

LT205: Theory and Literature

Mondays and Wednesdays, 15:45-17:15

Seminar Leader: James Harker
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Office Hours: By Appointment

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). 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?

Participants are required to acquire the following texts in paper or digital form:

Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse*
Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*
Maggie Nelson, *The Argonauts*

All other texts will be available in digital form on Google Classroom.

Requirements

Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the highest standards of academic integrity and expects students to adhere to these standards at all times. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

AI tools may not be used for the purposes of completing written assignments.

Accommodations

Bard College Berlin is committed to inclusion and providing equal access to all students; we uphold and maintain all aspects of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and Section

3 of the German Disability Equality Act of April 27, 2002 (Federal Law Gazette I p. 1468). If you have a disability, or think you may have a disability, please contact the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, Atticus Kleen, (accommodations@berlin.bard.edu) to request an official accommodation.

Requests for accommodations should be made as early as possible to ensure adequate time for coordination and planning. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and may require advance notice to implement.

If you have already been approved for accommodations with the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, please arrange to meet with me outside of class so that we can develop an implementation plan.

Students may face extenuating circumstances related to various personal or external factors, which impact their academic performance. While these circumstances often do not fall within the legal framework of Disability Accommodations, Bard College Berlin is committed to supporting students experiencing such circumstances. A student needing a short extension or a replacement assignment because of an extenuating circumstance is encouraged to make arrangements directly with instructors if possible. If further support is needed, please visit the [Bard College Berlin Accessibility page](#). Questions about this process can be directed to James Harker (j.harker@berlin.bard.edu) or Maria Anderson-Long (m.andersonlong@berlin.bard.edu).

Attendance

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, two absences from twice-per-week courses or the equivalent (e.g. one absence from a once-per-week course) should not affect the participation grade or require documentation.

Absences beyond two sessions may result in the reduction of the participation grade by one step (e.g. A- reduced to B+) per additional absence.

Bard College Berlin may not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

Assessment

In-Class Quiz (1250 words)	20%
Final Exam (1250 words)	20%
Summary 1 (1250 words)	20%
Summary 2 (1250 words)	20%
Participation	20%

Assignments

In-Class Quiz (September 29)

An in-person, open-book quiz requiring three responses: an explanation of a concept from Marx, an explanation of a concept from Freud, and an interpretation of a passage.

Final Exam (December 10)

An in-person, open-book exam requiring two short essays that each will require synthesizing two readings from the course.

Summary 1 and Summary 2 (due the Sunday after class)

Course participants will sign up twice in the semester to create summaries of the seminar. The summary should include the key concepts discussed, any passages that were discussed in detail, and should follow up on any outstanding questions that emerged during the seminar.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

Essays that are up to 24 hours late can be downgraded up to one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where a professor agrees to accept a late assignment, it should be submitted by the new deadline agreed upon by both parties. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment. Grades and comments will be returned to students in a timely fashion. Students are also entitled to make an appointment to discuss essay assignments and feedback during instructors' office hours.

Students receive mid- and end-of-semester grades for their seminar work. Students are entitled to make an appointment with an instructor to discuss seminar participation, or may be asked to meet with the instructor at any stage in the semester regarding class progress.

Schedule

Week 1

Monday, September 1

Introduction

Wednesday, September 3

Foundation 1: Marx

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, September 8

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels
Excerpts from *Capital*

Wednesday, September 10

Foundation 2: Freud

Sigmund Freud
Excerpts from *The Interpretation of Dreams*

Week 3

Monday, September 15

Sigmund Freud
Excerpts from:
“The ‘Uncanny’”
“Fetishism”

Wednesday, September 17

Synthesizing Marx and Freud

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

Week 4

Monday, September 22

Louis Althusser
Excerpt from “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses”

Wednesday, September 24

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

Week 5

Monday, September 29

In-class Quiz

Wednesday, October 1

Class rescheduled

Week 6

Monday, October 6

Origins of Structuralism

Ferdinand de Saussure
Excerpts from *Course in General Linguistics*

Wednesday, October 8

Roman Jakobson
Excerpts from:
Linguistics and Poetics
Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances

Week 7

Monday, October 13

Claude Lévi-Strauss
Excerpt from *Tristes Tropiques*

Wednesday, October 15

Roland Barthes
“An Introduction to the Structuralist Analysis of Narrative”

Fall Break

Week 8

Monday, October 27

The Encounter of Structuralism and Psychoanalysis

Jacques Lacan
“The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in
Psychoanalytic Experience”

Wednesday, October 29

Jacques Lacan
Excerpts from:

“The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious”
“The Signification of the Phallus”

Week 9

Monday, November 3

Deconstruction and Poststructuralism

Jacques Derrida
Excerpt from *Of Grammatology*

Wednesday, November 5

Roland Barthes
A Lover's Discourse

Week 10

Monday, November 10

Roland Barthes
A Lover's Discourse

Wednesday, November 12

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari
Excerpts from:
Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature
Anti-Oedipus

Week 11

Monday, November 17

Postcolonial Theory

Frantz Fanon
Excerpt from *The Wretched of the Earth*

Wednesday, November 19

Edward Said
Excerpt from *Orientalism*

Week 12

Monday, November 24

Gender and Queer Theory

Gayle Rubin

Excerpt from *Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality*

Wednesday, November 26

Judith Butler

Gender Trouble

Week 13

Monday, December 1

Judith Butler

Gender Trouble

Wednesday, December 3

Theory in your Life

Maggie Nelson

The Argonauts

Week 14

Monday, December 8

Maggie Nelson

The Argonauts

Special Evening Joint Session: Tuesday, December 9

Maggie Nelson

The Argonauts

Wednesday, December 10

Final Exam (in-class)