Aesthetics, Immanuel Kant, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Hegel's Aesthetics, Kant's Aesthetics and Teleology, Johann Gottfried von Herder

CTSP: Lessing, Kant, Hegel

Reading goal: the German synthesis combines aesthetics (philosophical and poetic) with concepts of history and education. How does their definition of education and history move beyond the French and English models in accounting for learning, not just taste? Note that Herder is the source for what becomes known as "Bardic Nationalism" (Katie Trumpener), for the various "folk projects" of the nineteenth century.

**THU From *Bildung* to Prophecy: German Romanticism**

SEP: Georg Friedrich Philipp von Hardenberg [Novalis], Friedrich Schlegel, August Wilhelm von Schlegel, Wilhelm von Humboldt

JHG: Friedrich Schiller, German Theory and Criticism: 3. Nineteenth Century, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

CTSP: Schiller, Schlegel, Humboldt

Reading goal: These texts (along with Kant) form the basis for 19th century aesthetic thought throughout Europe (including Slavic traditions). Note that they have in them a tacit or overt historiography, with a notion of perfectability/evolution. Is this nature or nurture (Darwin, or Lamarck, both read badly) -- change, or determinism?

**Week 8: 5, 7 March**

**TU Romanticisms: the end of the long 18th century**

SEP: Transcendentalism, Ralph Waldo Emerson

JHG: William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Percy Bysshe Shelley, John Keats

CTSP: Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Shelley, Emerson, Baudelaire, Mallarmé

Reading goal: German Classicism and Romanticism are the source for European Romanticism and for US Transcendentalism -- for the establishment of national literature projects that purportedly express/transmit the nation's essence. How has the relation of the artwork, artist, and audience been redefined from 18th-century norms.

**THU A New Historicist Criticism: Social engineering and aesthetic critique (the long 19th century)**

SEP: John Stuart Mill, Auguste Comte

JHG: German Theory and Criticism: 3. Nineteenth Century, Historical Theory and Criticism, Hippolyte Taine, John Ruskin, Matthew Arnold, John Stuart Mill, Mary Wollstonecraft, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels

CTSP: Johnson, Kames, Wollstonecraft, Arnold, Taine, Marx/Engels, Nietzsche, Tolstoy, Wilde, Zola, Freud, Pater, Woolf

Reading goal: Under various terms (positivism, naturalism, even pragmatism), a new philosophy of history, strongly intertwined with the rise of European nationalism and Imperialism, begins to redefine art as part of national patrimony and identity, leading to interest in causal-genetic histories of literature and other arts as part of national determinism. Find the national imperative in some of these texts (which can take the form of an "enlightenment project" [term to be discussed]).

### **CLASSICAL TEXT INTERPRETATION DUE**

#### **SPRING BREAK, 9 - 17 March**

#### **PART II: Ideologies of Literary Studies: The New Practical Disciplines of Literature**

##### **Week 9: 19, 21 March**

#### **1. After Historicism and Nationalism: The Professional Study of Literature in the 20th Century and Beyond**

TU Gibaldi, 1st ed, *Introduction to Scholarship*, 29-115

CTSP: Introduction: The Modern Era (621-638) [Note: conflates modernity with modernism in more uncritical ways; modernity was historicist in the latter 19th century, while modernism was not.]

CTS65: "Afterword," 856-872

Lecture/Discussion: the structural difference in literary study emerges in the 20th century in its implication with national projects in the context of the universities rather than between critic, author, and public in the public sphere (the nineteenth-century version of that space). Professional interpretation takes on various forms and strategies, as it seeks validation from various theories. Phases of these operations have been designated fairly randomly. Favorite theme: "the linguistic turn" of the 1970s -- which is actually a return to the philological imperative of the nineteenth century, disguised (see Wellek/Warren, Chapter VI: The Ordering and Establishing of Evidence). That is, the move to positivism (etc.) is rejected as instrumentalizing art in unacceptable ways, and as losing its intrinsic qualities. This lecture will set up the new conceptual/instrumental frameworks that have coopted literary studies, generally from within the universities, rather than from within the public sphere.

#### **DRAFT OF STEP 2 DUE: National canon of theory (for feedback)**

#### **2. Text-Intrinsic Criticisms: Art, Creation, Values, and the "Well-Wrought Urn"**

##### **THU The Return of Romanticism, art as education**

Wellek/Warren, Section IV: The Intrinsic Study of Literature (139-282)

JHG: Poet-Critic, American Theory and Criticism: 2. 1900 to 1970, New Criticism, Practical Criticism, Archetypal Theory and Criticism

CTSP: Kenneth Burke, T. S. Eliot, I.A Richards, Empson, John Crowe Ransom, Blackmur, Wimsatt/Beardsley, Cleanth Brooks, Northrup Frye (CTS65: Frye is not the interesting one)

CTS65: M. H. Abrams (Abrams in CTSP is less interesting)

Reading goal: New Criticism is associated with Anglo-American university critics, particularly those from the South. In many ways the criticism associated with modernism, it runs the line between criticism of taste and values and a possible democratizing, almost scientific approach to reading, as it follows the poetics of the "well-wrought urn" -- the work of art as ennobling those who trouble to engage with it. Take a position on how this differs from nineteenth-century Romanticism, as an expressly intrinsic criticism (in Wellek/Warren's sense). What happens when the *critic* takes over the role as seer from or next to the poet?

**Week 10: 26, 28 March**

**TU Continental and Continental-Inspired text-imminent criticisms: New approaches to Hermeneutics and Reading as Phenomenological Activity**

SEP: Hermeneutics, Phenomenology

JHG: Narratology, Gérard Genette, Hermeneutics: 2. Twentieth Century

CTSP: Husserl, Sartre

CTS65: Husserl (different essay), Ingarden, Heidegger (the CTSP essay is not as important), Gadamer

Reading goal: Hermeneutics and phenomenology are two sides of the same philosophical model for reading, with phenomenology focused on the cognition of the work, and hermeneutics on the meaning structures in the work. In the hands of Ricoeur, De Man, or Jakobson, it becomes a narratology or poetics focused on philosophical values and ethics. Be prepared to outline the model of interactions specified.

**THU The Next Generation: Yale Critics and Deconstruction**

JHG: J. Hillis Miller, Harold Bloom, Geoffrey H. Hartman, Deconstruction: 1. Derrida, de Man, and the Yale Critics, Deconstruction: 2. The 1980s and After, Geneva School

SEP: Derrida, Paul Ricoeur

CTSP: Derrida (not "Meaning and Representation"), De Man

CTS65: De Man, Derrida, Bloom, Hartmann, Ricoeur

Reading goal: The Yale Critics, under the influence of Derrida, moved from their training and disposition in New Criticism into Deconstruction. What is the same or different between the two movements?

**Week 11: 2, 4 April**

**2. The Science Imperative of postwar criticism: Linguistic Theories and Semiotics**

**TU Philosophical Roots of "the linguistic turn"**

JHG: Fernand de Saussure, Structuralism, Speech Acts, Linguistics and Language

CTSP: Saussure (same in both), Peirce, Wittgenstein, Chomsky, Pratt

CTS65: Whorf, Benveniste, Austin, Chomsky (different in both), Searle

CTS65: Peirce (different in both), Wittgenstein (different in both)

[OPT: CTS65: Frege; CTSP: Frege, Carnap, Russell]

Reading goal: Take Saussure and one other linguist/philosopher of language (except for Frege, Carnap, and Russell, who are too far out for this context) and explain how this philosophy redefines the ontology and epistemology of the work of art, especially in ties between signification and "truth." Note: the "linguistic turn" is a misnomer: the whole field *started* from philology, and it's thus a RETURN, not a turn.

**THU Theories of Language and cognition turned into systems analysis of power/signification**

JHG: Russian Formalism, Prague School Structuralism, Semiotics  
CTSP: Shklovsky, Eichenbaum, Bakhtin, Volosinov, Jakobson, Barthes  
CTS65: Lévi-Strauss (same in both), Bakhtin (different selection here), Lotman/Uspensky  
Reading goal: Contemporary linguistics has taken on the model of a hard science, dealing with laws and structures. Take Barthes and one other theorist and trace how their linguistic/semiotic assumptions change their visions of the work of art.

**Week 12: 9, 11 April**

**3. Text-Extrinsic Criticisms: Social Psychology, Power, Classes, and Discursive Strategies**

**TU Poststructuralism: Power, Knowledge, Discourses, and the Social Subject of Knowledge**

Wellek/Warren, Section III: The Extrinsic Approach to the Study of Literature, 65-138  
OPT: Glabaldi, 2nd ed., "Cross disciplinary and cultural studies" section  
JHG: Lacan, French Theory and Criticism: 6. 1968 and After, Michel Foucault, Marxist Theory and Criticism: 2. Structuralist Marxism (has def. of interpellation), Pierre Bourdieu, Jean-François Lyotard, Marxist Theory and Criticism: 3. 1989 and After, Psychoanalytic Theory and Criticism: 3. The Post-Lacanianians  
SEP: Louis Althusser, Michel Foucault, Postmodernism  
CTSP: Lacan, Foucault, Althusser (same in both versions), Bourdieu, Lyotard  
CTS65: Lacan (extra sections), Foucault (different in both texts)  
Reading goal: [Note: the Wellek/Warren is important documentation of the first moves beyond text-intrinsic criticism toward interdisciplinarity and different values.]  
"interpellation" -- the subject and consciousness and knowledge production only exist in social contexts as part of a network of signification and practice/ The old marxist term "interpellation" describes how post-structuralism traces how an individual comes to consciousness in contact with the semiotic and practice resources of the community/group(s) of which one is a member. Track in Lacan's *Mirror Stage* and at least one more article why this is justifiably an *extrinsic* approach to textuality/art. Also decide what this has to do with artworks (any form of art), if anything -- what are its epistemological field and ontological claims?

**THU New Epistemologies of Power: At the root of poststructuralism**

JHG: French Theory and Criticism: 5. 1945 to 1968, French Theory and Criticism: 6. 1968 and After  
SEP: Gilles Deleuze  
CTS65: Deleuze and Guattari (different in both)  
CTSP: Deleuze and Guattari, Laclau  
Reading goal: Deleuze is Foucault's major reference point for his great historical project, as his oeuvre is an exploration of designation and power, especially in relation to disciplines and to the subjects producing / produced by knowledge practices -- the politicization of the subject (followed up by Laclau) and of signification. "Art" becomes only one specialized form of textuality. Figure out key terms in Deleuze's project.

**Week 13: 16, 18 April**

**TU The Inheritance of Marxism: Art as consciousness-raising**

JHG: Frankfurt School, Georg Lukács, Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall, British Theory and Criticism: 5. 1900 and After, Cultural Studies: 1. United Kingdom, Cultural Studies: 2. United States

SEP: Critical Theory, Theodor W. Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Jürgen Habermas

CTSP: Gramsci, Raymond Williams, Adorno, Habermas

CTS65: Adorno (different in both), Horkheimer, Georg Lukács

Reading goal: Different European countries had different traditions that derived from Marxism in various ways; some (especially the Frankfurt School) deny any relationship to Marxism because of state politics. Nonetheless, they share interest in consciousness-raising through the material base and in critiques of industrial society and what Hans Magnus Enzensberger would call the "consciousness industry." Find in Williams and at least one other text what kind of consciousness-raising was being implemented, and what their image of classes are.

**THU Marxish/materialist critics: Reception theory versus Reader-Response Theory**

JHG: Stanley Fish, Reception Theory, Reader-Response Theory and Criticism, Roman Ingarden

SEP: Roman Ingarden

CTSP: Jauss, Fish

CTS65: Iser

Reading goal: "Reader Response Theory" is a US variant of phenomenology that inherits the New Critics' concept of the strong reader; reception theory is associated with the "Constance School" in Germany and is more appropriately a sociology of reading cast around the readers. Pick at least two texts, and explain how "reading" is suppose to be happening there.

**Week 14: 23, 25 April**

**TU New Forms of Historicism**

JHG: New Historicism, Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Benjamin, Thomas S. Kuhn, Myth Theory and Criticism (see Cassirer), Discourse: 2. Discourse Theory, Hayden White

SEP: Philosophy of History, Walter Benjamin, Ernst Cassirer, Thomas Kuhn, Culture and Cognitive Science

CTSP: Kuhn, Cassirer, Greenblatt, Benjamin, Geertz

CTS65: Benjamin (same in both), Geertz (different in both), Hayden White

Reading goal: A continental alternative to contemporary theory lies closer to the kind of cultural studies done today. Kuhn resembles a bad carbon copy of Deleuze; Cassirer, a better one. Benjamin needs to be read next to Foucault. Greenblatt and "new historicism" rose around Shakespeare studies. Hayden White takes on the discourse analysis of the semiotics of historical narratives; Geertz does the anthropology of history. Pick two, and figure out what kind of "historicism" they represent (why they are extrinsic criticism).

**THU Identity politics, hyphens, feminism, and queering**

SEP: Identity Politics, Feminist Political Philosophy

JHG: Feminist Theory and Criticism: 2. Anglo-American Feminisms, Feminist Theory and Criticism: 1. From Movement Critique to Discourse Analysis, Feminist Theory and

Criticism: 3. Poststructuralist Feminisms. Feminist Theory and Criticism: 4. Materialist Feminisms

CTSP: Kolodny, Sedgwick, Butler

CTS65: Jardine, Robinson, Gilbert, Cixous, Kristeva

Reading goal: Current trends of criticism take up principally identity politics, interested in the production and critique of consciousness; there are few if any methodological innovations beyond careful socio-anthropological attention to the groups and individuals involved. Take a couple, and name those politics.

**Week 15: 30 April, 2 May**

**TU Postcolonial theories**

JHG: Postcolonial Cultural Studies: 1. Origins to the 1980s, Multiculturalism

CTSP: Fanon, Benedict Anderson, Said (use this, not CTS65 essay), Spivak

Reading goal: This is the root of critiques of globalization, and it was strongly marked by deconstructive politics. Name those politics, and how they are reproduced in political subjects.

**THU Final Class**

**MODERN TEXT INTERP DUE**

**Online final and  
FINAL VERSION OF STEPS 1-3 due DUE AT OFFICIAL EXAM TIME:  
Saturday, 11 May, 7 pm**

## CL 385: ASSIGNMENTS

### Preamble:

Today, it seems impossible to read the variety of texts that would make one even a marginally literate comparative literature theorist of the sort that would have been more common in the mid-twentieth century. Moreover, the "theory project" that is the subject of this course is an artificial disciplinary construct, invented just after the Second World War (with analogues earlier and later) in Euro-American circles.

This course will take an opposite tactic: its readings juxtapose "standard accounts" of the theorists deemed to be central to that disciplinary construct (from standard reference books) with the excerpts of texts that are deemed to contribute to it (mostly from the anthology that became the backbone of that postwar discipline, *Critical Theory Since Plato*).

The goal of this juxtaposition, however, is not "coverage." It sets the readers a couple of distinct tasks:

1. To increase their familiarity with "standard terminology" (some of which *purportedly* comes from texts in other disciplines, but which have been massively adapted)
2. To turn away from the idea that one "had to know" these texts, and to stress instead the notion that there are epochs of problems that have been coopted into being the core of the study of literature.
3. To give you the chance to work out what "the theory tradition" for *your particular area(s) of specialization* needs to be, especially in light of knowing what texts lie behind the newest and coolest -- or how the newest and coolest lie about earlier generations.

To that end, your homework for the semester will take on several forms.

### READINGS

Due the day indicated on the syllabus. NOTE that each day has a reading goal, and that each day has far too much reading to complete. Read enough to have something to say about the task given; be careful to start where indicated if a name is given. All readings are from the class BlackBoard site.

### SEMESTER PROJECT IN STAGES

The final project for this class will be an accretion of smaller projects, building toward a "comprehensive" image of what the theory project has been/needs to be *in your particular areas of study* and with reference to "the canon" -- since modern literary study in the west is a creation based on norms represented in texts like *Critical Theory since Plato*, one has to factor in not only indigenous traditions, but also the emergence of "literary study" or "textual study" in new forms as universities and cultural institutes respond to "international norms" (usually in the 20th century). By comparing this dual origin of your local projects to the international norms, you should become aware of how indigenous or national traditions have been multiply reframed and reread, how they absorbed outside impetuses (for good or ill), and what indigenous or national traditions can contribute to international theory discussions in their own voices (especially in light of the influences of purportedly indigenous intellectuals actually trained in dominant western traditions, who then claim to speak for their "own" traditions without working the comparisons through).

Note that all entries need proper bibliographic forms. Your list of canonical texts should have the date of original writing/publications, PLUS the current "best editions" to use (historical

critical edition, plus best translation into English, if that's an issue). MLA style; you should be an MLA member, then you can get into the stylesheet online.

#### STEP 1: National histories

The first part of the assignment asks you to identify how the national traditions of textual study have been defined historically. Note that this is *not* necessarily limited to "aesthetic texts" -- and should not be, given that projects like scriptural exegesis and legal exegesis often play large roles in the "arts of reading" that apply in national traditions.

To this end, you need to be able to identify:

1. The first/most authoritative/foundational "national history" of literature (and possibly of theory) in your field(s). This is not a transparent requirement, and may require considerable work on your part, especially if you are working in older traditions like Arabic, Chinese, or Latin. On the other hand, there is a line between older handbook type things that identify the canon, and modern history writing, with its causal-genetic bias.
2. Any attempts to come up with revisionist histories, especially in the areas you are trying to compare. This might be a chapter in an otherwise traditional history; it might be a completely new approach. There might not be any (my example: connections between Broadway drama and Central Europe and Yiddish theater are completely transparent if you know the traditions; that history has not been written because "no one can shift languages as a playwright or actor" -- completely antithetical to the truth of functioning actors and playwrights ca WW I).
3. Any attempts to distinguish "literary history" from "theory history" from "great books history" -- important because "literature" meaning "belles lettres" isn't always defined as we do (is RARELY defined as we do).

This first part of the assignment thus is a short list of texts, in an annotated bibliography (a text on how to do an annotated bibliography is on the class blackboard site). The annotation should reflect the organization and ideology of the history adduced, and why you think it is important (negatively or positively assessed).

Preface the list with a description of your particular point of interest -- not necessarily "nation 1 plus nation 2" but what you are actually interested in tracing as your comparison.

#### STEP 2:

The next part of this assignment involves you reconstructing what the "canon" of "theory texts" referring to your special transnational/comparative project. In some cases, this will mean adducing reference points that go back a millennium or more; in others, very few; in yet others, there may be more than one canon. Your mission is to sort out what "one has to have read" to understand the aesthetics /textual reading conventions involved in your project.

In many cases, there will be up to three parts/versions of this canon:

1. Some origin texts (like Aristotle's *Poetics* that keep getting dredged up, correctly or not)
2. Some more modern traditions that get relevant once one turns to print (often 18th or 19th centuries, in Imperialism)
3. Some texts that represent the influence of or reaction to Western aesthetics/poetics/university study (often 20th century -- like the history of CL in Turkey)

This assignment constitutes your bow to periodization in theory, and the kind of overview you might need to provide for a survey implicating your national site(s) and/or their significant crossovers.

Here again, a brief annotation for (sets of) texts is required, to show what kind of theory is involved and why this (set of) text(s) is a necessary part of "the canon."

### STEP 3:

The third section of this assignment asks you to flesh out differences (if any) in the current theory studies in your site(s). This may involve differentiating what literary/textual studies dominate

1. within the relevant nations
2. in significant exile scholarly communities (e.g. during and after WW II, US German studies was doing something not done in Germany)
3. in the Anglo-American sphere (aka where you are going to get hired: one example -- young Slavists are gravitating to ACLA away from Slavic Studies Association, with a concomitant shift away from aesthetics to post-colonial, transnational, and identity politics issues).

This is probably less than 500 words in prose; it can go longer. The issues to be addressed are reading styles, goals of reading/aesthetics, leading names/projects, etc. The goal is to produce a verbal map of what is being done in the current generation under the umbrella of theory in your fields.

### **TEXT INTERPRETATIONS:**

You need to write two short text interpretations on a literary text of your choice, guided by a theorist /theoretical issue of your choice. One needs to be on the kind of issue prominent before 1900 (aesthetics, hermeneutics, ontology of the work of art, mimesis, for example), and the other something later.

Each essay should be no longer than 1000 words; each needs to contain quotations from the text being interpreted and solid definitions of the theoretical issues that guide the interpretation.

Those in CL will recognize this as part of the QE. Those not in CL need to know how to do a close reading.

### **FINAL THEORY ESSAY:**

You will have a two-hour online final, available starting the last week of the semester, that asks you to write a theory essay addressing issues in the class. Again, those in CL will recognize this as part of the QE; those of you not in CL can use this as an opportunity to review the larger issues of the class vis-à-vis your own goals.