

Structuralism and Post-structuralism
PHIL 407
Spring 2016

T-Th 2 – 3:50pm, MC 121
Instructor: Dr. Beata Stawarska
Office: SC 247
Office hours: T 4-5:50pm and by appointment
Email: stawarsk@uoregon.edu

This seminar examines structuralism and post-structuralism within the context of contemporary philosophy and literary theory. We will begin by tracing the emergence of scientific structuralism within the linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure, and consider its legacy in the works of Levi-Strauss and Lacan. We will then turn to the post-structuralist critique of scientific structuralism as developed especially in Derrida's classic work *Of Grammatology* (in a 40th Anniversary edition reissued and revised in 2016), as well as essays such as '*Différance*', and the interviews from *Positions*, with an emphasis on Derrida's deconstructive reading of Saussure as well as Levi-Strauss and Rousseau. We will conclude with selections from Julia Kristeva's *Revolution in Poetic Language*, where she challenges Derrida to include the semiotic (the living, desiring body) alongside an emphasis on the symbolic aspects of cultural signification. Throughout the term we will seek to identify the distinctive features of the poststructuralist approach, and situate them in relation to other contemporary schools of thought. Our focus is going to be thematic as well as historical, and we will address a number of themes at the intersection of language, social structures, subjectivity, desire, and the living body.

Class Schedule

WEEK 1 (03/28 – 04/03):

1. **Introductory meeting. What is structuralism and post-structuralism?**
Recommended: Editor's introduction in Culler, *Structuralism*, (4 vol.), pp. 1- 14. Are you History? Introduction to Sturrock's *Structuralism* (pp. 1-24). Manfred Frank, Lectures 1 – 5, *What is Neostructuralism?*
2. **Historical origins and contemporary perspectives:**
Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* –Preface to the First Edition; Introduction, Ch. 1-5.
Recommended: Claude Levi-Strauss: Structural Analysis in Linguistics and Anthropology, *Structural Anthropology* (pp. 31-54).
Chapter 1: Language in Sturrock's *Structuralism* (pp. 24-47).

WEEK 2 (04/04 – 04/10)

3. Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*. Introduction, ch. 6 & 7; Part One: General Principles, ch. 1. Nature of the Linguistic Sign; ch. 2. Invariability and variability of the sign.
Recommended: Stawarska, *Saussure's Philosophy of Language as Phenomenology* (2015), P. I, Ch. 1. The Signifier and the Signified (pp. 23-31; 47-70) (entire book is available in electronic /eBook format on the Knight Library website).
4. *Course*, Part Two, Synchronic Linguistics (with an emphasis on ch. 4. Linguistic Value, ch. 5. Syntagmatic and Associate Relations, and ch. 6. The Language Mechanism).
Recommended: Stawarska, (2015), P. I, Ch. 3. *La langue* and *la parole*, synchrony and diachrony (pp. 85-106).

WEEK 3 (04/11 – 04/17)

5. Author meets Critic/Class. 'The Inception and Reception of the *Course in General Linguistics*'. In Stawarska (2015) (pp. 193-225; 240-255).
6. **Post-structuralism and deconstruction**. Derrida – "Differance" (in *Speech and Phenomena*); "Implications. Interview with Henri Ronse" (in *Positions*).

WEEK 4 (04/18 – 04/24)

7. ***Grammatology: the Book and Unlimited Writing***.
"Semiology and Grammatology. An Interview with Julia Kristeva" (*Positions*, 17-36).
Of Grammatology: Introduction by J. Butler (VII-XXIV); **Translator's Preface by G. Spivak (pp. CII-CXI); 2016 Afterword (recommended)**.
8. *Of Grammatology*: Part I, Exergue and chapter 1. "The End of the Book and the Beginning of Writing."

WEEK 5 (04/25 – 5/1)

9. ***Grammatology: Derrida with Saussure (and Levi-Strauss)***.
Part I, chapter 2. "Linguistics and Grammatology." Please review Introduction, Ch. 6, in Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics*.
Recommended: Stawarska, (2015), P. I, Ch. 2. Phonocentrism: Derrida (pp. 71-84)
10. Part I, chapter 2. "Linguistics and Grammatology" (contd).

WEEK 6 (5/2 – 5/8)

11. Part I, ch. 3 "Of Grammatology as a Positive Science."
Midterm paper due in class on Tuesday.
12. P. II, 1. The Violence of the Letter: from Levi-Strauss to Rousseau (*Of Grammatology*).
Recommended: 'A Writing Lesson' in Levi-Strauss' *Tristes Tropiques* (pp. 294-304).

WEEK 7 (5/9 – 5/15)

13. ***Grammatology – Derrida with Rousseau (and Levi-Strauss)***
Part I, 2. “...That Dangerous Supplement”.
 14. Rousseau, *On the Origin of Language*. Chapters 1-2 (pp. 5-12);
Derrida, Part II, ch. 3, II, Imitation. “The Interval and the Supplement,” “The Engraving
and the Ambiguities of Formalism,” “The Turn of Writing.”
(Note: P. II, ch. 3, I “The Place of the Essay” is recommended but not required).
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WEEK 8 (5/16 – 5/22)

15. Rousseau, ch. 4 and 7 (pp. 14-16; 24-28). Derrida, Part II, ch. 3, III. Articulation. ““That
Movement of the Wand,”” “The Inscription of the Origin,” “The Neume,” “That Simple
Movement of the Finger.”
 16. Part II, ch. 3, III. Articulation. (contd).
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WEEK 9 (5/23 – 5/29)

17. Rousseau, ch. 3 and 5 (pp. 12-13; 16-22). Derrida, Part II, ch. 4, From/Of the Supplement
to the Source: The Theory of Writing. “The Originary Metaphor,” “The History and
System of Scripts,” “The Supplement of (at) the Origin” (Recommended: “The Alphabet
and Absolute Representation,” “The Theorem and the Theater,” pp. 321-341).
 18. **Post-structuralism and the Semiotic.**
Kristeva, from *Revolution in Poetic Language*. I. The Semiotic and the Symbolic.
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WEEK 10 (5/30 – 6/5)

19. Kristeva, from *Revolution in Poetic Language*, II. Negativity: Rejection.
Recommended: Kristeva, “The Speaking Subject” (Culler, *Structuralism*, vol. I, pp. 282-
292).
 20. Final paper workshop; concluding remarks.
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Please note: I reserve the right to make changes to the reading list.

All books are available at the UO Bookstore. PDF copies of additional readings will be made
available on Canvas (under ‘Files’).

Course requirements:

ATTENDANCE: This is a small seminar style class, and you are expected to attend all the
meetings and participate actively in the conversation. Two unexcused absences are allowed per
term; additional absences need documentation such as a doctor’s note.

READING. This course has a sizable reading load, and you will be required to read the assigned
texts carefully, and be prepared to discuss them in class. In addition to attending the class, you
will need to plan your schedule to allow sufficient time to read the texts assigned for each class.
Please note that this class has some recommended readings in addition to the required ones; these
are optional but you are encouraged to read them as well.

WRITING. Each Thursday (excluding weeks 1 and 10) you will submit a one to two pages typed up response to the readings assigned for the week. The response is not expected to be a polished piece of writing (but needs to be readable and free from spelling/grammatical errors); it provides an opportunity for you to actively engage the material, and offer your own perspective on the readings.

There will be one midterm and one term paper. The midterm is 5-7 pages long. The term paper is 8-12 pages long. Topics and detailed guidelines for both papers will be provided in advance; in some cases, students may write the final on a topic of their own choice (approved in advance by the instructor).

All written assignments should be typewritten, double-spaced, font size no smaller than 11. They need to include the class title, your name - and my name for the midterm and final papers.

Grade components:

Participation: 10%

Weekly response to the reading: 10%

Midterm paper: 30%

Final paper: 50%

Total: 100%

Grading

What kind of paper deserves an “A,” “B,” etc.? The following rubric reflects the general standards of the Philosophy Department at the University of Oregon.

A = excellent. No mistakes, well-written, and distinctive in some way or other.

B = good. No significant mistakes, well-written, but not distinctive in any way.

C = OK. Some errors, but a basic grasp of the material.

D = poor. Several errors. A tenuous grasp of the material.

F = failing. Problematic on all fronts indicating either no real grasp of the material or a complete lack of effort.

Please note: what counts as “excellent” or “OK,” for example, depends in part upon the nature and level of the class in question.

Late paper policy: the overall grade for the paper will be reduced by 0.3 grade if no extension has been granted by the instructor before the paper is due.

Plagiarism: a failure to cite your sources and give credit to others for their work is a violation of academic honesty, and can result in an F grade for the class.

Final Paper due at noon on Thursday in the Finals Week, SC 211.

Attendance policy

No more than two unexcused absence are allowed. Each additional unexcused absence negatively affects your grade (-0.3 of the final grade).

If you have questions about the assignments, requirements, or subject matter, please let me know. If you have special needs due to a disability, please talk with me as soon as possible so that your needs can be addressed.