



**LIT 73894/ENGL 90914 — Spring 2014  
From Philology to World Literature**

Professor Tobias Boes

M 12:30-3:15, De Bartolo Hall 242

Office hours: M 9:00-1:30, W 11:30-12:30

Office location: Decio Hall 302

This course, one of two required classes for every student in the Ph.D. in Literature Program, offers an overview of different models that have been used to justify the comparative study of literature. While the course readings are arranged chronologically and touch on many of the major schools of academic criticism of the last century, the class is not intended as a “theory survey.” Instead, we will try to outline several different ways in which we might conceptualize the relationship between literature and the extra-textual world, and will then ask what role these various models still play in what has sometimes been called our present “post-theoretical” era.

Almost all our readings will be interdisciplinary in nature, and will help us situate literary study within the broader field of the humanities, i.e. in relationship to such disciplines as history, philosophy, sociology, anthropology, and political theory. Students who are interested primarily in what one might call the “analytic” side of literary criticism (i.e. in critical approaches that seek to provide us with a more precise conceptual language by which to describe literary works) are encouraged to also enroll in the other mandatory Ph.D. class, LIT 73895 “Narrative, Narratology, Novels,” taught by Prof. Barry McCrea.

Assigned Texts

This class has no required books for purchase. All readings will instead be made available in PDF format via the Hesburgh Library electronic reserve system, or distributed by email.

Objectives

The primary objective of this class is to give students a broad and historically informed background in literary theory as it is practiced in the twenty-first century, especially in comparative literature departments. Students will thus study—and, more importantly, debate amongst one another—some of the following questions:

- What methodological basis exists for a study of literary texts that transcends national boundaries and linguistic traditions?
- What relevance might such study have to the larger issues of our time, both academic and extra-academic?
- What does it mean to interpret a work of literature? How is literary interpretation different from other forms of interpretation as they might be practiced in adjacent disciplines?
- What is the state of literary theory right now, and what contribution might a graduate student who is just beginning Ph.D.-level work make to its future?

At the same time, this course aims to prepare students to become active members of their profession, and the assignments are tailored to help them incorporate reflections about theory both into their pedagogy and into their writing. See the following sections for more details.

### Requirements and Grading:

The requirements for this course are as follows:

- Regular attendance and active participation in class discussions (30%)
- Three oral presentations, in which you reflect on one of the theoretical readings and then help lead students through the ensuing discussion, much as you would with an advanced undergraduate class (10% each)
- A final paper of at least 20 pages, in which you write a critical history of the various ways in which a work of literature of your own choosing has stood up to various theoretical schools over the past decades (40%)

Since this class meets only once a week, students are allowed only one unexcused absence. After this, their final grade for the course will decrease by one step for each absence (i.e. from an A to an A-, etc.). In accordance with Notre Dame policy, a note from the Health Center doesn't necessarily excuse an absence.

### Plagiarism and Academic Honesty:

The Ph.D. in Literature Program takes the University Academic Code of Honor very seriously, and evidence of intentional plagiarism will result in the appropriate punishment, up to and including course failure. Students may find it useful to consult Notre Dame' honor code at the following web site: <http://www.nd.edu/~hnr/code/>.

## Class Schedule

Assignments followed by an asterisk (\*) will be distributed via email or weblink. All other assignments are available via the Hesburgh Library electronic reserve system.

You should try to read the assigned essay in the order that they are listed on the syllabus for each day. This is generally also the order in which we will discuss them during class.

- Jan. 20                    **Pathways into Modern Criticism I: Philology**  
Erich Auerbach, "The Philology of Weltliteratur"  
Erich Auerbach, "Figura"  
Erich Auerbach, "Odysseus' Scar" (\*)
- Jan. 27                    **Pathways into Modern Criticism II: Formalism**  
Victor Shklovsky, "Art as Device"  
Wimsatt and Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy"  
Cleanth Brooks, "Irony as a Principle of Structure" (\*)
- Feb. 3                     **Pathways into Modern Criticism III: Structuralism**  
Ferdinand de Saussure, "The Nature of the Linguistic Sign" (\*)  
Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth"  
Roland Barthes, "From Work to Text"
- Feb. 10                   **Pathways into Modern Criticism IV: Marxism**  
Raymond Williams, excerpt from *Marxism and Literature*  
Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of its Mechanical  
Reproducibility" (\*)  
Georg Lukács, "The Ideology of Modernism"
- Feb. 17                   **Reading with Theory I: Differences and Reminders**  
Jacques Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the  
Human Sciences"  
Judith Butler, "Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire"  
Giorgio Agamben, "The Paradox of Sovereignty"
- Feb. 24                   **Reading with Theory II: The Hermeneutics of Suspicion**  
Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?"  
Frederic Jameson, "On Interpretation"  
Clifford Geertz, "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight"
- Mar. 3                     **Reading with Theory III: Subaltern Representation**  
Edward Said, Introduction to *Orientalism*  
Edward Said, "Jane Austen and Empire"  
Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: "Can the Subaltern Speak?"

## **[Spring Break]**

- Mar. 17                   **Reading with Theory IV: Narrative and History**  
Edward Said, "Traveling Theory"  
Michel Foucault, "Las Meninas"  
Hayden White, "The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory"
- Mar. 24                   **Reading with Theory V: Post-Nationalism and Globalization**  
Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism"  
Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy"  
James Clifford, "Traveling Cultures"
- Mar. 31                   **Currents in Contemporary Criticism I: Networks and Information Theory**  
Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto"  
Bruno Latour, "Compositionist Manifesto" (\*)  
N. Katherine Hayles, "Flickering Signifiers"
- Apr. 7                    **Currents in Contemporary Criticism II: World Literature**  
David Damrosch, "Goethe Coins a Phrase"  
Pascale Casanova, "Literature as a World"  
Alex Beecroft, "World Literature Without a Hyphen" (\*)
- Apr. 14                   **Currents in Contemporary Criticism III: Distant and Surface Reading**  
Franco Moretti, "Conjectures on World Literature"  
Franco Moretti, "The Slaughterhouse of Literature"  
Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus, "Surface Reading: An Introduction"
- Apr. 21 (Easter)       **Currents in Contemporary Criticism IV: Post-Human Mimesis**  
Eric Hayot, "On Literary Worlds"  
Mark McGurl, "The Posthuman Comedy" (\*)  
Wai Chee Dimock, "Low Epic" (\*)
- Apr. 28                   **Currents in Contemporary Criticism V: Environmental Humanities**  
Ursula Heise, "From the Blue Planet to Google Earth"  
Rob Nixon, Introduction to *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*  
Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History"