

LT118 Introduction to Critical and Cultural Theory

Seminar Leader: Laura Scuriatti

Email: l.scuriatti@berlin.bard.edu

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 1.30-3.30 pm, in Laura's office: P98a, Room 4

Course schedule: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3.45-5.15 pm

Course Description

Throughout the modern history of literature and art, we encounter the demand that they be an imaginative locus of social justice, explaining, criticizing, and proposing alternatives to a deficient present. In this course, we will explore a number of texts and theories which analyze, diagnose and offer guidelines for the status and role of literature in modern Western societies. Although most of these texts can be said to propose sociological theories of literature (and the arts), most of the authors we will read were not professional sociologists, but rather philosophers, intellectuals and literary critics, who reflected on their own roles within the cultural and social systems which had created a special space and status for this particular cultural formation.

We will read texts by, among others, Jean-Paul Sartre, T. W. Adorno, Germaine de Staël, Marshall Berman, Raymond Williams, Antonio Gramsci, Julia Kristeva, Pierre Bourdieu, Franco Moretti, Gisèle Sapiro, Lucien Goldmann, Pascale Casanova, Edoardo Mendieta.

Requirements

Students should come to all classes prepared. Preparation for the class includes bringing the relevant texts and materials to class, having carefully read the texts assigned for each session, and being able to contribute meaningfully to class discussion.

Students should bring PRINTED COPIES of the texts. **Electronic devices are not allowed in class**, unless a specific form of accommodation has been granted to students.

Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the staunchest regard for academic integrity and expects good academic practice from students in their studies. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section III Academic Misconduct.

Attendance

Attendance at ALL classes is expected. More than two absences (that is absences from two sessions of 90 minutes) in a semester will significantly affect the participation grade for the course. Active participation in discussions will be an essential part of the course. Readings should be done in advance of the class for which they are assigned.

Please refer to the Student Handbook for regulations governing periods of illness or leaves of absence.

Assessment

Participation

Students should arrive to each class on time and prepared. Being prepared means:

- (1) having completed the assigned reading,
- (2) bringing to class a non-electronic copy of the assigned reading,
- (3) being ready to initiate and to meaningfully contribute to discussion.

Engagement in class discussion should be regular as well as productive; quantity alone will not favorably affect the participation grade.

Writing Assignments

Written assessment will include the following:

- An in-class quiz (circa 1000 words)
- A mid-term essay (2000 words)
- An in-class final exam (circa 2000 words)

Oral presentation

Each student will be in charge of an **oral presentation**. For the oral presentation, students will bring to class one or more pages of written notes with questions and bullet-points intended to introduce the assigned reading and to facilitate the discussion. These notes will be handed to Laura Scuriatti at the end of the class and will be part of the presentation grade.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

As stipulated in the Student Handbook, *essays that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where an 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

Participation: 30%

Quiz: 10%

Essay: 20%

Exam: 20%

Presentation: 20%

Essay Deadlines and Important Dates

Thursday, 26 September: QUIZ

Friday, 18 October, 23:58 hours: MID-TERM ESSAY DUE

Thursday, 5 December: IN-CLASS EXAM

All texts will be made available in digital format on BCB's google classroom drive. Students are required to come to class with a printed copy of the assigned texts.

A reserve shelf with additional readings for the purpose of independent work is available in the library.

Schedule

WEEK 1 – INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

Tuesday, September 3 and Thursday, September 5

Jean-Paul Sartre, *What Is Literature?* (selection)

T. W. Adorno, “Commitment”

WEEKS 2-6 – DEFINING LITERATURE WITHIN CULTURE

Tuesday, September 10

Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory. An Introduction* (selection)

Raymond Williams, “Institutions”, from *Sociology of Culture*

Thursday, September 12

Raymond Williams, “Forms” from *Sociology of Culture*

Tuesday, September 17

Harry Levin, “Literature as an Institution”

Lucien Goldmann, *Essays on Method in the Sociology of Literature* (selection)

Thursday, September 19

Pascale Casanova, “Principles of a World History of Literature”, from *The World Republic of Letters*

Tuesday, September 24

Pascale Casanova, “The Invention of Literature”, from *The World Republic of Letters*

Thursday, September 26

QUIZ

Tuesday, October 1

Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production* (selection)

Tuesday, October 8

Pierre Bordieu, *The Field of Cultural Production* (selection)

Thursday, October 10

Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production* (selection)

WEEK 7

No classes in this week

Friday, October 18, 23:58 hours: **ESSAY DEADLINE**

WEEK 8 – LITERATURE AND THE NATION

Tuesday, October 22 – Guest seminar leader: Ulrike Wagner

Germaine de Staël, *Politics, Literature and National Character* (selection)

Hyppolite Taine, “Introduction”, in *History of English Literature*

Thursday, October 24

Max Weber, “The Chinese Literati”

FALL BREAK

WEEK 9 – LITERATURE AND THE NATION

Tuesday, November 5 and Thursday, November 7

G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*

WEEKS 10-13 – THE ROLE OF WRITERS AND INTELLECTUALS

Tuesday, November 12 and Thursday, November 14

Antonio Gramsci, *The Prison Notebooks* (selection)

Tuesday, November 19

Gisèle Sapiro, “Forms of Politicization in the French Literary field”

Gisèle Sapiro, “The Debate on the Writer's Responsibility in France and the United States from the 1920s to the 1950s”

Thursday, November 21

Kristeva, Julia. “A New Type of Intellectual: The Dissident”

Tuesday, November 26

Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual* (selection)

Bruce Robbins, *Intellectuals: Aesthetics, Politics, Academics* (selection)

Thursday, November 28

Edoardo Mendieta, “What Can Latinas/os Learn from Cornel West? The Latino Postcolonial Intellectual in the Age of the Exhaustion of Public Spheres”

Tuesday, December 3 – GUEST LECTURE: AGATA LISIAK

Thursday, December 5

EXAM

WEEKS 14-15 – FORMS AND THEIR CONTEXT

Tuesday, December 10

Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (selection)

Edward Said, “Narrative and Social Space”, in *Culture and Imperialism*

Thursday, December 12 and Tuesday, December 17

Franco Moretti, *Signs Taken for Wonders. On the Sociology of Literary Forms* (selection)

Thursday, December 19

Wrap-up session