Spring 2015 Course Descriptions

Undergraduate

Noam Pines
COL 203: Women in Jewish Literature
Cross listed with JDS 209
PIN: 23573
Monday, Wednesday, Friday 11:00-11:50
Clemens 708

The course will chart the role of women in modern Jewish literature. We will consider portrayals of women in traditional Jewish sources, and focus on the way that Jewish women authors sought to challenge or develop such portrayals in their own writings.

Noam Pines
COL 275: Jewish Rebels in Music-Punk Jews
Cross listed with JDS 264
PIN: 22372
Monday, Wednesday, Friday 2:00-2:50
Clemens 708

The course will follow the careers of Jewish rebels in music, visual art, and literature in the twentieth century. We will attempt to determine the appeal of an anti-cultural stance (such as we find in Dada, Beat poetry, and Punk) to people of Jewish heritage. Discussions will include figures such as Tristan Tzara, David Bomberg, Bob Dylan, Allen Ginsberg, Lou Reed, The Ramones, Martin Rev and Alan Vega, and more.

Kalliopi Nikolopoulou
COL 303: Art & Violence
A: 23739
Mondays & Wednesdays 11:00-12:20
Clemens 640

Ever since Romanticism, we often think of the artistic genius in relation to violence, madness, and self-destruction. But this relationship of art to violence is not so new. Already in antiquity, Plato was wary of the destructive effects art can have on the human psyche, and this was the reason he proposed to ban the poets from the city. Later on, at the end of the nineteenth century, the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche equated this violent impulse of art with the “Dionysian principle”—namely, the part of artistic inspiration that comes from the dark, divine madness of Dionysus, god of intoxication. In this seminar, we will focus on two modern novellas, Joseph Conrad’s Heart of Darkness and Thomas Mann’s Death in Venice, both of which explore the significance of violence, madness, and death in relation to artistic creativity.
Heart of Darkness, a story about the violence of colonialism, centers around the mysterious and horrifying figure of Kurtz, who is himself portrayed as a painter, orator, poet, and musician—in short, as an artist. The most violent of the novella’s characters is the artistically inclined man. While set in a different context, Death in Venice presents us with yet another angle of this violent aspect of art. In this novella, death is the price another artist must pay in order to reclaim the heights of his long lost inspiration. Mann writes this narrative while consciously responding to Nietzsche’s philosophical treatise, The Birth of Tragedy, in which the philosopher discussed art in terms of the strife between two opposing but equally important forces: the rational plastic form (the Apollonian principle), and the tragic, terrible truth (the Dionysian principle).

Required Readings: Joseph Conrad, Heart of Darkness (Penguin), Thomas Mann, Death in Venice (Vintage), Friedrich Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy (Vintage)

In addition to these three texts, we will read: a short article by Chinua Achebe (his interpretation of Conrad’s Heart of Darkness); excerpts from Plato’s Ion and Republic (on the poets’ madness and the dangerous effects of poetry); excerpts from Euripides’s Bacchae (in comparison with the Dionysian scene in Death in Venice).

Course Objective: There is one principal objective in this class: to learn how to practice close reading by way of developing your critical and analytical skills.

Course Requirements: There is one principal objective in this class: to learn how to practice close reading by way of developing your critical and analytical skills.

Wisdom or love--which one is more fundamental to our pursuit of the meaning of life? This class will examine the selected texts from Western and Chinese intellectual traditions--Plato, Aristotle, Confucianism, and Daoism--to explore the answers for this question. Rather than choosing love or wisdom, perhaps we need to explore how wisdom of love and love of wisdom have formulated the relations between the personal and the political in different cultural traditions. Regarding this, we will introduce some contemporary perspectives (such as, globalization, multiculturalism, and gender) to explore this topic. In the globalization epoch, we need an understanding of the value of human life that does not subordinate personal desires to political or economic goals. Yet how to imagine a new politics that respects cultural and sexual differences? You are invited to take this class if you would like to explore the following questions:

What is the relationship between love and truth?
How do love and truth formulate the meaning of life?
How to approach cultural difference(i.e., Chinese culture)?
Are there different attitudes to love and gender in the East and West?
Why is the dialogue between Eastern and Western cultures important?
Graduate

David E Johnson
COL 720: As If, As Such (Part 2)
A: 23570  B: 23569
Tuesdays 3:30-6:10
Clemens 640

We will begin with Montaigne and move relatively slowly to Descartes and then on to Locke and to Hume. In each case we’ll focus on the role of the imagination in the formation of knowledge, of the senses, of the body and the soul. We will be concerned with the place of the imagination in the formation of Cartesian certainty (in the Discourse on the Method, the Meditations, but also in the Passions of the Soul), for instance; and its role in the constitution of impressions and ideas in Locke (in A Essay Concerning Human Understanding) and Hume (in A Treatise on Human Nature). But we will begin with Montaigne’s remarkable Essais and we’ll ask why it was that although Descartes never mentions Montaigne, every word he wrote was directed against him. Ultimately, what is at stake in the seminar is the status of the human “as such.” We’ll be interested to discovered whether lurking behind the ostensibly irreducible “as such” does not lie a “as if.” In other words, we want to see if a certain fiction does not haunt the subject of modern philosophy from its very inception.

Krzysztof Ziarek
COL 717: Art, Globalization, Event
A: 23564  B: 23563
Mondays 12:30-3:10
Clemens 640

The course will address the role and significance of art in the context of globalization and the notion of the event. Discourses of globalization tend to focus predominantly on social, economic, and political issues, and when they reflect on contemporary culture, the emphasis falls on either the issues of difference and multiculturalism, on local specificity as a practice of resistance to global culture, or else on the importance of technology and information to contemporary art. Yet what exactly is the relation between art, technology, and event today? Do the apparently conflicting discourses of the “local” and the “global” account sufficiently for the stakes of art in the age of globalization? To help us examine these and related issues, we will look at an array of literary and artistic practices in the 20th and 21st centuries as well as several theoretical texts. Readings will include works by Bauman, Deleuze and Guattari, Heidegger, Eduardo Kac, Myung Mi Kim, Marinetti, Nancy, Ranciere, Kurt Schwitters, TristanTzara, Bill Viola, and Krzysztof Wodiczko.

Rodolphe Gasché
COL 719: Athens, Jerusalem, Rome
A: 23568  B: 23567
Tuesdays 12:30-3:10
Clemens 640
Europe (or the West in general) is commonly retraced to the double legacy of Greek and Judaic thought and civilization. The names of the two cities: Jerusalem and Athens, are often used to refer to this origin and heritage of Western man. The importance of Rome is often neglected in this scheme even though it is via Rome that the Greek legacy became bestowed on Europe. In this seminar about the triple origin of European thought and culture, we will inquire into some of the distinctive features of these three legacies, and what their implications are for the “identity” of Western thought. We will read Plato’s *Sophist*, especially the sections on the parricide of the father of Greek philosophy, Parmenides, at the hands of the foreigner of Elea, to make the point that Greek thought inscribes within itself an irreducible relation, and openness to the other. In this context we will also take Jacques Derrida’s remarks in “Violence and Metaphysics” on Greek and Jewish thought into account. Hannah Arendt’s *The Promise of Politics*, and Rémi Brague’s *Eccentric Culture: A Theory of Western Civilization*, will serve as a basis for a discussion of the Roman heritage as one that consists in adopting foreign cultures without destroying them. Finally, we will study Leo Strauss’s reflections on Jerusalem and Athens, and the parallelism of these heritages as well as their differences.

Kalliopi Nikolopoulou

COL 714: On Greek Religion
A: 23572   B: 23571
Wednesdays 3:30-6:10
Clemens 640

This seminar takes the topic of Greek religion in order to examine various philosophical questions at the heart of the disjunction between ancients and moderns. What is the role of nature in religion and what are the ethical consequences of the dismissal of nature in "revealed religion"? In what ways does this dismissal of nature imply an anthropocentrism that remains unspoken in contemporary theory’s critique of classical humanism? Is Greek religion really "humanist" in the sense this term has had in twentieth-century thought? What is the epistemological and ethical value of myth qua logos of nature? We will ask these and other relevant questions while following the two often contrasted strains of Greek religion: the Olympian (Homeric) and the Orphic (mystical). Potential authors: Hesiod, Aeschylus, Euripides, Jane Ellen Harrison, Karl Kerényi, Walter Otto, Walter Burkert. A pre-requisite for this course is a reasonable familiarity with Homer, particularly the *Iliad*.

Ewa Ziarek

COL 718: Narrative, Gender, Judgment
A: 23566   B: 23565
Wednesdays 12:30-3:10
Clemens 640

One of the oldest terms in literary studies, dating at least to Aristotle’s *Poetics*, narrative no longer belongs exclusively to the study of literature, but, as W. J. T. Mitchell writes in 1981, is “an invaluable source of insights for all the branches of human and natural sciences.” Interdisciplinary approaches to narrative are informed by philosophy (both continental and
analytic, from Ricoeur and Derrida, to Danto and Taylor), psychoanalysis (from Brooks to Kristeva), history (for example, Hayden White), anthropology (for example, Turner and Geertz), sociology (for example, Somers), folklore (Propp), critical race studies and law (for example, Patricia Williams) neuroscience and medicine (Kleinman, *The Illness Narratives*), not to mention feminisms, disability studies, the studies of autobiography, and queer studies. Against this interdisciplinary background, which we will briefly survey by looking at the classical 1981 collection *On Narrative*, we will examine a new shift in narrative studies, namely the move from the narrative construction of knowledge and representation (including self-representation) to the narrative construction/disclosure of subjectivity itself and its gendered, sexual, racial and class dimensions. Is this shift in the role of narrative an extension of feminist theories of social construction and performativity or is it an alternative to these theories? How does the narrative construction/disclosure of subjectivity enable us to think about the relationship between literature and politics, and between literary and non-literary narratives and their different styles? To probe these questions, we will focus in depth on feminist approaches to narrative (and narrative performances), by examining the work of Patricia Williams, Gloria Anzaldua, Mae G. Henderson, to Adriana Cavarero, Julia Kristeva and Judith Butler. If we are lucky we will also read the new collection, *Narratives Theory Unbound: Queer and Feminist Interventions*, which is supposed to be published Spring 2015.

In the second part of the course, we will focus on the relationship between the narrative disclosure of subjectivity and aesthetic judgment. Toward this end, we will study Hannah Arendt’s reading of Kant’s critique of aesthetic judgment (based on the pleasure/pain, without the mediation of concept) as a model of political judgment and political community. What calls for the rethinking of the relation between narrative and aesthetic judgment is the fact that both of these performative acts negotiate between singularity and the constitutive exposure to others. **Requirements** will include seminar presentations, participation in class discussions, and the final research paper (12pp conference style).

Sergey Dolgopolski
COL 716: The Literary & The Political
A: 23662   B: 23663
Thursdays 12:30-3:10
640 Clemens

Focusing on the question of moral judgment and political decision in Talmudic and philosophical traditions of thought after Kant, this course will explore and renegotiate the competing constructions of the literary and of its role in understanding of the political. We will begin from Kant and his interpreters who took his aesthetics as a foundation of political philosophy (critique of political reason) and will continue to where Jewish and Christian responses to Kant went, but did not fully reach --- to taking moral judgment and political decision beyond its relationship with the philosophical and the literary. We will address Gilles Deleuze as a thinker breaching into this new area of the political beyond either philosophical or literary-aesthetical and see how the reengagement of the tradition of the Talmud and of its interpretation enriches and complicates that discussion of the political in its new relationship to the philosophical and the literary. On the way from Kant to Deleuze we will read such thinkers of the literary as Auerbach,
Sartre, Bartes, and Derrida, and such thinkers of the political as Schmitt, Arendt, Rancière, Nancy, as well as the new theorists of the Talmudic thinking.

Dennis Tedlock
COL 542: Native American Autobiography (also ENG 563 & APY 515)
A: 22441
Wednesdays 12:30-3:10
Clemens 540

The autobiographical narratives chosen for this seminar deal directly with issues of personal, linguistic, and ethnic identity. They describe and evoke cultural worlds that exist only in memory, but they also reach into the contemporary world, addressing historical, political, and legal issues. For post-colonial studies they are of prime importance, telling the story from the other side.

Before 1920, native autobiographies followed the plot-line of progress, whether on the model of Christian salvation or that of social Darwinism. The publication of narratives that depart from this pattern began with the work of anthropologists of the American cultural-historical school, who generally sided with Native Americans when it came to social, political, and religious issues. In contrast, British social anthropologists, who often worked in close association with colonial officials, took no interest in autobiographical narratives.

In the genre sometimes called the “native life history,” the narrator, with or without the help of an interpreter, speaks to an ethnographer (or a person with ethnographic interests) who makes a transcription, whether on the spot or by working from a sound recording. The transcript then serves as the basis for a book that bears the name of the original narrator as its title, while the transcriber-editor is named as the author.

At present, many ethnographers are themselves natives, and some of them take the role of writer while a native of an older generation takes the role of speaking narrator. Or the native narrator and the writer may be the same person, producing a work that takes the shape of an autobiographical novel.

We will begin with Crashing Thunder, named for a Winnebago also known as Sam Blowsnake, whose narrative was published in both Winnebago and English translation by Paul Radin, the first ethnographer to publish a native life history. Alongside this work we will read ethnographer Nancy Oestreich Lurie’s Mountain Wolf Woman, Sister of Crashing Thunder.

Next will come the most famous of Native American life histories, Black Elk Speaks, spoken by an Oglala Lakota holy man and written by poet-historian John J. Neihardt. We will use the critical edition published in 2008, which takes account of Neihardt’s departures from the transcript of the original interviews.

Works by contemporary Native American writers will include Belle Herbert’s Shandaa: In My Lifetime (Athabaskan), N. Scott Momaday’s Way to Rainy Mountain (Kiowa), Leslie Marmon Silko’s Storyteller, Ray A. Young Bear’s Black Eagle Child: The Facepaint Narratives (Mesquakie), and Greg Sarris’ Mabel McKay: Weaving the Dream (Pomo).

Weekly one-page response papers will be required, along with the classroom presentation of a research project based on autobiographies other than the assigned ones. Except for graduate students in English who take the course under the recitation rubric, a term paper will also be required.
Cézanne, whose paintings twentieth-century French philosophers insistently return to, defined his work as one of “thinking in painting.” Artworks have drawn modern French philosophers and poets, such as Cixous, Deleuze, Merleau-Ponty, and Michaux, to write with—and not simply about—nonverbal compositions. By allowing the artwork to intervene in and shape their thought and style, these authors’ artwriting subverts the conventional subjection of art to the verbal “translations” of aesthetic or literary methodologies. Our readings of different instances of artwriting in this course will allow us to explore direct transmissions of sensations, productions of new signifiers, the making-visible of time, and other functions of the aesthetic.

Possible readings include Baudelaire, Buci-Glucksmann, Cixous, Deleuze, Derrida, Ettinger, Kristeva, Lacan, Merleau-Ponty, Michaux, and Nancy. Class discussions will be conducted in English. While readings will be available in English and French, the latter is preferred (and required for French Ph.D. students). Final papers can be submitted in English or French.