

Spring 2016

CMLT-C513 (32671)

Narrative: The Experience of the Novel: History and Theory of a Modern Genre

Professor Johannes Turk

04:00-06:15 W room WH118

This course investigates the history and theory of the novel from the eighteenth to the twentieth century in exemplary readings. The novel emerges after the end of an era, in which poetics has stabilized literary genres. Openness and flexibility are often described as hallmarks of a genre that seems to escape traditional criteria for literary form. It both represents and constitutes a profound reorganization of human experience that is inseparable from modernity. The resulting porosity allows the novel to explore a large spectrum of experiential dimensions ranging from love and adventure – the hallmarks of the chivalresque – to domesticity, sensibility, sociability, the quotidian, historicity, and privacy. Beginning with Huet, Blanckenburg and others in the eighteenth century, a rich debate on the novel opens. Through a wide range of exemplary novels reaching from Defoe, Wieland, Goethe, and Dickens to Thomas Mann and Proust, as well as a large number of theories, the course will discuss the novel as a space where the existential implications of our world and its history unfold. The course is taught in English.

CMLT C523 Medieval Literature

Topic: Performance, Identity, and Community in Medieval Europe

Instructor: Rosemarie McGerr

01:00-02:15 MW room BH245

4 credit hours

This course explores the rich tradition of texts authored by women during the Middle Ages in Europe. Our primary readings come from the ninth through fifteenth centuries and were written in France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, and England, some in Latin and some in vernacular languages. The readings include texts from a wide range of genres: lyrics, plays, letters, vision accounts, romance narratives, allegorical narratives, and autobiography. The list of authors includes “saints” and “heretics,” members of royal courts and members of the merchant class, mothers and nuns. In each case, we will examine the text from multiple perspectives. Among the issues we will address are the position of medieval women in relation to literary, civic, and theological authority; the role of literacy in medieval definitions of authorship and audience; the construction of gender within the individual texts; and the relationship of medieval women’s texts to modern concepts of feminism.

Our readings will include works by Dhuoda of Septimania, Hrotsvit von Gandersheim, Marie de France, Hildegard of Bingen, Heloise, the troubairitz, Hadewijch of Brabant, Catherine of Siena, Julian of Norwich, Christine de Pizan, Margery Kempe, and Florencia Piñar.

All readings will be available in modern English. No previous experience with medieval European literature required.

Students will prepare two short class presentations on assigned critical or theoretical readings. Students will also choose a comparative research project on a topic related to the

course readings, submit a project proposal with preliminary bibliography (2-3 pages), and complete the written research project (23-25 pages) at the end of the semester.

CMLT-C580: History and Theory of Translation
Section # 29788 | Prof. P. Losensky | 4 cr

09:30-10:45 TR room BH235

This seminar will explore the burgeoning field of translation studies and the central role of translation in the field of comparative literature. We will first look at the history of translation, with an emphasis on the English tradition, and examine some representative translations from the Renaissance to the present. Close readings of influential, “pre-theoretical” statements on translation will provide a foundation for our study of the development of translation studies since the 1960s. Concepts such as translatability, equivalence, resistance, uncertainty, naturalization, and foreignization will be analyzed in terms of various models of language, social communication, and poetics. We will also consider how the field of translation studies engages other trends in contemporary criticism, such as structuralism, deconstruction, gender studies, and post-colonialism. Participants in this seminar are expected to play an active role in leading and participating in discussions of the readings and of their own research. They are also required to prepare written discussion questions for one or more of the readings, to write a formal proposal of a seminar project, and to present the final project orally to the class before submitting it in written form. A good knowledge of English and at least one other language is a prerequisite for this seminar.

CMLT-C603 (15758)
Topics in Comparative Literature: Nabokov
Professor Jacob Emery

04:00-05:15 MW room WH007

This course provides an overview of Vladimir Nabokov’s work in both Russian and English and contextualizes that work within the Russian diaspora. The focus is on his prose fictions, but we will also consider Nabokov as a poet, playwright, critic, translator, and puzzle constructor. In exploring a selection of Nabokov’s major literary works, as well as samples of poetry and fiction by Nina Berberova, Boris Poplavsky, Joseph Brodsky, Eduard Limonov, and Gary Shteyngart, we will explore the themes that make Nabokov a central figure of twentieth century literature. These include: the poetics of exile and nostalgia; translation and transnational culture; literary trickery and deceit; paranoia as a tactic of reading; the relationship between the aesthetic and the sadistic; artifice and the imagination; and art as an image of a higher reality.

CMLT-C611 (30077)

Topics in Literary Genres, Modes, and Forms: The Renaissance Epic
Professor Sarah Van der Laan

02:30-03:45 TR room BH016

The Renaissance saw the last great flowering of the Western epic tradition. After centuries of relative neglect, the epic became once again the form of choice for poets intent on exploring nationhood, community, and the human spirit on a grand canvas. Why should the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, so “early modern” in many other respects, have been the last to turn to this ancient form for their national poems? How did the belatedness of this recovery shape these epics? How did the epic tradition change in response to the transformed cultural and religious context—or, to paraphrase a recent study of this problem, how does epic make the transition “from many gods to one”? Epics to include Ludovico Ariosto’s *Orlando furioso*, Torquato Tasso’s *Gerusalemme liberata*, Luis Vaz de Camões’s *Os Lusíadas*, John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. Approaches to foreground ancient and contemporary theories of intertextuality and allusion.

C647 THE TOTAL WORK OF ART AND THE AGE OF AESTHETICS

Prof. Eyal Peretz, Comparative Literature
Tuesdays 230-5 PM Ballantine Hall 340

Beginning with the Renaissance and culminating in the era of the social political crisis of the French revolution the task and function of art (speaking from the Western perspective) has been increasingly put in question. If art is no longer, as it has been for the Greeks and for medieval Christianity, the arena for the showing of the divine, what then is it? This crisis in the meaning of art was inevitably tied to a parallel social crisis, having to do as well with the demise of the centrality of the divine. If society is no longer guided by divine order, what then is it that should guide its organization? It is around these crises that two discourses emerged: the discourse of aesthetics (that is, an attempt to conceive art for art’s sake, not in relation to its functioning in the service of the divine) culminating in Kant, and the discourse of the social contract (that is, the discourse trying to conceive of the ground for the organization of a nation-state when we can no longer count on given divine organization) culminating in Rousseau. These two discourses reached as well a certain crisis in the age immediately following the French revolution, a crisis most famously finding expression in Hegel’s philosophy of art and in Schiller’s *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*. If it is thought only aesthetically then art, as Hegel famously says, considered in its highest vocation becomes for us a thing of the past. If society can no longer count on a pre-given divine organization, thought Schiller, contemplating the failure of the French revolution to found a new society, then it needs a new kind of education to allow it to organize, to ground it, an education he called aesthetic. It is around this double challenge of Hegel and Schiller that a new tradition in the history of art and the history of thinking about art emerged, that of the total work of art that tries to posit a new kind of artistic work as the founding glue for a new kind of social organization. This class will examine what is at stake in this tradition, its well-known risks, and also its potential promise.

Readings, viewings, and listenings may include: Shakespeare, Breugel, Rembrandt, Kant, Rousseau, Diderot, Schiller, Hegel, Wagner, Nietzsche, Baudelaire, Benjamin, Chaplin, Griffith, Riefenstahl, Brecht, Artaud, Pasolini, Beuys, Syberberg, Heidegger, Ranciere, Lacoue-Labarthe.

CMLT-C 670 (30385) Topics in Cross-Cultural Studies:
Biopolitics and Postcolonial Discourse
Professor Akin Adesokan

04:00-06:30 M room BH236

As a discourse of identity, postcoloniality has brought institutional respectability and redress to important questions of difference—race, gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality, disability, and the like. One criticism of postcolonial studies, however, is that the emphasis on these questions is often uneven and instrumentalist. This seminar proposes to pitch selected classics of postcolonial studies against the currents of critical theory such as transnationalism, micropolitics, and biopolitics in order to examine this criticism and others like it. We will do this by engaging several compelling postmodernist propositions (the exhaustion of difference, the fragmentation of political reason, the deterritorialized rule of empire) and equally compelling contemporary ideas about unequal exchange, actual human suffering, economic logic, and the politics of knowledge. Among the questions informing this seminar are: How do we make sense of the ubiquity of acts of impunity across different parts of the world at a time when legalism is perhaps at its strongest? What is the relationship between “disorder” and “inventiveness”? What does culture (as in “local culture” or “high culture”) mean today?