PHIL 6140 Contemporary European Philosophy 1

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Office hours: Physical Wed 9-11
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This is a course on Jacques Derrida's theory of signifiers, concentrating on his great early works of the 1960's. Derrida has had an enormous influence on the philosophy of language, on political philosophy, and on the interpretation of the history of metaphysics. The issues around signifiers are connected to Derrida's other topics of writing, difference, presence, and deconstruction. His invention of "deconstruction" has often been misunderstood, but it is extremely interesting, important, and useful for anyone interested in meaning. Derrida's writing is difficult, and his ideas are highly controversial, but in this instructor's view, studying Derrida is essential for anyone who wants to understand and do philosophy in a contemporary way. We will study Derrida's texts closely (sympathetically as well as critically), and we will consider his work in relation to movements of structuralism and semiotics, and in relation to disciplines like literary theory and anthropology (and more briefly, to psychoanalysis). The most important thing that students will take from this course is a range of options for thinking about how "signifiers" work.

Required texts:

Derrida, *Of Grammatology*
Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*
Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*

Recommended texts:

Derrida, *Limited Inc*
Derrida, *The Post Card*

Grading scheme:

Short explication due Feb 4	15%
Final paper April 8	55%
4 Micropresentations*	20%
Final paper presentation on April 1	10%

*Micropresentations are 60-second (!) oral presentations in class. Each student must do one of these on a linguistics related reading (see list below), and three others under three different headings on the sign-up sheets.

Readings:

Jan 7   Introduction to the course

Jan 14 *Grammatology*, pp. 3-50

Jan 21 *Grammatology*, pp. 50-100

Jan 28 *Grammatology*, pp. 101-164

Feb 4   "Différance" in *Margins of Philosophy*

Feb 11 "Signature Event Context" in *Margins of Philosophy* (see also *Limited Inc*)

Feb 18 No class—Reading week

Feb 25 *Speech and Phenomena* (chapters 3, 5, 7), plus Husserl, *Logical Investigation* 1

Mar 4   "White Metaphor" in *Margins of Philosophy*

Mar 11 "The Pit and the Pyramid" in *Margins of Philosophy*

Mar 18 Deleuze and Guattari, "Postulates of Linguistics" in *A Thousand Plateaus*

Mar 25 Choice of: "Racism's Last Word" (also read the reply by McClintock and Nixon, and Derrida's response) in *Race, Writing and Difference* (ed. Gates); or, *Schibboleth*; or, *Glas*

Apr 1   Term paper presentations (roughly 10 minutes each, depending on the number of students in the course)

Standard Statements – Graduate Course Outlines

The following are standard statements for inclusion in all course outlines. Some departments or colleges may also elect to post this information on a common website and link to such sites in the course outline. However, it is strongly recommended that statements on academic misconduct and links to the academic misconduct section of the academic calendars be included in all course outlines.

E-mail Communication
All students are required to check their University of Guelph e-mail account regularly. E-mail is the official route of communication between the University and its students.

When You Cannot Meet a Course Requirement
When you find yourself unable to meet an in-course requirement because of illness or compassionate reasons, please advise the course in writing, with your name, id#, and e-mail contact. See the graduate calendar for information on regulations and procedures for Academic Consideration:
http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/sec_d0e1415.shtml

Drop Date
The last date to drop one-semester courses, without academic penalty, is Friday, March 7. Two-semester courses must be dropped by the last day of the add period in the second semester. Refer to the Graduate Calendar for the Schedule of Dates.

Academic Misconduct
The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and it is the responsibility of all members of the University community – faculty, staff, and students – to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and to do as much as possible to prevent academic offences from occurring. University of Guelph students have the responsibility of abiding by the University's policy on academic misconduct regardless of their location of study; faculty, staff and students have the responsibility of supporting an environment that discourages misconduct. Students need to remain aware that instructors have access to and the right to use electronic and other means of detection. The Academic Misconduct Policy is detailed in the Graduate Calendar:
http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/sec_d0e1702.shtml

Recording of Materials
Presentations which are made in relation to course work—including lectures—cannot be recorded in any electronic media without the permission of the presenter, whether the instructor, a classmate or guest lecturer.

Resources
The Graduate Calendar is the source of information about the University of Guelph's procedures, policies and regulations that apply to graduate programs:

http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/

Linguistics related readings:

Chomsky, *Aspects of a Theory of Syntax*, pp. 3-30.

Boris Eichenbaum, "The Theory of the Formal Method", in *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays* (Tr Lemon and Reis). U. of Nebraska Press, 1965, pp. 102-139.

Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*. Columbia UP. 1984, 21-30, 57-90.
----- "Towards a semiology of paragrams", in *The Tel Quel Reader*.

Roland Barthes, *Elements of Semiology*.

Jacques Lacan, "The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis", in *Écrits* (Tr. Fink). Norton, 2006, pp. 197-265.

De Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*.

Roman Jacobson, "Quest for the Essence of Language"?

Hjelmslev, *Prolegomena to a Theory of Language*?

Émile Benveniste, "Delocutive Verbs", or "Semiology of Language", in *Problems of General Linguistics*

Fredrik Jameson, *The Prisonhouse of Language*

Christian Metz, "Cinema: *langue* or *langage*?", in *Essay on the Signification of Cinema*.

Umberto Eco, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*.

Husserl, First *Logical Investigation*, on expressive and indicative signs.

Frege, "Sense and Reference".

Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator", in *Illuminations* (Tr Zohn). Schoken Books, 1969, pp. 69-82.

C. S. Peirce, "Logic as Semiotic: The Theory of Signs".

Foucault, *The Order of Things*, chapter 4 and chapter 8 s. iv.

Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa".

M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*. U of Texas Press, 1996; polyglossia and chronotopes, pp. 3-40, 243-58.

Gerard Genette, *Narrative Discourse*

J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, on performatives.

Bertrand Russell, "Descriptions".

Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, on private languages, and on language games.

Erwin Panofsky, "Iconography and Iconology: An Introduction to the Study of Renaissance Art", in *Meaning and the Visual Arts*. U of Chicago Press, 1983.

John R. Pierce, *An Introduction to Information Theory: Symbols, Signals, and Noise*. Dover, 1980. Chapter 2

Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, chapters 1-2.

<u>MICROPRESENTATIONS</u>

<u>Definition</u>

Jan 14

Jan 21

Jan 28

Feb 4

Feb 11

Feb 25

Mar 4

Mar 11

Mar 18

Mar 25

<u>Small detailed argument</u>

Jan 14

Jan 21

Jan 28

Feb 4

Feb 11

Feb 25

Mar 4

Mar 11

Mar 18

Mar 25

Flow of themes (in one section of the text, or in the whole day's reading)

Jan 14

Jan 21

Jan 28

Feb 4

Feb 11

Feb 25

Mar 4

Mar 11

Mar 18

Mar 25

Linguistics related reading summary

Jan 14

Jan 21

Jan 28

Feb 4

Feb 11

Feb 25

Mar 4

Mar 11

Mar 18

Mar 25

<u>Commentator</u>

Jan 14

Jan 21

Jan 28

Feb 4

Feb 11

Feb 25

Mar 4

Mar 11

Mar 18

Mar 25

<u>Objection</u>

Jan 14

Jan 21

Jan 28

Feb 4

Feb 11

Feb 25

Mar 4

Mar 11

Mar 18

Mar 25