What is Post-Structuralism?

Spring 2015

IDSEM 1819

M-W, 2:30-3:15; SCASL 265

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Office hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 3:30-5:30

Course Description: Like so many terms using the "post-" prefix, post-structuralism is hard to define: do we mean to indicate an aftermath, a continuity, a break, a repetition? In this course, we'll investigate some of the thinkers associated with post-structuralism and discover, perhaps, that all of these designators apply. Post-structuralism emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s and is associated with writers as diverse and complicated as Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, and Julia Kristeva. If the central claim of structuralism is that all systems of meaning are structured along the lines of language, post-structuralist thought interrogates that claim. But rather than rejecting it outright, post-structuralist thinkers attend to the ways in which systems of meaning tend to instability, contingency, opening up gaps and silences, leaving echoes and traces. We'll start by looking a bit at Structuralism and then examine some of the ways post-structuralist thinkers have sought to intervene in literary studies, visual culture, and politics.
**Learning Goals:** Students in this course will develop their understanding of the historical location of structuralist and post-structuralist thought. They will increase their skills as careful, attentive readers of complex texts and advance their skills as critical and analytical writers. Most centrally, they will develop an understanding of some key thinkers associated with post-structuralist thought.

**Requirements:**

- **Attendance, Punctuality, Participation:** All are required. More than three unexcused absences can cause you to fail the course. Come to class on time and prepared.

- **Weekly short response assignments:** These are graded pass/fail and are simply designed to help you keep up with the reading and develop your thinking; they help you figure out what you understand, and more importantly, perhaps, what you don't.

- **Group Project:** more details soon.

- **Two short formal papers [5 pages]**

**Texts:**

Barthes, R., *Camera Lucida*

Barthes, R., *S/Z*


Deleuze, G., *Kafka: Toward A Minor Literature*

Derrida, J., *Acts of Literature*

*Kafka, F.* *The Collected Short Stories*
Lyotard, J.-F., The Post-Modern Condition: A Report on Knowledge

Additional essays will be made available through the Classes site in .pdf format. They will always be in the Resources folder.

Classroom Behavior and Academic Integrity:

- **Attendance and Punctuality:** Both are required. More than three unexcused absences can cause you to fail the course. Come to class on time and prepared.

- **Academic Integrity:** As a Gallatin student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Please consult the Gallatin Bulletin or Gallatin website [www.gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policy/integrity.html] for a full description of the academic integrity policy.

- **Classroom Behavior:** It is expected that when you are in class, you are engaged with the class— and not with Facebook or online commerce. All engagement with technology is restricted to class materials; those found violating this rule will be asked to leave.
Class Schedule

nb: this schedule should be understood as somewhat elastic, depending on class interests.

January 26: Introductions.

What IS Post-Structuralism?

January 28:

• Belsey, Chapter 1, pages 1-22

• Saussure, fr. A Course in General Linguistics

February 2:

• Belsey, Chapter 2, 23-47

• Levi-Strauss, "Introduction to the Structural Study of Myth;" The Elementary Structures of Kinship, chapter 5

February 4:

• Levi-Strauss, cont'd; Roland Barthes, fr. Mythologies

Post-Structuralism and Literature

February 9:

• Barthes, "The Death of the Author"

• Balzac, "Sarrasine"

February 11:
• Barthes, from S/Z

February 16: Presidents' Day

February 18:

• Foucault, "What Is An Author?"

February 23:

• Rousseau, from Confessions, excerpts
• "This Strange Institution Called Literature..." An Interview with Jacques Derrida, Attridge,

• Derrida, "...That Dangerous Supplement..." [grammatology], Attridge, 76-109

February 25:

• Kafka, "Before the Law,"

• Derrida, "Before the Law," Attridge, 181-220

March 2:

• Derrida, "Before the Law," cont'd.

March 4:

• Kafka, "The Burrow"

• Deleuze, Kafka: Toward a Minot Literature, Chapter 1-2, pages 3-16

March 9:
• Deleuze, TM, Chapter 3, 16-27

• optional: Kafka, "Letter to his father;" "Josephine the Singer, or The Mouse Folk;" "Investigations of a Dog;" any other Kafka stories you want to pick

March 11:

• Deleuze, Chapter 9, 81-88

March 16-18: Spring Break

March 23:

• Group 1 Presentation/ Groups 2 and 3 Paper

Post-Structuralism and Visual Culture

March 25:

• Foucault, fr. The Order of Things, 3-16

March 30:

• Barthes, Camera Lucida

April 1:

• Barthes, Camera Lucida

April 6:

• Baudrillard, "Simulacra and Simulations"

April 8: tba
April 13:

- Group 2 Presentation/Groups 1 and 3 papers

Post-Structuralism and the Political

April 15:

- Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses"

April 20:

- Foucault, D and P

April 22:

- Foucault, D and P

April 27:

- Judith Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination"

April 29:

- Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaux, 454-473

May 4: Group 3 Presentation/Groups 1 and 2 papers

May 6: Post-modernism and Post-Structuralism: What are the relations?

May 11: Last class. Wrap up