Ewa DOMANSKA
Spring 2003
Research Seminar (graduate, 3-5 units)
Thursday, 2:15-5:05, room 120-314

CASA 311B
Comparative Literature 311B
French and Italian 311E
History 406

APPROACHES TO THE PAST:
THEORY AND PRACTICE IN THE HUMAN SCIENCES

Course description

This course is a research seminar designed to help students work on papers for classes, theses and individual projects. It introduces texts that have inspired theoretically oriented scholars, and show students how their research can incorporate techniques and categories from various disciplines. The course suggests that theory is fundamental to humanistic studies. It will focus on cross-disciplinary themes and explore them through seminars. It encourages an understanding of theory, promotes interdisciplinary approaches to research, teaches critical thinking, introduces various strategies of interpretation, and devotes special attention to the development of students' original approaches.

Topics of seminars include such issues as: the “metanarrative” of postcolonial theory (Dipesh Chakrabarty); ideology in Lacanian terms (Slavoj Žižek, Renata Salecl); the genre of the feminist manifesto (Hélène Cixous; Luce Irigaray); chosen topics from contemporary art criticism and aesthetics (Hal Foster; Wolfgang Welsch); the problem of forgiveness and politics (Paul Ricoeur, Jacques Derrida); pragmatism, literary culture and truth (Richard Rorty); notions of the human and non-human (Giorgio Agamben); anthropological concepts of liminality and community (Victor Turner).

Course requirements

Attendance is mandatory. Students who miss more than three meetings (except illness or others serious matters) will not be graded. Students are expected to read assigned readings carefully and participate in discussions. A 15-20 pages final paper is required. Its topic will be chosen by the student himself/herself and it is supposed to draw upon the projects undertaken in other courses the student is taking and draws on course materials.

Course schedule

1. Introduction: overview of the course.

2. Lacanian critique of ideology - Slavoj Žižek

   (special guest: Richard Rorty)
   Richard Rorty, Philosophy and Social Hope. Penguin Books, 1999 [(2) Truth without Correspondence to Reality; (3) A World without Substances or Essences; (4) Ethics Without Principles; (8) The Humanistic intellectual: Eleven Theses; (10) Religious Faith, Intellectual Responsibility and Romance; (14) Failed Prophecies, Glorious Hopes; (15) A Spectre is haunting the Intellectuals: Derrida on Marx; (16) Love and Money; (17) Globalization, the Politics of Identity and Social Hope]
4. Oblivion, guilt and forgiveness – Paul Ricoeur and Jacques Derrida

5. Human/non-human – Giorgio Agamben on Auschwitz
Handouts from writings by Primo Levi (Survival in Auschwitz) and Tadeusz Borowski (This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen)

6. The rhetoric of the feminist manifesto – Hélène Cixous; Luce Irigaray; Renata Salecl
Renata Salecl, (Per)versions of Love and Hate. London and New York: Verso, 1998 (chapters: 1, 3, 6, 7)

7. Contemporary art criticism and aesthetics – Hal Foster; Wolfgang Welsch

8. History and counter-history; history as the discourse of power - Michel Foucault
(additional seminar May 21)

9. Community, anti-community, liminality – Victor Turner

10. The problem of metanarrative (the case of postcolonial theory) – Dipesh Chakrabarty (May 29)
(special guest: Akhil Gupta)