

Spring, 2012 ENG 6810 0001: Texts & Technology Theory

Professor Barry Mauer

CNH 203, 7:30PM - 10:15PM Mondays

Office Hours: TR 12:00-1:15, and by appointment Office: Colbourn Hall 304C

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T&T Theory Course description

This seminar, intended as a survey of modern critical theory and its relationship to the arts and to social and political shifts, proposes that almost all of contemporary theory derives from three writers who initiated what Paul Ricoeur called "the hermeneutics of suspicion": Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud. The hermeneutics of suspicion, with its practice of regarding ideas and behavior as symptoms, itself arose out of a century-long encounter with positivism, the most influential philosophy of the nineteenth century. Thus, one of the course projects will involve tracing the abiding prestige of Comte's philosophical intervention on modern thought.

Because positivism emerged from an intellectual climate infatuated with the prestige of science and the promise of technology, the seminar's second goal will be to speculate about the relationships between communication technologies and critical practice. In particular, we will study those technologies which have appeared since Comte: photography, the gramophone, the telephone, film, radio, and the computer.

This class seeks to put T&T theory in context by exploring its relationship to the modernist movement across the arts. It treats modernism as a set of practices: aesthetic or formal strategies applied to poetry, novels, manifestoes, paintings, films, music, and essays. Thus, sections of this course will focus on cultural questions and the relationship of the arts to mass media and modern politics.

In his autobiography, Roland Barthes observed that

Many (still unpublished) avant-garde texts are uncertain: how to judge, to classify them, how to predict their immediate or eventual future? Do they please? Do they bore? Their obvious quality is of an intentional order: they are concerned to serve theory. Yet this quality is a blackmail as well (theory blackmailed): love me, keep me, defend me, since I conform to the theory you call for; do I not do what Artaud, Cage, etc. have done? -- But Artaud is not just "avant-garde"; he is a kind of writing as well; Cage has a certain charm as well . . . But those are precisely the attributes which are not recognized by theory, which are sometimes even execrated by theory. At least make your taste and your ideas match. (Roland Barthes, p. 54)

While providing an introduction to some of the central ideas in contemporary theory, this course will assume that such theory is "a kind of writing as well"-- in other words, that such works experiment as much with the form of "the essay" as they do with the ideas of "criticism." Thus, the texts we read will serve as models for assignments asking you to invent new ways of writing, or "doing criticism."

The midterm and final papers will require a section of formal experimentation based on modernist principles, though our "target" will not be the arts, but rather the discipline of Texts and Technology. The final paper will be addressed to an agency (to be chosen in consultation with the instructor) concerned with solving or ameliorating a public problem. Students may choose to work in teams, each writing a chapter (12-15 pages) of a longer manuscript.

Course Goals

The goals of this class overlap with those of the English Department, the College of Arts and Sciences, the discipline of textual studies, the University of Central Florida, and its relationship to the greater community (Orlando, Florida, the United States, and the world). The goals of this class also overlap with my goals as an instructor and, I hope, with your goals as a student.

English:

- To read discerningly, think critically, and write clearly.
- To study literature in historical, cultural, and theoretical contexts to reveal the ways of people and society while encouraging the lifelong pleasure to be found in this art form.

Discipline of textual studies:

- Literacy
- Critical thinking
- Self-knowledge
- Citizenship

CAH:

- To cultivate the examined life in order to act thoughtfully and ethically, in both public and private roles.
- To nourish respect for the rich artistic and scientific contributions of all cultures.
- Critical reflection and evaluative skills.
- To solve the problems of our society with broad knowledge, precise expertise, critical thinking, and skills to effectively utilize technology.
- Professional skills.
- Public service and an appreciation for tolerance, freedom of expression, and open-mindedness.
- To challenge conventional wisdom through our inquisitiveness, good communication, and good citizenship.
- To store and the transmit the cultural, humanistic, and scientific learning that addresses the recurrent, and yet ever changing, human and social questions of how individuals and groups give meaning, purpose, and value to their lives.
- Citizenship in an increasingly diverse global economy.
- Familiarization with the technological advances that characterize the postindustrial society and application of these advances to major fields of inquiry.

UCF Goals:

- Provide international focus to our curricula and research programs.
- Become more inclusive and diverse.

UCF's relationship to the Community (role of education in it):

- To educate students for a world in which cooperation is as important as competition; in which societal and environmental impacts of new developments are as important as their technical merits; and in which technology, the arts, sciences, humanities, and commerce work together to shape the future.
- To create new knowledge, new points of view, and new means of expression in a broad range of academic, professional, and socially significant areas. To convey the results, methods, values, and expressions to students, colleagues, and the public.
- To serve the free expression of ideas, the equality of all people, and the dignity of the individual.

Required Texts

- Course disc (distributed in class)
- Barthes: *Image, Music, Text*
- Ulmer: *Heuristics*

Grading

| | |
|--|-------------------|
| 12-15 page final paper | 100 points |
| 10-12 page mid-term paper | 100 points |
| 1-3 page response papers (5@ 20 points each) | 100 points |
| Presentation (2@ 50 points each) | 100 points |
| Total | 400 points |

Course Grades

A = 370-400

B- = 320-329

D+ = 270-279

A- = 360-369

C+ = 310-319

D = 250-269

B+ = 350-359

C = 290-309

D- = 240-249

B = 330-349

C- = 280-289

F = Below 240

Course Policies

- Classroom Behavior: Proper classroom behavior is expected at all times. Students must follow UCF standards for personal and academic conduct as outlined in The Golden Rule. As a matter of common courtesy, please arrive on time prepared to stay for the entire class. Proper classroom conduct also entails creating a positive learning experience for all students; therefore, sexist, racist, homophobic, or other derogatory remarks will not be tolerated. My top priority is to provide a safe environment for learning.
- Your participation in class discussions is **required** and is expected at each and every class meeting. This is a discussion-based, student-centered class; it only works if you, the student, take responsibility for your learning by showing up prepared and engaged. Full preparation means you have read the assigned material and wrote or thought about it and you have brought your course materials to class with you.
- Attendance is crucial because of the vital role discussion plays in this course. You will drop your grade a whole letter for every three unexcused absences. Absences will be excused in cases of emergency or for prior arrangements of short duration. You must contact me ASAP once you know you will be absent.
- Make-up work is available at the professor's discretion for excused absences only. No make-up work will be given for unexcused absences. Students are responsible for raising the issue of make-up work with the professor.
- Late assignments will lose 20% of the total possible points per class meeting after due date.
- All work is to be done individually unless otherwise noted by the instructor.
- All papers must be proofed, printed, and stapled. Incomplete papers will be returned.
- Responses to emails may take up to three days. Please be patient.
- No incompletes will be given in this course.
- Complaints about assignment grades should be discussed with me within two weeks after return.
- Plagiarism and Cheating: All work that you submit for this class must be your own, and it must be written exclusively for this course. Also, any sources consulted for your writing must be properly documented. "Rewriting," in which a student consults a source, changes a few words, and presents the ideas as his/her own, is plagiarism. Plagiarism and cheating of any kind on an examination, quiz, or assignment will result at least in an "F" for that assignment and may also lead to an "F" for the entire course. Plagiarism and cheating subjects a student to referral to the Office of Student Conduct for further action. See the UCF Golden Rule (<http://www.goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu/>). I will adhere to the highest standards of academic integrity, so please do not expect me to change your grade illegitimately or to break rules.
- Disability Accommodation: The University of Central Florida is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities. Students who need accommodations must be registered with Student Disability Services, Student Resource Center Rm. 132, phone (407) 823-2371, TTY/TDD only phone (407) 823-2116.

Standards for Written Work

- An "A" text is exceptional. It presents sophisticated and significant critique and is guided by a meaningful argument. It contains the required elements of the assignment, is written in an engaging style, is arranged in a logical manner, is memorable, and is visually appealing. It is free of mechanical errors.
- A "B" text is strong. It contains all required elements of the assignment. It is generally above average in terms of the criteria mentioned above, but falls short of excellence in one or more category. It has few mechanical errors.
- A "C" text is competent. It contains all required elements of the assignment. It is generally average in terms of the major criteria listed above. It has some mechanical errors.
- "D" work is weak. It does not include the required elements of the assignment and it falls below average in terms of one or more of the major criteria.
- "F" work fails in terms of one or more of these criteria.

Schedule

Part I – Photography, Positivism, and the Hermeneutics of Suspicion

Week 1 Monday, January 9: Course Introduction

Lecture and discuss the grammatological tradition, the alphabet-as-technology, and the course themes of positivism, communication technology, and formal experimentation. Distribution of course CD.

Screening: Ernie Gehr's *Eureka*, Chick Strand's *Loose Ends*

Week 2 Monday, January 16: MLK Day. NO CLASS

Week 3 Monday, January 23: Grammatology/Photography/Positivism

1. Marx, Karl. "Consciousness Derived from Material Conditions" and "On Greek Art in Its Time." (7 pages)
2. Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)." (38 pages)
3. Comte, August. Excerpts from *Course of Positive Philosophy* and Steven Kreis, "The World of Auguste Comte." (17 pages)
4. Taylor, Frederick. *The Principles of Scientific Management*. (84 pages)
5. Bazin, Andre. "The Ontology of the Photographic Image." (6 pages)
6. Benjamin, Walter. "A Short History of Photography." (18 pages)
7. Bennett, James R. "The Essay in Recent Anthologies of Literary Criticism." (6 pages)
8. Ray, Robert. "Snapshots: The Beginnings of Photography." *The Avant-Garde Finds Andy Hardy* (14 pages)

Optional Reading: Mauer's Notes on Photography

Screening: scenes from Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times*

Week 4 Monday, January 30: Nietzsche and the Avant-Garde: The Critique of Positivism

- **Response paper 1 due**
- **Group 1 Presentation**
 1. Ulmer, Gregory. "Representation and Its Complications." (5 pages)
 2. Ray, Robert. "How to Start and Avant-Garde" and "How to Teach Cultural Studies." (21 pages)
 3. Baudelaire, Charles. Selections from *The Flowers of Evil*. (17 pages)
 4. Mallarmé, Stephen. "Action Restricted" and "Crisis in Poetry." (5 pages)
 5. Nietzsche, Friedrich. Selections from *The Portable Nietzsche*. (49 pages)
 6. Stein, Gertrude. Excerpt from *Tender Buttons*. (21 pages)
 7. Loy, Mina. A few Aphorisms, Essays, and Manifestoes. (7 pages)
 8. de Saint Point, Valentine. "The Manifesto of Futurist Woman (Response to F. T. Marinetti)" (4 pages)

Optional Readings: Ray's Positivism-Nihilism handout, Mauer's Notes on Nietzsche, Mauer's 110 Propositions by Nietzsche, Hussain's "Nietzsche's Positivism"

Screening: Robert Hughes' *The Shock of the New*

Week 5 Monday, February 6: Film and Freud

- **Group 2 Presentation**
- **Response Paper 2 Due**
 1. Bazin, Andre. "The Myth of Total Cinema." (6 pages)
 2. Eisenstein, Sergei. "Word and Image." (63 pages)
 3. Monaco, James: "Montage." (9 pages)
 4. Mauer, Barry. "Taylorizing the Movies: Hollywood and the Factory Production System." (5 pages)
 5. Freud, Sigmund. "Recommendations to physicians practicing psychoanalysis." (8 pages) and "On Beginning the Treatment (Further Recommendations on the Technique of Psychoanalysis I)" (4 pages)
 6. Freud, Sigmund. "The Forgetting of Proper Names." (7 pages)
 7. Freud, Sigmund. "The Dream Work." (12 pages)

Optional Reading: Mauer's Notes on Freud, and Mauer's Metaphor and Poetry

Screening: Sergei Eisenstein's *The Battleship Potemkin*

Week 6 Monday, February 13: The Rise of Modernism / The Frankfurt School: Psychoanalytic Materialism and the *Arcades Project*

- **Group 3 Presentation**

1. Wollen: "Out of the Past: Fashion / Orientalism / The Body" (28 pages)
2. Adorno, Theodor. "On Popular Music." (16 pages)
3. Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." (26 pages)
4. Benjamin, Walter. "N [Theoretics of Knowledge; Theory of Progress]." (40 pages)
5. Adorno, Theodor. "Letter to Benjamin re: The Arcades Project]." (14 pages)
6. Przyblyski, Jeannene. "History is Photography: The Afterimage of Walter Benjamin." (11 pages)

Optional Readings: Mauer's Notes on the Frankfurt School and Buck Morss' "The Flaneur, the Sandwichman, and the Whore: The Politics of Loitering" (34 pages)

Screening: Various clips from *Topsy Turvy*, Gary Giddins' *Satchmo*, and *Mao's Last Dancer*

Week 7 Monday, February 20: Brecht and Epic Theater

- **Group 4 Presentation**

- **Response Paper 3 Due**

1. Brecht, Bertolt: *Brecht on Theater* (106 pages)
2. Mauer: Bertolt Brecht Dramatic Structure (4 pages)

Optional Readings: Mauer's Notes on Meyerhold and Brecht, and Mauer's Notes on Brecht

Screening: Jean-Luc Godard's *2 or 3 Things I Know about Her*

Week 8 Monday, February 27: Surrealism

1. Breton, André. "Manifesto of Surrealism [1924]." (25 pages)
2. Hammond, Paul. "Off at a Tangent." (21 Pages)
3. Jean, Marcel. "Surrealist games." (20 pages)
4. Benjamin, Walter. "Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia." (15 pages)
5. Ray, Robert. "Invention Finds a Method: Surrealist Research and Games." *The Avant-Garde Finds Andy Hardy*. (33 pages)
6. Mauer. "A Brief Introduction to Surrealism and Its Political Implications." (3 pages)

Optional Reading: Mauer's Notes on Surrealism

Screening: Joseph Cornell's *Rose Hobart*, Jean Vigo's *L'Atalante*

Week 9 Monday, March 5: The Rise of Fascism

- **Group 1 Presentation**

1. Kracauer, Siegfried. "The Mass Ornament." (11 pages)
2. Stern, J.P. excerpts from *Hitler: The Führer and the People*. (117 pages)
3. Kahn, Douglas. "The Tiger Montage." (30 pages)
4. Kahn, Douglas. "Montage, Mimikry." (37 pages)
5. Benjamin, Walter. "Theories of German Fascism" (9 pages)

Optional Reading: Mauer's Notes on Fascism (6 pages)

Screening: *The Architecture of Doom*, Alain Resnais' *Night and Fog*

Week 10 Monday, March 12: No Class – Spring Break

Part II – Semiotics, Pleasure, and the Poetics of Invention

Week 11 Monday, March 19: Semiotics

- **Response Paper 4 Due**

1. Saussure, Ferdinand. "The Linguistic Sign." (22 pages)
2. Barthes, Roland. "The Kitchen of Meaning" and "The Romans in Films." (6 pages)
3. Williamson, Judith. "A Currency of Signs." (19 pages)

THEN read Barthes: *Image-Music-Text*, pp. 15-51, 142-148, and 155-164.

Optional Reading: Mauer's "The Epistemology of Cindy Sherman"

Week 12 Monday, March 26: Pleasure

- **Group 2 Presentation**

1. Loos, Adolf. "Ornament and Crime." (5 pages)
2. Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and the Narrative Cinema." (13 pages)
3. Ray, Robert. "Roland Barthes: Fetishism as a Research Strategy." (26 pages)

THEN read Barthes: *Image-Music-Text*, pp. 52-68, 165-169.

Optional Reading: Mauer's notes on S/Z

ALSO Midterm papers due.

Week 13 Monday, April 2: Poststructuralism

- **Group 3 Presentation**

1. Derrida, Jacques. "My Chance/Mes Chances: A Rendezvous with some Epicurean Stereophonies." And excerpt from *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*. (52 pages)
2. Ulmer, et al. "Signing (The Proper Name)." (25 pages)
3. Ray, Robert. "Derrida, Auteurism, and the Signature." (23 pages)

Optional Reading: Mauer's Notes on Derrida

Week 14 Monday, April 9: *Inventios* for Writing

- **Group 4 Presentation**

- **Response Paper 5 Due**

Read Ulmer's *Heuretics* through end of Part Two. (129 pages)

1. Refer to Ulmer files

Week 15 Monday, April 16: The Hybrid Text

Read Ulmer's *Heuretics* to the end. (108 pages)

1. Ulmer, Gregory, et al. "Image Emergency: A Psychogeography of Miami" (2 pages)

Screening: *Miami Miautre*

Week 16 Monday, April 23: Paper Presentations/Discussion in class

(No assigned readings for today).

Week 17 Monday, April 30: Final Papers due in my office by 2:00.