

Fall 2017 Graduate Course Descriptions

Foucault and the Care of the Self

David Johnson

COL 727

A: 018466/23352

B: 018465/23351

Tuesdays 3:30-6:10

Clemens 640

Beginning with the second volume of the *History of Sexuality, The Use of Pleasure* (Gallimard 1984), Foucault turned his attention away from the 17th - 19th centuries (a three-hundred year period Foucault effectively reinvented) and toward the 1000 year period of late Hellenism and early Christianity, 500 BCE to 500 CE, in order to ask about the relation of truth to the self. Foucault prepared for the publication of *The Use of Pleasure* over the course of several years of teaching and lecturing, beginning, perhaps, with the 1980-81 course *Subjectivité et vérité* (Collège de France) and the 1981 course he gave at Louvain, *Mal faire, dire vrai: Fonction de l'aveu en justice*. In addition, in 1980, at Dartmouth College, he gave a series of lectures on the origin of the hermeneutic of self (L'origine de l'herméneutique de soi). These courses and lectures would be followed up by others devoted largely to the same problem: the necessary transformation of the self in order to speak the truth, and the politics that would follow from this self-transformation. In this seminar, we will read Foucault's seminars, *Subjectivity and Truth* (1980-81) and *The Hermeneutics of the Self* (1982-1983) as well as the lectures *The Origin of the Hermeneutic of Self* (Dartmouth 1980), *Discourse and Truth* (Berkeley 1983), and *Parrhesia* (Berkeley 1983). We'll be concerned precisely with the constitution 1) of the self, its relation to the world and the other; 2) of truth; 3) of politics.

Because these texts often circle around the same problems, it would be a good idea to read them over the summer, since during the seminar my hope is to develop a reading of Foucault that does not necessary proceed chronologically through each text.

Course requirement: 15-20 page research paper on one of the problems of the course.

Plato & the Political

Rodolphe Gasché

COL 728

A: 018468/23354

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Tuesdays 12:30-3:10

Clemens 640

In this seminar we will start out with a close reading of Plato's late dialogue about politics, and statesmanship. Apart from drawing the consequences from the fact that in the Statesman it is a Stranger who lectures the Greeks about politics, we will pay particular attention to the problematic of interlacing and interweaving that according to this dialogue is the art of

statesmanship, and how this conception shapes the political community, and the being together of its members. On the basis of this reading, we then will turn to some writings of Derrida in order to evaluate how Derrida rethinks this problematic of interlacing and interweaving, and what its consequences are with respect to the political.

The **course's objective** is not only to learn how to practice close readings of philosophical texts by developing critical and analytical skills, but also to become familiar with the writings of the thinkers in question about the political, statesmanship, and the question of community, or being-with. **Course requirements:** Attendance is mandatory. A final research, or argumentative paper of ca. 12-15 pages is required for students, who take the course intensively (A section); a three page paper, for those who take the course extensively (B section).

Paranoid & Reparative Reading

Ewa Ziarek

COL 726

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Wednesdays 12:30-3:10

Clemens 640

The call for reparation has been haunting feminist and feminist queer studies for over a decade now. This call is not a demand for economic and political reparations for dispossessed groups, but rather for a new mode of reading of artistic and cultural practices that would replace the authority of critique or even “theory” at large. As such, as Robyn Wiegman suggests, reparation belongs to aesthetics broadly speaking, an aesthetics that includes Foucault’s arts of existence in a broader sense and engagement with art in the narrower sense. Reparative reading claims to go beyond the recognition and debunking of hidden agendas concerning race, gender, and sexuality. Not limited to critique, reparation cultivates zones of more life-affirming queer communities and inspires the belief that a painful and traumatic past could have happened differently.

The “reparative turn” in queer feminist scholarship and in literary and cultural studies (Ann Cvetkovich, Heather Love, and Elizabeth Freeman) has been inspired by selective readings of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s enormously influential essay “Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading,” in which she traces her own use of this term to Melanie Klein. For Sedgwick, paranoid, symptomatic reading not only continues a certain distorted legacy of Marxism, Nietzsche, and Freud, but also characterizes the hegemonic positions of poststructuralism, feminism, and feminist queer theory, since one of Sedgwick’s prime (and surprising) examples is Butler’s *Gender Trouble*.

In this course, we will question whether “critique,” “theory,” and “interpretation,” in their numerous manifestations, can be equated with “paranoid reading;” and vice versa, can a “paranoid position” be equated with “theory”? How are “critique,” “theory,” and “interpretation” associated with the Enlightenment as its subsequent transformations? Second, we will reflect on the tensions between the reparative turn in queer feminist criticism and the so called antisocial thesis in queer studies, on the one hand, and the move beyond critique in literary studies, on the other. Finally, as time permits we will try to situate reparative reading within a broader trend in

contemporary literary studies to find ways of reading such as “surface reading,” “distance reading,” and the new emphasis on objects that try to go beyond critique.

Our readings will include Freud, Klein, Sedgwick, Butler, Cvetkovich, Kristeva, Edelman, Love, and Latour among others.

Requirements will include seminar presentations, participation in class discussions, and the final research paper (12pp conference style).

Writing Disaster

Shaun Irlam

COL 722

A: 018456/24210

B: 018455/24209

Thursdays 12:30-3:10

Clemens 640

The new millennium has ushered in an epoch of massive environmental decline, destabilized weather patterns, waning resources, global economic calamity, atrocious human rights violations, global conspiracy theories and other auguries of apocalypse. Expanding ‘ecologies of fear’ (in Mike Davis’s phrase) and toxic bio-polities seem increasingly to be the natural habitat of the postmodern subject. Most recently, scientists have proposed a new name for this epoch that arguably begins with our massive combustion of the Mesozoic: the *Anthropocene*.

In this course, we will explore the thematic, rhetorical and representational strategies for writing disaster — in Blanchot’s phrase ‘writing the disaster,’ investigating the different ways in which literature evokes the rupture and trauma occasioned by the intrusion of the radically other. We will also frame this literature in terms of theoretical debates around biopolitics and the Anthropocene; however, rather than privileging any single theoretical discourse, our guide here will be the literary texts we explore. Starting from Blanchot’s *The Writing of Disaster*, and entertaining a broad and flexible conception of ‘disaster,’ that allows us to pass from Defoe’s *Journal of the Plague Year* to Camus’s *The Plague*, Duras’s, *Ravishment of Lol V. Stein*, Pynchon’s *Crying of Lot 49* and McCarthy’s *The Road* (to name some possible choices), we will attempt to theorize some of the common characteristics that draw these texts together.

Meta-Metaphysics

Jorge Gracia

COL 680JG

A: 018389/23369

Tuesdays 4:00-6:40

Norton 210

Is metaphysics dead? Here is a course that will show not only that metaphysics is alive and well, but that it is inevitable for any serious philosopher. The seminar will be offered in the Fall of 2017. Meta-Metaphysics has recently attracted some attention, but courses on it are rare. The

seminar will take up this topic and see how it is related to many other central philosophical topics. We shall begin with an analysis of the questions and issues that are involved in this pursuit and proceed to examine the main positions that have been offered in the history of philosophy, from Aristotle to Strawson, including Aquinas, Kant, Meinong, Carnap, and others.

Literature as Bible

Sergey Dolgopolski

COL 723

A: 018458/23346

B: 01845/23345

Mondays 6:30-9:10

Clemens 640

How literature and theology relate to each other? Instead of asking a more conventional question of reading Bible as Literature, the course asks a new question of the role of Bible in the formation literature. Can literature be reduced to a work of imagination and imitation? Can theology be denied a power of a literary production? To address these questions, the course will explore the role of Biblical style and its Jewish and Christian interpretations over the centuries in the formation and understanding of the constitutive aporias, impasses, and tensions in "Western Literature" in its relationship to Christian theology, philosophy, and their counterparts in Jewish thought. Relevant works of Auerbach, Sartre, Barthes, and Foucault, as well as the competing notions of close reading, distant reading, and slow reading as modes of critical reading of a literary and theological work will be at the center of the course-work.