



Graduate Course Descriptions: 2014–15

COLT 613 Graduate Studies in Translation

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]

COLT 540 Studies in Genre: “The Short Story Form and the Status of the Event”

Dawn Marlan

It is almost a truism that happiness is boring, unworthy of anyone’s attention. Theorist and literary historian, D.A. Miler, dignifies this notion by his theory of “the narratable,” in which conflict propels plot and “peace” extinguishes it. Once happiness has been achieved, there’s nothing left to tell, which is why traditional novels resolve tensions to achieve narrative closure, at least apparently. If this is true of the rambling novel form, how does Miller’s insight apply to the short story, a compressed genre that requires a tighter structure? In the German tradition, the short story form follows prescribed rules: the *nouvelle* (the German story) is restricted to a single event or conflict leading to an unexpected turning point, provoking a logical but surprising end. But in other traditions, some of these rules fall away. In Poe, for instance, the story is simply a narrative that must be read in a single sitting, announcing brevity, coherence, and the totality effect as its most defining features. Other thinkers and practitioners of the form offer more open-ended analyses: the short story as a recognition of a paradox, for example, for as a study of the psychological phenomena that unfold when characters of varying temperaments are brought together in interesting situations. Such theories of the story seem to imply that the turning points we call “events” need not be exterior ones. Indeed, they might be the barely perceptible movement of feeling. In this class, we will extend Miller’s theory to the story form, examining some of the best stories from various national traditions and periods to ask what sort of feelings, problems, and questions are capable of generating narratives and what

sorts of events propel or end them. In a reduced temporal space and in different cultural contexts, what counts as the interesting? What constitutes change, leading to an altered course? How do the structure and craft of the stories work to produce certain effects? Alongside the stories themselves we will read writers on writing to consider how the writers view their own practice. Assignments will differ for undergrads and grad students.

Readings may include stories by: Balzac, de Maupassant, Chekov, Kafka, Mann, Walser, Nabokov, Dostoevsky, Marquez, Borges, Rushdie, Joyce, Calvino, James, Munro, Twain, Mansfield, Poe, Oates, Kincaid, Lahiri, Perkins Gilman, Woolf, Barnes, Diaz, Beatie, McEwan, Oz, Ishiguro. **[Winter] [4 credits]**

COLT 607 Seminar: "Habitual New Media"

Colin Koopman

This course examines how new media matter most when they seem not to matter at all, that is, through the habits they foster. New media technologies provoke both anxiety and hope: anxiety over surveillance and hope for empowerment. Rather than view these as polar opposites, this course examines the extent to which these two reactions complement rather than oppose each other by emphasizing how exposure is necessary in order for networks to work. Key concepts will be risk and habits. We will consider risk as central to any rigorous understanding and practice of empowerment and freedom: risk, that is, as central to the experience of networks as public. We will consider habits as central to comprehending the impact of new media technologies: rather than focus on the "new" and the practices of first adapters, we will investigate the ways in which technologies matter most when they seem not to matter at all, when they have moved from new devices that we voluntarily engage to nearly invisible ones that structure our daily actions. Key topics will include: ways in which new media habits make possible something like communal action in the era of neoliberalism, how new media habituate us to the logic of update and the rise of big data, and how new media habits are further entrenching unquestioned habits of once-new but still-persistent old media. We will engage a series of case studies for reflecting on critical moments of contemporary new media. This course is intended to provide graduate students from a range of disciplines with an introduction to, and deeper engagement with, some of the major theoretical approaches to new media as an object of critical inquiry. The course will thus survey, and attempt to deepen our understandings of, emerging themes of inquiry gaining importance across a range of contemporary disciplinary formations including not only new media studies, but also science and technology studies, the history and philosophy of technology and science, and political philosophy and social theory. A note on course format: this course will be co-taught by Wendy Chun (Visiting Wayne Morse Chair in Law and Politics at UO, and Professor of Modern Culture and Media at Brown University) and Colin Koopman (Philosophy at UO). Prof. Chun will lead the course for the first three weeks in January and return for another week in late February. Prof. Koopman will co-facilitate these sessions and be the primary seminar facilitator for our other six weeks. The course will meet twice weekly (on Mondays and Wednesdays). The course is open to all UO graduate students and is intended to fulfill requirements for the New Media and Culture Certificate program (see newmediaculture.uoregon.edu). **[Winter] [5 credits]**

COLT 614 Graduate Studies in Comparative Literature: "Aesthetics, Philology, Formalism: A Disciplinary Genealogy"

Michael Allan

Our class will focus on the emergence of Comparative Literature with attention both to local and global histories of the discipline. We will trace the emergence of comparative literary study from aesthetic theory in the 18th century, philology and comparative grammar in the 19th century, and formalism in the early 20th century. The first half of the course will combine essays on Comparative Literature with more general studies in philosophy, philology and culture, and the second half will be conducted as a workshop with each student focusing on the emergence of literary study in her particular field. Our goal will be both to cultivate a reflexive

historical method for the analysis of texts and to enrich our understanding of the formation of literary disciplines across regions and languages. Given the scope of the course and its emphasis on the individual research trajectories, I will be meeting with students one-on-one throughout the term to coordinate the final research project. Our seminar will be collaborative and therefore demands weekly participation in discussion, research and presentations. **[Winter] [5 credits]**

COLT 510 Experimental Course: “Visuality and Literature”

Jenifer 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, sculpture, and photography—inform literature and contemporary critical theory. Our weekly readings will pair literary works from a number of different traditions with theoretical writings by Barthes, Benjamin, Crary, Freud, Jakobson, and Sontag among others. **[Spring] [4 credits]**

COLT 607 Seminar: “Poetics”

Forest “Tres” Pyle

This seminar will examine decisive texts in Western poetic theory as it is oriented around three principal modes: poet, poem, reader. These most basic of terms are not, of course, necessarily distinct or even separable; but they offer a starting point for readings which are organized around the question of poetic agency and production, the formal structures and rhetorical workings of the poetic text, and the forms of poetic effectivity and affectivity. The seminar will not be organized chronologically, but we will read selections of texts from Plato and Longinus through Dante and Aquinas to the German and British Romantics and Nietzsche. But our principal focus will be 20th and 21st century poetic theory, from Russian Formalism and the New Criticism through the structuralist/deconstructive nexus to recent discussions of poetic effects and affects. Though our focus will be poetry and poetics, this is not a course in prosody; and the theoretical questions posed by our readings should always have relevance for the study of narrative. **[Spring] [5 credits]**
