



## Graduate Course Descriptions: 2013–14

### COLT 570 Studies in Identity: “Anxiety from Kierkegaard to Lacan”

Jeffrey Librett

This course turns around the following hypothesis:

When identity starts to slip away, anxiety presents itself. Is that the case? If so, why would that be? If not, how is anxiety related to identity? Is it possible for anxiety to assert itself precisely at the moment of identification, and what would that mean?

Anxiety--generally characterized as an indeterminate fear, or a fear of the indeterminate--has been an important theme in the modernist period. Why is it that anxiety is such an important theme for modernism? Does it have to do with identity there? And in what sense? Is it still a theme--an affect or mood--that characterizes with particular centrality or plausibility our own age? In the age of cultural identity, cultural difference, and cultural studies, is our own anxiety that of the dissolution of identity, as would be demonstrated in scholarly circles by the failure or impossibility of a definitive historicization? Is our ultimate anxiety perhaps that of the flight of meaning in an infinite withdrawal of the limits of historical context? These are the presentist and historical questions that will initially and ultimately frame our investigation.

In order to approach these questions, however, we will examine several canonical approaches to anxiety, asking in each case what anxiety is taken to reveal or render manifest and in each case how this unveiling is (or was) particularly pertinent to modernity. Is anxiety a window onto pure possibility? An opening to the horizon of faith? Is anxiety a revelation of our temporal predicament, of the imminence of death, and of the need to decide one's own existence? Is anxiety a sign of separation from a personal or impersonal source of affective safety and belonging? Is it the sign of unprocessed trauma? Is anxiety the sign of the approach of the object of a primal fantasy in the unconscious mind? Or is it simply a neutral "disorder" based on chemical imbalances and thoughts contingently misaligned with their referents, one with no epistemic value or purchase?

We will explore these and related questions by reading several of the most powerful literary, philosophical, and psychoanalytic exponents of the modernist notion of anxiety: W.H. Auden ("The Age of Anxiety"); S. Kierkegaard (selections from *The Concept of Anxiety*); M. Heidegger (selections from *Being and Time*); S. Freud (*Inhibitions, Symptoms, and Anxiety* and perhaps some other brief texts); M. Klein ("Infantile Anxiety Situations Reflected in a Work of Art and in the Creative Impulse"); and J. Lacan (selections from *Seminar X: Anxiety*). While reading these canonical works, we will also take a look at some of the most recent cultural studies work on anxiety, such as the book *On Anxiety* by Renata Salecl, and we will also take a peek at the DSM-IV account of anxiety disorders. Students will have the opportunity to work in addition on other artefacts related to anxiety, works of art or music, literary texts, etc. [Fall] [4 credits]

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## **COLT 610      Comparative Literature in the Academy**

Karen Emmerich

This course aims to help upper-level graduate students conceptualize and articulate their role as practitioners of Comparative Literature within a broader academic community. Much of the coursework will involve the hands-on preparation of materials (job application materials, course syllabi, proposals for conference papers, outlines and work plans for academic articles) that place individual research agendas in dialogue with existing conversations taking place in various sectors of the academic world. Several weekly sessions will be devoted to workshopping students' materials, while others will focus on concepts of comparison, on the place of Comparative Literature among other academic disciplines, on issues of gender and race in the academy, and on the notion of the "academy" itself and the range of educational modes and institutions it comprises. Grading for the course will be P/NP. **[Fall] [5 credits]**

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## **COLT 613      Translation Pedagogy**

Karen Emmerich

Disciplines across the university—including history, philosophy, anthropology, comparative literature, and even “national” literature departments—are constantly encountering the problem of translation, since key texts are often taught in translation, particularly at the undergraduate level. Yet few of us, from first-year undergraduates to senior professors, have been trained to discuss translated materials as translations. If each translation embodies a particular interpretation of an original, how does this affect our own work of interpretation as we engage critically with texts in translation? Can, or should, we perform close readings of translations as if they were “originals”? What is an “original,” anyhow? How is translation similar to and distinct from other forms of rewriting, such as edition-making, anthologization, and literary criticism? This course tackles such questions head-on, on the premise that a nuanced understanding of the problem of translation is essential for the responsible teaching of texts in translation. **[Fall] [5 credits]**

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## **COLT 561      Contemporary Theory: “Introduction to Food Studies”**

Jennifer Burns Bright

This course will focus on recent developments in literary criticism on food and foodways, which can be understood as the social, economic, and cultural practices of people, regions, or historical periods. Course goals include an understanding of foundational texts in the emerging field of Food Studies from a range of disciplines, including sociology, philosophy, environmental studies, and history. We will explore a collection of theoretical models for analyzing food in a literary text, critiquing and classifying them for use in literary criticism, then apply these methods to several works in the growing canon of food literature. Theoretical texts will most likely include classic pieces from Brillat-Savarin, Mead, Barthes, Lévi-Strauss, Bourdieu, and Mintz, and new perspectives integrating underrepresented and marginalized populations by Pollan, Heldke, Albala, Clark, McMillan, and more. Literary works to be determined. Coursework will include class community activities building to the successful completion of a research paper, including oral reports on theory, exams, and joint projects. **[Winter] [4 credits]**

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## **COLT 562      Cultural Intersections: “Orientalism: Politics, Sexuality, Religion”**

Michael Allan

This course weaves together social theory, international politics, film and literature to analyze critically the imagination of civilizational difference between East and West. Beginning with Edward Said’s *Orientalism*, we will explore how civilizational rhetoric permeates discussions of political authority, sexuality and religion in the modern world. In texts ranging from Disney’s *Aladdin* to Samuel Huntington’s *Clash of Civilizations*, the East has been figured as a land

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shrouded in mystery, the site of political despotism, heightened religiosity and unbridled sexuality. What animates these presumptions—and for whom? In what way do literary, filmic and philosophical texts affirm or contest these imaginings? Our goal is not necessarily to agree or disagree, but to examine the historical formation of Orientalism and to ask about possible worlds made thinkable outside the binarism of East and West. Readings include works by Edward Said, Wendy Brown, Saba Mahmood, Tayyib Salih, Malek Alloula, and Richard Burton. [Winter] [4 credits]

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## **COLT 615      Graduate Studies in Contemporary Literary Theory: “The Subject of The Subject”**

Leah Middlebrook

Graduate-level seminar centered on theories of the subject, as those theories are developed in psychoanalysis, Marxism, structuralism, post-structuralism and Latin American/Subaltern studies. COLT 615 is our department's introductory course on critical theory. Therefore, emphasis will be on analyzing a spectrum of theories that deploy the figure of the subject in what are at times contradictory ways. Core texts for this course are Hamlet, Paul Smith's *Discerning the Subject* (U. Minnesota, 1988) and Judith Butler's *The Psychic Life of Power* (Stanford, 1997). We will supplement them with shorter readings from the work of critics including Anzaldúa, de Beauvoir, Fanon, Foucault, Freud, Hegel, Jameson, Lacan, Audre Lord, Gayatri Spivak, D.W. Winnicott. [Winter] [5 credits]

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## **COLT 560      Major Theorists: “Deleuze and Guattari”**

Steven T. Brown

An advanced introduction to the critical theory of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari and their impact on discourses of philosophy, aesthetics, literary criticism, film theory, cultural studies, psychoanalysis, geography, ethics, and political theory. Deleuze and Guattari's magnum opus *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* will be read in its entirety, along with selected interviews.

Issues addressed include Deleuze and Guattari's practice of nomad philosophy, revalued notions of monstrosity and becoming-other, the "body without organs" and its deterritorialization of conceptions of "organism," lines of flight away from dominant familial, judiciary, economic, and bureaucratic assemblages, and the rhizomatic intersection of heterogeneous forces and organizations forming connections with the outside (viral, animal, vegetal, technological, political, etc.). [Spring] [4 credits]

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## **COLT 607      Seminar: “Film Theory”**

Kenneth Calhoon

Within a generation of its advent at the end of the nineteenth century, the cinema had become the object of serious theoretical engagement. Subsequent decades saw the emergence of a body of theoretical work specific to the cinema, though film also gave new life to extant approaches, including structuralism and psychoanalysis. While this seminar will aim in part at tracing general trends, its focus will be exemplary moments in film-theorizing. [Spring] [5 credits]

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