

American Literature pro-Seminar

After the Fall: American Literature (and Culture) after 1945

The purpose of the (pro)-seminar is to familiarize students with a number of American literary texts written after 1945 and various critical approaches to them as well as with a number of cultural constructs and phenomena these texts and theories refer to. The students' task will then be to choose texts by American authors written after 1945 upon which their MA theses will be based.

*** In blue "Complementary Texts;" complementary means that you will have to read/watch them to be able to discuss "Primary Texts"**

**** In black "Primary Texts" we are going to discuss in class**

Temporary Schedule

Semester One

1. Introduction

- a. Basic rules
- b. Basic definitions

2. Movie: Josef Rusnak, *The Thirteenth Floor*; *21 Grams*;

- a. Discussion
- b. Basic critical approaches

3. What is Postmodernism?

- a. Robert Coover, "The Elevator" and "The Magic Poker"

4. Postmodern Criticism (Level: Beginners); A Review

- a. Ihab Hassan
- b. Brian McHale
- c. Lynda Hutcheon
- d. Other voices

5. Don DeLillo, *Underworld*, *White Noise* + critical approaches

- a. Frank Lentricchia et al.
- b. Tom LeClair, *In the Loop: Don DeLillo and the Systems Novel* (excerpts)
- c. Jean Baudrillard, "The Precession of Simulacrum," Postmodern Criticism (Level: Intermediate)
- d. Movie: *Nazi America, A Secret History*

6. Postmodern Cinema

- a. David Lynch
- b. Jim Jarmusch
- c. David Cronenberg
- d. Alejandro González Iñárritu
- e. Selected Criticism: N. Kathryn Hayles, "The Slipstream of Mixed Reality: Unstable Ontologies and Semiotic Markers in *The Thirteenth Floor*, *Dark City*, and *Mulholland Drive*"

7. Postmodern Science-Fiction; Do Androids Really Dream of Electric Sheep?

- a. William Gibson, *Idoru*, *Neuromancer* or Neal Stephenson *Snow Crash*
- b. Movie: Ridley Scott, *Blade Runner*

8. Footnotes and bibliography + Students' Essays

Semester Two

1. Jack Kerouac, *On the Road*

- a. The Beat Generation
- b. The concept of the Border

- c. National Geographic Channel, *Mind Altering Drugs; Getting High, the Secret History of LSD*
 - d. Movie: John Ford, *The Searchers* or Denis Hopper, *Easy Rider*
 - 2. **To Live and Die in L.A.; the City of Angeles as Postmodern Space**
 - a. Mike Davis, *Ecology of Fear* (excerpts)
 - b. Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (excerpts)
 - c. Movie: Michael Mann, *Collateral* (fragments)
 - d. Movie: R. Polański, *Chinatown*
 - 3. **Postmodern Music**
 - a. John Cage, Laurie Anderson, Madonna, William Burroughs, Brian Eno, Ministry
 - 4. **Anna Castillo, *So Far from God***
 - 5. **Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse 5***
 - 6. **Games**
 - a. Movie: David Cronenberg, *eXistenZ*
 - b. Movie: *The Story of Computer Games*
 - 7. **Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49*, *Vineland***
 - a. Critical essays on *The Crying of Lot 49*
 - 8. **Students' Essays**
- Semester Three**
- 1. **Shirley Lim, *Among the White Moon Faces*, Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior***
 - a. Critical essays on *The Woman Warrior*
 - b. Postmodern ethnic literature
 - c. Gloria Anzaldua, *Borderlands/La Frontera*
 - d. Movie: *Smoke Rings*
 - 2. **Postmodern Criticism (Level: Advanced/Proficiency); Neo-Baroque, the Fractal Theory, the Rhizome**
 - a. Angela Ndalians, "The Baroque and the Neo-Baroque"
 - b. Calabrese, *Neo-Baroque; A Sign of the Times*, Deleuze and Guattari *A Thousand Plateaus*
 - c. Movie: Michel Gondry, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*
 - 3. **Mark Z. Danielewski, *The House of Leaves***
 - a. Movie: Alex Proyas, *Dark City* or Vincenzo Natali, *Cypher*
 - 4. **Postmodern Poetry: A Selection (to be decided)**
 - 5. **Chuck Palahniuk, *Fight Club*, Bret Easton Ellis, *American Psycho***
 - a. Movie: Mary Harron, *American Psycho* (the movie)
 - 6. **Summary: Robert Siegle, "Postmodernism TM"**
 - 7. **Students Chapters**

Below you will find a few suggestions about American Fiction after 1945 on the basis of which you may develop some ideas about the subject of your M.A. thesis:

The Postmodern

1. Self-reflexive, self-conscious (meta)-fiction, also focusing on various myths, archetypes, fairy tales etc.
 Robert Coover *Pricksongs and Descants*, *The Public Burning*, *The Origin of the Brunists*, *Pinocchio in Venice*, *John's Wife*, *Ghost Town*, Donald Barthelme, *Snow White*, *The Dead Father*, *The King*, Raymond Federman, *Double or Nothing*, *Smiles on Washington Square*, John Barth, *Giles Goat Boy*, *Chimera*, *Lost in the Funhouse*

Basic critical works (*many of the items listed here refer to all the categories below*):

Brian McHale, *The Postmodernist Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1991)

Charles Jencks, *The Post-Modern Reader* (London: Academy Editions, 1992), including Jean Francois Lyotard, "Answering the Question: What Is Postmodernism," Jean Baudrillard, "*The Ecstasy of Communication*" and other
 Edmund J. Smyth, ed., *Postmodernism and Contemporary Fiction* (London: Batsford, 1991)

Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke UP, 1991)

Ihab Hassan, *Paracriticism: Seven Speculations of the Times*, (Urbana & London: University of Illinois Press, 1975)

Janusz Semrau, *American Self-Conscious Fiction of the 1960s and 1970s: Donald Bartheleme, Robert Coover, Ronald Sucknick* (Poznan: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza, 1986)
 Larry McCaffery, *The Metafictional Muse The Works of Robert Coover, Donald Bartheleme, and William H. Gass* (Pittsburg: the University of Pittsburgh Press, 1982)
 Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism History, Theory, Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1989)
 Patricia Waugh, ed., *Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 1992)
 Tom LeClair, *In the Loop: Don DeLillo and the Systems Novel* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987)

2. Postmodern "humanists," system novelists, conspiracy writers.

Don DeLillo, *Americana, Libra Mao II, Players, Running Dog, Underworld, White Noise* Thomas Pynchon, *V, The Crying of Lot 49, Gravity's Rainbow, Vineland, Mason and Dixon* William Gaddis, *J.R., The Recognitions, Carpenter's Gothic*

Basic critical works:

Brian McHale, *Constructing Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 1992)
 Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, (Trans. Sheila Faria Glaser), (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1994)
 Omar Calabrese, *Neo-Baroque. A Sign of the Times*, (Trans. Charles Lambert, with a foreword by Umberto Eco), (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992)
 Steffen Hantke, *Conspiracy and Paranoia in Contemporary American Fiction; The Works of Don DeLillo and Joseph McElroy*. (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1994)
 Larry McCaffery ed., *After Yesterday's Crash; The Avant-Pop Anthology* (New York: Penguin Books, 1995)
 Larry McCaffery ed., *Storming the Reality Studio* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1991)
 Patrick O'Donnell, *Latent Destinies; Cultural Paranoia and Contemporary U.S. Narrative* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000)
 Mark Osteen, *American Magic and Dread: Don DeLillo's Dialogue with Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000)

3. Postmodern science-fiction.

William Gibson *Neuromancer, Mona Lisa Overdrive*, Neal Stephenson *Snow Crash*, Bruce Sterling *Mirroshades*

Basic critical works:

George Slusser, Tom Shippey ed., *Fiction 2000; Cyberpunk and the Future of Narrative* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1992)
 Larry McCaffery ed., *Storming the Reality Studio* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1991)
 Michael Benedikt, ed., *Cyberspace: First Steps* (Stone Serif: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1991)
 Scott Bukatman, *Terminal Identity: The Virtual Subject in Postmodern Science Fiction* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993)

4. Ethnic Literature:

Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior*, Eva Hoffman *Lost in Translation*, Ihab Hassan *Out of Egypt*, Richard Rodriguez *Hunger for Memory*, Vladimir Nabokov *Invitation of a Memory*, Gloria Anzaldua *Borderlands, La Frontera*, Sandra Cisneros *The House on Mango Street*, Louise Erdrich *Tracks*, Louise Erdrich selected short stories, Adrian Louis selected poetry, Alice Walker "In Search of our Mothers' Gardens," "Everyday Use," *Color Purple*, Toni Morrison *The Bluest Eye*, Toni Morrison *Sula*, Naomi Shihab Nye selected poetry, Bharati Mukherjee selected short stories, African American writing et al.

Basic critical works:

Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* (Indianapolis: University of Indiana Press, 1989)

Ellen McCracken, *New Latina Narrative: The Feminine Space of Postmodern Ethnicity* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1999)

Gerald Vizenor, *Narrative chance: postmodern discourse on Native American Indian literatures* (Albuquerque : University of New Mexico, 1989)

5. Ethnic Literature ctd. – Black

Nathan McCall, *Makes me Wanna Holler*, Claude Brown *Manchild in the Promised Land*, W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, Gayl Jones, *Corrigedora*, John Wideman, *Philadelphia Fire*

Basic critical works:

Aldon Nielsen, *Black Chant; Languages of African American Postmodernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997)

Judith Fossett (ed. and preface), *Race Consciousness: African-American Studies for the New Century* (New York, NY : New York UP, 1997)

Robert Lee, *Designs of Blackness: Mappings in the Literature and Culture of Afro-America* (London, England: Pluto, 1998)

6. On the Edges of Postmodern

Kurt Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle*, *Slaughterhouse Five*, *Galapagos*, and *Hocus Pocus*

7. Postmodern Bridges

Martin Amis *Information*, *Money*, *London Fields*

8. New Realism

Raymond Carver "What we talk about when we talk about love," Richard Ford, Frederick Barthelme (literary minimalism), Tobias Woolfe

9. The Titles Heard Around the World

Henry Miller *The Tropic of Cancer*, *The Tropic of Capricorn*, J.D. Salinger *The Catcher in the Rye*, Jerzy Kościński *The Painted Bird*, John Updike, *Rabbit Run*, *Rabbit is Rich*, Vladimir Nabokov *Invitation of a Beulah*, *Invitation of a Beulah*, *Pale Fire*, *Lolita*, Joseph Heller, *Catch 22*

10. Highways Revisited – Beat Generation

Jack Kerouac, Neal Cassady, Charles Bukowski, William Burroughs

11. Jewish Writing

Saul Bellow, *Seize the Day*, *Herzog*, Philip Roth, *Portnoy's Complaint*, *The Ghost Writer*, *The Great American Novel*, Bernard Malamud *The Magic Barrel*, *The Fixer*

12. Christian elements/the South

Walker Percy, *The Movie Goer*, *Love in the Ruins*, *Lancelot*, *The Last Gentleman*