



Margins of Philology: The Futures of Literary Theory

Graduate Seminar, Spring 2021
Prof. Dominik Zechner

*Are the finest days of literary theory over or is
its brightest future yet to come?*



This seminar will cast a thorough look at the past and future of literary theory as a mode of thinking language; one might call it a radical form of philology. Taking Werner Hamacher's aphoristic work *95 Theses on Philology* as its starting point and guiding thread, the seminar will delve into a variety of discourses to determine the current state of critical theory, literary theory, and the philosophy of language. It will introduce students to various basic concepts pertaining to the study of literature (e.g. "form," "performance," "afformance," "reading," "reference," "representation," "translation," etc.), and familiarize them with a number of approaches to the question of reading and understanding, including hermeneutics (Gadamer; Szondi), structuralism (Barthes; Lacan), discourse analysis (Foucault), rhetorical reading (de Man), performance theory (Austin; Butler), and deconstruction (Derrida; Nancy; Gasché). This methodological trajectory will help us to critically assess contemporary conversations revolving around "post-hermeneutics" (Kittler; Wellbery; Gumbrecht) and "surface reading" (Best and Marcus; Felsky). In addition to the above-mentioned authors, with a special emphasis on Hamacher and contemporary discussions of his oeuvre, students will be exposed to philosophical works by Friedrich Nietzsche, Walter Benjamin, and Martin Heidegger. *All graduate students with an interest in literary theory are welcome.*



M 4:30–7:10pm, Zoom

German: 16:470:671:01

Comparative Literature: 16:195:634:01

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