



Graduate Course Descriptions: 2011–12

COLT 613 **Transitional Pedagogy**

Leah Middlebrook

Designed for first-year graduate students in Comparative Literature, but open to students across campus, this course addresses the complex position of the twenty-first century literature GTF and professor. Typically, the lower-division literature course is, openly or covertly, undergirded by notions of nation, author and the work of art. Yet contemporary discussions in the humanities tend to stress a post-Eurocentric, post-nationalist perspective, one keyed to community, to globalization, to networks of affiliation, and to the impact of ideology, of epistemes, of technology on texts and artifacts. How to translate the fruits of our thinking into lower-division pedagogy? The word “translate” is used advisedly here. Undergraduate courses in comparative literature designed with a broad-enough comparative focus inevitably teach texts in translation, since one can never assume that all students will share exactly the same foreign language expertise. To call attention to lit-in-translation is to recognize the presence of a sneaky assumption in the United States that culture is produced in English. It also opens the door to further ways to remind us all of the ethical imperative the oldest humanists, such as Petrarch, Montaigne, had firmly in mind: my knowledge is limited by my ignorance. I stop where the other begins. [Fall] [5 credits]

COLT 560 **Major Theorists: “Arendt”**

Martin Klebes

While Hannah Arendt has long been recognized as one of the major political theorists of the 20th century, her wide-ranging contributions to the study of literature and culture have only recently begun to be more widely appreciated, particularly in the anglophone realm. We will primarily focus on this latter part of Arendt’s work; her important and controversial contributions to an understanding of totalitarianism, the Shoah, and revolution will selectively be discussed as these intersect with her reflections on aesthetics and culture. Texts to be read will include *The Human Condition*, *The Life of the Mind*, and a selection of essays, as well as some of the (mostly modernist) literary texts Arendt discusses in her work. All readings in English; students are invited to read those essays first written in German in the original.[Winter] [4 credits]

COLT 530 **Gender and Identity in Literature: “Diaries, Autobiographies, Blogs”**

Mosche Rachmuth

In this course we will explore the different forms of recording one’s own life. From testimonies of childhood during the Holocaust to Chelsea Handler’s one-night stands, from the ironic

memories of Benjamin Franklin to the daily routines of a Muslim girl in rural China and from the lately published poignant remarks of Mark Twain (that he ordered not to publish until one hundred years after his death in 1910) to the inglorious conception of comedian George Carlin, people record, remember and reflect on their lives. Reading autobiographies (memoirs, diaries, blogs...) will allow us to follow the formation of one's identity through one's life. Furthermore, we will debate the elements that create identity – gender, race, nationality, religion, socio-economic background, choices, relationships and pure luck. Beyond these elements, I will try to convince the students, the act writing not only expresses but defines the identity of the writer.

Students will read (and watch) works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Benjamin Franklin, Mark Twain, Anne Frank, Chelsea Handler, David Perlov, Julie Powers, George Carlin and Ma Yan. The course also contains a creative element: each student will keep a blog to which he or she will add entries on a weekly basis.

"Your handwriting. The way you walk. Which china pattern you choose. It's all giving you away. Everything you do shows your hand. Everything is a self-portrait. Everything is a diary." (Diary, Chuck Palahniuk). "June 12, 1942. I hope I will be able to confide everything to you, as I have never been able to confide in anyone, and I hope you will be a great source of comfort and support." (The Diary of a Young Girl, Anne Frank) [Spring] [4 credits]

COLT 540 Studies in Genre: "Cinema"

Kenneth Calhoon

This course will examine a selection of films with respect to literary genre. We will focus on tragedy and comedy, considering how the socio-poetical divergence in these two principal forms often provides the tension that drives the on-screen drama. Of particular interest will be the translation of the respective realms of tragedy and comedy into the dynamics of cinematic space. While the films under examination will furnish a new perspective on certain literary-critical mainstays, including Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis* and Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism*, the cinema will be treated as a unique, at times transformative intervention in the history of these key genres. Films: *The Last Laugh* (F. W. Murnau, 1924); *Chimes at Midnight* (Orson Welles, 1965); *Double Suicide* (Masahiro Shinoda, 1969); *Ran* (Akira Kurosawa, 1985); *Rehearsals for War* (Mario Martone, 1998); *Topsy-Turvy* (Mike Leigh, 1999); *Miss Julie* (Mike Figgis, 1999); *Gosford Park* (Robert Altman, 2001); *The Consequences of Love* (Paolo Sorrentino, 2004); *Molière* (Laurent Tirard, 2007); *Tetro* (Francis Coppola, 2009). Readings (selections from the following titles): Giorgio Agamben, *The End of the Poem*; Aristotle, *The Poetics*; Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis*; Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*; Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*; Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*; Northrop Frye, *The Anatomy of Criticism*; Siegfried Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament*; Molière, *The Bourgeois Gentleman*; William Shakespeare, *Henry IV (pt. 1)*; Antony Tatlow, *Shakespeare, Brecht, and the Intercultural Sign*; Robert Weimann, *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition of the Theater*. [Spring] [4 credits]

COLT 590 Literature and Philosophy

Forest "Tres" Pyle

While the critical practices of reading and interpretation that we have come to call "literary theory" are deeply informed by some of the most important strains of Continental philosophy, this course is designed to take us back to the tensions between the fundamental claims of philosophy and the exploits of literature. To explore these tensions, we will take up four of the fundamental directions of philosophy, ancient and contemporary: epistemology, ontology, ethics, aesthetics. And we will examine literary texts from a variety of national traditions and historical periods that address formally and thematically these important philosophical paradigms. We are likely to read focused selections from the work of such philosophers as Plato, Aristotle, and Longinus; Kant, Rousseau, and Hegel; Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Levinas; Derrida, Cavell, and Badiou. And we are likely to read from the work of such diverse writers of poetry and narrative fiction as Sappho, Shakespeare, and Shelley; Baudelaire, Dostoyevsky, and

McCarthy; Kleist, Beckett, and Ai. The goal of the course is to look closely and carefully into both the literary and the philosophical texts in order to consider how literature addresses or even illuminates the principal claims of literature. **[Spring] [4 credits]**

COLT 615 Graduate Studies in Comparative Literature: “Word, Image, Statue, Text”

Jennifer Presto

“In the beginning was the Word,” or so begins one of the most famous texts in world literature. In this course, we will question the primacy of the word and the word-worshipping that has dominated much of Western thought by looking at how the image and image-thinking has informed both literature and critical theory. We will pay particular attention to how the visual arts—specifically, painting, drawing, sculpture, and photography—have become the focus of contemporary critical theory. However, we will also consider how, for all the discussion of a visual turn in literary studies, critical theory has remained deeply skeptical about the visual. Readings may include critical and theoretical texts by Adorno, Barthes, Benjamin, Jakobson, Jay, Lessing, Lyotard, and Sontag, as well as selected literary texts. Students will be expected to do occasional presentations on the course readings, a response paper based on several of the readings, and a final, seminar-length paper and presentation on a topic of their own design. **[Spring] [5 credits]**
