

AMERICAN STUDIES PH.D. PROGRAM

Department of American Studies, SEAS, ELTE

Literary and Cultural Theories After Deconstruction I

(every thing you always wanted to know about theory but were afraid to ask)

Professor: Enikő Bollobás

Tue 3:30-5:00, Rm 356, R5, Fall 2010

This is an in-depth survey of some aspects of the paradigm change which poststructuralism in general—and deconstruction in particular—has brought about in literary and cultural theory. Feminist theories will provide the focus of the course, and it is from this feminist vantage point that we will explore theories and thematics such as representation, the author, the canon, postmodernism, discourse, Bildung, autobiography, poststructuralism, binary oppositions and their deconstruction, the subject, identity, essence/essentialism, performativity, and the body.

Grades will be based on

- (i) short written summary of the assigned essays;
- (ii) checking (“grading,” “marking”) the essays of one other student for the following week;
- (iii) class participation.

Students are required to read ALL the assignments for ALL the classes. Moreover, you will write a short (150-250 word) outline (synopsis) of one essay for each week; this constitutes your written homework. An outline is expected to cover the main theses of each essay. However, you are advised not to use the outline form, but rather write in short sentences, and your own words, when paraphrasing the author. You need to show how an argument is built up, what ideas are put forward or contested, what conclusions are reached. Please write one outline on one page and staple the pages for each week. Put YOUR NAME on each sheet (not mine or the course title), the NUMBER OF ASSIGNMENT (see list), the DATE OF SUBMISSION, and the NUMBER OF WORDS you counted.

Students will also be asked to go through the essays of one fellow student each week. You will do this after we discussed the essays. Please bring these marked papers for the week after that particular class.

ELTE students have the right to miss three classes per semester. In this class, this also means that you are allowed to not write three sets of homework. But remember: not reading the assignments of the day or not writing the assigned synopses also counts as absence (even if you are physically present) and is therefore included into the three possible absences you can accumulate.

The reading assignments have been collected into a COURSE PACKET available for xeroxing. However, in order to read the full books listed on the syllabus, you will have to search several Budapest libraries (CEU, Egyetemi, Akadémiai, Idegennyelvű, OSZK). Please plan ahead: pay your membership dues, use the electronic catalogues, borrow the books in time, and make sure you can spend ample time in those reading rooms.

One last piece of advice: start doing the assignments ahead of time, already on Wednesday perhaps. These are difficult texts, and you will most certainly need to go through them more than once (more than twice even). Allow yourself enough time for each assignment, and then you can watch a movie Monday night ...

Syllabus

SEPTEMBER 14

Orientation

Copernican Revolution in Theory: Deconstruction, Poststructuralism, Post-Deconstruction (Lecture)

Background readings recommended to students:

Hans Bertens, *Literary Theory—The Basics* (2001) (esp. chapters “The poststructuralist revolution: Derrida, deconstruction, and postmodernism” [117-146], “Poststructuralism continued: Foucault, Lacan” [147-163, 168])

Catherine Belsey, *Critical Practice* (1980) (esp. chapters “Challenges to Expressive Realism,” “Criticism and Meaning,” “Addressing the Subject” [14-77], “The Interrogative Text” [78-87], “Deconstruction and the Difference It Makes” [114-119])

Frank Lentricchia, *After the New Criticism* (1980) (esp. ch. 5: “History or the Abyss: Poststructuralism” [156-210])

Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction* (1982) (esp. Chapter Two: “Deconstruction” [85-225])

Robert Scholes, *Textual Power—Literary Theory and the Teaching of English* (1986)

Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin, *Critical Terms for Literary Study* (1990)

Bóka Antal: *Irodalomtudomány a modern és posztmodern korban* (1997) (esp. ch's 6-7-8)

Jonathan Culler, *Literary Theory—A Very Short Introduction* (1997)

Catherine Belsey, *Poststructuralism: A Very Short Introduction* (2002)

chapter on “Deconstruction”: in Patricia Waugh, ed., *Literary Theory and Criticism—An Oxford Guide* (2006) (298-318)

Introductions in *Literary Theories—A Reader and Guide*, ed. Julian Wolfreys (1999) (esp. FEMINISM [49-59], DECONSTRUCTION [267-282], POSTSTRUCTURALISM [317-328], POSTMODERNISM [359-371], POSTCOLONIAL THEORY [463-474], GAY STUDIES/QUEER THEORY [525-537], CULTURAL STUDIES [593-604])

SEPTEMBER 21

A. First wave feminism

• Mary Wollstonecraft

READ AND OUTLINE:

Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792)

INTERNET (for example, <http://feminism.eserver.org/history/wollstonecraft-vindication.txt>)

• Virginia Woolf

READ AND OUTLINE:

Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (1929)

INTERNET (for example, <http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/woolf/virginia/w91r/>)

SEPTEMBER 28

B. Second wave feminism

1. Betty Friedan

READ AND OUTLINE:

Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) [CHECK LIBRARIES]

2. “Images of Women” Criticism

READ AND OUTLINE:

de Beauvoir, “The Myth of Woman in Five Authors” (Ch. X of *The Second Sex*) [CHECK LIBRARIES]

OCTOBER 5

3. In search of the female voice, woman as writer

READ AND OUTLINE:

Ruth Robbins, “Woman As Writer” (PACKET)

• gynocriticism

READ:

Elaine Showalter, “Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness” (PACKET)

4. Interrogating the canon

READ:

Annette Kolodny, “A Map for Rereading: Gender and the Interpretation of Literary Texts” (PACKET)

Lilian S. Robinson, “Treason Our Texts: Feminist Challenges to the Literary Canon” (PACKET)

Ann duCille, “On canons: anxious history and the rise of black feminist literary studies” (PACKET)

OCTOBER 12

The diversification of feminisms

Humanist and postmodern feminism

READ:

de Lauretis, “Upping the Anti in Feminist Theory” (PACKET)

***Gynesis*, or woman entering discourse**

READ AND OUTLINE:

Mary Jacobus, "Reading Woman (Reading)" (PACKET)

READ:

Mary Jacobus, "Is There a Woman in this Text?" (PACKET)

Shoshana Felman, "Rereading Femininity" (PACKET)

OCTOBER 19

The impact of feminist literary theory on literary studies

• novel studies

READ:

Nancy Armstrong, "What feminism did to novel studies" (PACKET)

Nancy K. Miller, "Emphasis Added: Plots and Plausibilities in Women's Fiction" (PACKET)

• modernism(s)

READ:

Katherine Mullin, "Modernisms and feminisms" (PACKET)

• Bildung

READ:

Elizabeth Abel, et al., "Introduction" (PACKET)

• autobiography

READ AND OUTLINE:

Linda Anderson, "Autobiography and the feminist subject" (PACKET)

OCTOBER 19

NO CLASS (FALL BREAK)

NOVEMBER 2

Poststructuralism and feminism

READ AND OUTLINE:

Rey Chow, "Poststructuralism: theory as critical self-consciousness" (PACKET)

• Psychoanalytic feminism

READ:

Juliet Mitchell, "Femininity, narrative and psychoanalysis" (PACKET)

Maggie Humm, "Language and Psychoanalysis" (PACKET)

NOVEMBER 9

French ("French") feminism

READ AND OUTLINE:

Hélène Cixous, "Sorties" (PACKET)

READ:

Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa" (PACKET)

Luce Irigaray, "This Sex Which is Not One" (PACKET)

Toril Moi, "Feminist, Female, Feminine" (PACKET)

NOVEMBER 16

Postfeminism, Postmodern feminism

READ AND OUTLINE:

Patricia Waugh, "Postmodern and Feminism: Where Have All the Women Gone?" (PACKET)

READ:

Susan Bordo, "Feminism, Postmodernism, Genderskepticism" (PACKET)

• Deconstructive feminism

READ:

Jane Moore, "Promises, Promises" (PACKET)

Barbara Johnson, "Gender Theory and the Yale School" (PACKET)

NOVEMBER 23

Poststructuralist theories of the (gendered) subject

READ AND OUTLINE:

Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power" (PACKET)

READ:

Chris Weedon, "Subjects" (PACKET)

Catherine Belsey, "Addressing the Subject" (PACKET)

NOVEMBER 30

READ AND OUTLINE:

Elizabeth Grosz, "Sexual Signatures. Feminism After the Death of the Author" (PACKET)

READ:

Elizabeth Grosz, "Ontology and Equivocation—Derrida's Politics of Sexual Difference" (PACKET)

DECEMBER 7

Other poststructuralist feminists

READ AND OUTLINE:

Judith Butler, "Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of 'Postmodernism'" (PACKET)

READ:

Diana Fuss, “The ‘Risk’ of Essence” (PACKET)

DECEMBER 14

Metaphors (Lecture)

Texts discussed:

Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*; *Bodies That Matter—On the Discursive Limits on “Sex”* (performativity)

Hélène Cixous, *The Newly Born Woman* (the body)

Donna Haraway, “A Manifesto for Cyborgs” (the cyborg)

Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects—Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (nomadic subject)

Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera—The New Mestiza* (new mestiza)

Elisabeth Bronfen, *The Knotted Subject—Hysteria and Its Discontents* (the hysterical woman)

Kaja Silverman, *The Subject of Semiotics* (suture)

... *to be continued* ...

LIST OF WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

- #1 Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*
- #2 Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*
- #3 Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*
- #4 Ruth Robbins, "Woman As Writer"
- #5 Mary Jacobus, "Is There a Woman in this Text?"
- #6 Linda Anderson, "Autobiography and the feminist subject"
- #7 Rey Chow, "Poststructuralism: theory as critical self-consciousness"
- #8 Hélène Cixous, "Sorties"
- #9 Patricia Waugh, "Postmodern and Feminism: Where Have All the Women Gone?"
- #10 Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power"
- #11 Elizabeth Grosz, "Sexual Signatures. Feminism After the Death of the Author"
- #12 Judith Butler, "Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of 'Postmodernism'"