

LT218 Radical Theory

Seminar Leader: James Harker

Course Times: Mondays and Wednesdays, 14:00-15:30 pm

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Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 11:00 am-12:30 pm

Course Description

This course examines some of the most influential and disruptive intellectual developments of the last century: the emergence and application of psychoanalytic theory (most notably in the work of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan); a rethinking of ideology and culture in the wake of Marxism (seen in the Frankfurt School, Louis Althusser, and Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri); the rise of structuralism (synthesized from the contributions of Ferdinand de Saussure, Roman Jakobson, and Claude Lévi-Strauss); and the turn to post-structuralism (Roland Barthes, Gilles Deleuze), deconstruction (Jacques Derrida), post-colonial theory (Edward Said, Frantz Fanon, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak), and gender and queer theory (Gayle Rubin, Judith Butler, Susan Stryker). The trajectory traced in this course is sometimes invoked by the one-word appellation, Theory, but is drawn from philosophy, anthropology, linguistics, political economy, psychology, and history. Despite the multidisciplinary origins, the epicenter of each of these approaches has been, and remains, the study of literature. This course will therefore attempt to answer an urgent question: What is it about literature that encourages and amplifies radical theorizing?

Requirements

Attendance

Attendance at all sessions of the course is required. After two absences for any reason (including minor health issues, unavoidable travel, appointments, etc.), the participation grade will be lowered one step (i.e. from A- to B+) per absence.

In accordance with the Student Handbook, a failing grade for the course will be given if absences reach 30% of the course meetings.

Arriving late to class will count as ½ of an absence.

Assessment

Assessment will be based on three summary posts (500 words each), a midterm exam (1000 words), a final essay (2500 words), and participation.

Written Assignments

Summary Posts (500 words each)

Participants will sign up to write short summaries of our readings and “minutes” of our discussion. These summaries will be posted in the class’s Google Drive folder so that they may serve as a common resource for everyone.

The summaries must be posted within 48 hours of the class. That means that a summary of a Monday class is due before class begins on Wednesday. Summaries of Wednesday classes are due on Friday. Classes will begin by reading the summary from the previous session.

The summary posts should do the following:

- Offer an overall assessment of the argument of the text.
- Identify the topics of most interest in the discussion.
- Cite specific passages and explain their importance to the text or to the discussion.
- Credit specific insights to those in the course who made them.

Each of these criteria is worth 1 point, and the summary posts will be graded on a basis of 1 to 4.

Late summary posts will lose 1 point per 24 hours.

Midterm Exam (1000 words)

You will take a midterm exam covering all material in the first half of the semester. The exam will be “open book,” meaning that you may consult the reader, your notes, and a print-out of the summary posts generated by the class. Electronic devices are not permitted (except in the case of documented disability accommodation).

Final Essay (2500 words)

The final essay assignment will be a longer paper concerning two or more of the theorists from the course. You may also bring in another reading if you choose.

Participation

A grade will be given for participation in seminar, which includes attendance and contributions to discussion. You are required to bring your own copy of the reading to class everyday as well as a notebook for taking notes. *Laptops and other electronic devices are not permitted.* After one warning, not having the reading or a notebook in class will be marked the same as “absent.”

Reading

You are required to acquire three sources for this course:

A Lover’s Discourse. Roland Barthes

Gender Trouble. Judith Butler
Course Reader

You will be given access to electronic copies of the materials in the course reader, but **you may not work from work electronic copies in class.**

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

All written work must be submitted electronically and on time.

As specified in the Student Handbook, essays that are up to 24 hours late can be downgraded one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). The instructor is not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where the instructor agrees to accept a late essay, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline and cannot receive a grade of higher than C. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.

Grade Breakdown

Three Summary Posts	500 words (1500 words total)	30% (10% each)
Midterm Exam	1000 words	20%
Final Essay	2500 words	30%
Participation		20%

Schedule

Week 1

Monday, Sept. 3 Introduction

Foundation 1: Marx

Wednesday, Sept. 5 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels
Excerpts from:
Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844
The German Ideology
The Communist Manifesto
Grundrisse
A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy

Week 2

Monday, Sept. 10 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels
Excerpts from *Capital*

Foundation 2: Freud

Wednesday, Sept. 12 Sigmund Freud
Excerpts from *The Interpretation of Dreams*

Week 3

Monday, Sept. 17 Sigmund Freud
Excerpts from:
“The ‘Uncanny’”
“Fetishism”

Synthesizing Marx and Freud

Wednesday: Sept. 19 Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno
Excerpts from “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception”

Week 4:

Monday: Sept. 24 Louis Althusser
Excerpt from “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses”

Wednesday: Sept. 26 Jürgen Habermas
Excerpts from:
“The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article”
“Modernity—An Incomplete Project”

Week 5:

Monday: Oct. 1 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri
Excerpts from *Empire*

Wednesday: Oct. 3 Federal Holiday

Week 6: Origins of Structuralism

Monday: Oct. 8 Ferdinand de Saussure
Excerpts from *Course in General Linguistics*

Wednesday: Oct. 10 Roman Jakobson
Excerpts from:
Linguistics and Poetics
Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances

Week 7

Monday: Oct. 15 Claude Lévi-Strauss
Excerpt from *Tristes Tropiques*

The Encounter of Structuralism and Psychoanalysis

Wednesday: Oct. 16 Jacques Lacan
“The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in
Psychoanalytic Experience”

Week 8

Monday: Oct. 22 Jacques Lacan
Excerpts from:
“The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious”
“The Signification of the Phallus”

Wednesday: Oct. 24 In-class Midterm Exam

Spring Break

Week 9 Deconstruction and Poststructuralism

Monday: Nov. 5 Jacques Derrida
Excerpt from *Of Grammatology*

Wednesday: Nov. 7 Roland Barthes
A Lover's Discourse

Week 10

Monday: Nov. 12 Roland Barthes
A Lover's Discourse

Wednesday: Nov. 14 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari
Excerpt from *Anti-Oedipus*

Week 11 Postcolonial Theory

Monday: Nov. 19 Frantz Fanon
Excerpt from *The Wretched of the Earth*

Wednesday: Nov. 21 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak
“Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism”

