

Course Description

Contemporary Continental Thought With A Writing Focus

Winter 2010

Gray Cox

*Office on second floor of Davis Center
Class TF, 11:10-12:35, Davis Seminar Room*

*Office Hours MTh 1:30- 4:00
and by appointment*

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This is an intermediate to advanced course examining pivotal works and ideas in late 20th and early 21st century Continental thinkers. It will take a collaborative, seminar approach to key works including those by Derrida, Zizek, and a variety of other authors such as Cixous, Deleuze and Guatarri, Lyotard, Lacan, Foucault, Badiou, Baudrillard, Habermas and Harraway. Students and the instructor will take turns leading analyses of texts, their contexts, and their significance. Students will also be required to do short weekly writings with a major term paper or project on an author and topic of their choice. Evaluations will be based on the quality of class participation as well as the creativity, insight and clarity of analysis in work leading class sessions, short essays and the final project. The course presupposes some familiarity with the philosophical tradition to which these writers respond and an ability to engage in careful analysis of very challenging texts. Intermediate to advanced.. Lab fee of \$20. Permission of instructor required. If necessary the class will be subdivided into sections to insure that students have a small seminar experience that is appropriately challenging for their level of skill and background.

In terms of labels, the lines of thought that we will focus on in the course are often identified with terms like deconstruction, post-structuralism, and post-modernism but virtually all the thinkers in this arena contest the ways in which others attempt to define them in schools and label their work. However, they share common concerns and are responding to previous key thinkers. Key themes for the seminar will include the questions and points of view that grow out of the late twentieth century responses to the Western tradition of fundamental philosophy (especially as reframed by Heidegger), the study of language (especially as reframed by Saussure), the psychoanalytic tradition (especially as reframed by Lacan), and social critique (especially as reframed by Nietzsche and Marx).

The primary texts for the course are available through Amazon and are THE NORTON ANTHOLOGY OF THEORY AND CRITICISM edited by Vincent B. Leitch, Jacques Derrida's OF GRAMMATOLOGY, and Slavoj Zizek's THE PARALLAX VIEW. Other readings will be arranged by reserve shelf, handouts or perhaps by ordering a further text later in the term. The texts by Derrida and Zizek will provide a pair of book ends to an elastic shelf of texts that respond to them or are their precursors and which we will delve in to as we are led, using the massive and very useful collection provided by the NORTON ANTHOLOGY. Or, alternatively, you might think of the Derrida and Zizek pieces as two

seminal works in a tradition that rejects the notion of linear intellectual history and canonical shelves of texts and so, as sperm and egg, inseminating each other at the course start, they will provide a kind of zygotic mass of ideas, energies, phrases, discourses, questions and other intellectual nutriment that will then plague us with their growth throughout the rest of the term.

Requirements

Standard: Each student will write a short weekly response paper to some passage or aspect of the texts we are reading. Each will lead two seminar discussion sessions. And each will do a major term project which might take the form of a single paper in depth on a text or author of interest or might also take the form of an artistic or other response.

For Writing Focus: For those who would like to take this seminar as a writing focused course to fulfill part of the writing requirement, this writing focused track is being offered. It differs from the regular track in that it involves meeting weekly with the instructor to analyze the weekly writing assignments handed in, rewriting all the weekly papers submitted, turning in two preliminary drafts of the final paper for review and discussion, and reading some short pieces on writing process and discussing these and student papers in peer review sessions with other students doing the course with a writing focus.

Initial Reading Plan:

(NOTE: This is subject to elaboration and revision based on student interests and the unfolding dialogue and concerns of the seminar as a group.)

Week 1	GRAMMATOLOGY, Introduction and Part I and selected commentary Video: DERRIDA
Week 2	GRAMMATOLOGY, Introduction and Part I and selected commentary
Week 3 NORTON	THE PARALLAX VIEW, pp. 1-123, selections from Lacan and others in
Week 4	THE PARALLAX VIEW, pp. 124-251, selections from NORTON THE PERVERTS GUIDE TO CINEMA
Week 5	THE PARALLAX VIEW, pp. 252-386, selections from NORTON
Week 6	Selections from NORTON based on student interest and group discernment
Week 7	Selections from NORTON based on student interest and group discernment
Week 8	Selections from NORTON based on student interest and group discernment
Week 9	Selections from NORTON based on student interest and group discernment
Week 10	Selections from NORTON based on student interest and group discernment

DUE: Final Project
