

SPRING 2009 GRADUATE COURSE
Modern European Theories of Rhetoric, Poetics, & Narrative
Prof. Thomas F. Broden (FLL, French, broden@purdue.edu)
Wednesdays 4:30 - 7:20pm

ENGL 665 Rhetoric, Poetics, Narrative (ENGL 66500-002-33665)

FLL 650 Rhetoric, Poetics, Narrative (FLL 65000-001-34337)

FR 527 Études de style (FR 52700-001-34348)

Content and organization: This course will focus on recent and contemporary European approaches to rhetoric, poetics, and narrative, working at the intersections of literary theory, stylistics, philosophy, and linguistics. The objective is to develop ideas and potentially methodologies for studying literature and discourse in general in today's intellectual context. We will engage the readings on a theoretical level and show how they can inform concrete textual analyses. For the first eleven weeks, we will read and discuss essays treating six interrelated points in turn. During the last four weeks, students will work on an individual research project that allows them to bring to bear selected ideas from the course on their particular field and area, exploring, critiquing, developing, and/or applying approaches studied in the class.

Student activities: discussion, oral presentations, two short papers, final paper.

1. *Introduction: Language, Rhetoric, Communication.* Ancient philosophers, modern linguists, and over two millennia of intervening rhetorical treatises envision language use as modifying relations among individuals and groups and as aimed at describing and transforming the natural and social environment. An individual idiom encompasses multiple registers and functions, and imaginative uses of language formulate striking alternatives to the familiar present. [Aristotle, Plato, Horace, Jakobson, Shklovsky]

Sub-topics:

--Genre

--Subjectivity, Dialogics, Polyphony, Intertextuality

--Aesthetics and literary uses of language

2. *Narrative.* From Aristotle's *Poetics* to contemporary cognitive linguistics, theorists have articulated the defining characteristics of stories, identifying central action sequences, basic agent roles, essential manipulations of theme and setting, and specifying the relations between plot, character, experience, and time. Narrative organizes both fictional and non-fictional discourse, as well as still and moving images. [Aristotle, V. Propp, K. Hamburger, R. Barthes, T. Todorov, A. J. Greimas, J. Bruner, L. Talmy]

3. *Point of view.* Discourse adopts a characterized perspective and emanates from a given source, composing a relation between author, reader, character, and language. Textual voices appear omniscient or restricted, situated, non-situated, or shifting, informed or flawed, each choice entailing intellectual and emotional factors. [J. Cortázar, B. Brecht, G. Genette, M. Bal]

4. *Metaphor and Figurative Language.* Far from playing a mere ornamental role, the metaphors and other creative expressions that permeate literary texts as well as everyday language function as critical cognitive devices for using existing notions to devise fresh ideas and to solve new problems. [G. Fauconnier, P. Ricoeur, G. Lakoff & M. Johnson]

5. *Text, Reader, Interpretation.* Does each text define an "implied reader" whose viewpoint establishes its key significations? Does each historical period or even individual possess a distinctive "horizon" of expectations that defines the ground rules for texts? Do texts themselves restrict or liberate the reader's interpretive processes? [W. Iser, H. R. Jauss, U. Eco].

6. *Text and Social Contexts.* Social categories such as gender, class, ethnicity, and region condition language use. French feminists have advanced the notion of "women's writing." Languages, nations, dialects, subjects, and intra-subjective instances structure histories of cultural interactions and generate texts as polyphony. Bilingualism, borderlands, and multiculturalism condition the production and study of texts south of the US border, for example, spawning such concepts as *mestizaje/métissage*, hybridity, and transculturation. [S. Lanser, H. Cixous, L. Irigaray, J. Kristeva; F. Ortiz, J. M. Arguedas, E. Glissant, G. Anzaldúa, A. Cornejo Polar, E. Tarica]

Sample works to be read as a class or to be presented by the instructor in lectures:

Introduction: Language, Rhetoric, Communication

- Aristotle, *Rhetoric* (excerpts): language in action among subjects, in society, and in the world
- Plato, *The Phaedra*, the seminal text for Western notions of representation in language and aesthetics; *Cratylus*
- Horace, *Ars poetica* (ca. 18 BC): a 476-verse treatise that argues the importance of imaginative discourse, identifies multiple styles or levels of language and counsels observing their respective conventions, and coins the famous expressions “*in medias res*” and “*ut pictura poesis*”
- Roland Barthes, “The Old Rhetoric: an aide-mémoire” (1970): a quick panoramic survey of two and a half millennia of treatises on rhetoric, on language in action
- Roman Jakobson, “Closing Statements: Linguistics and Poetics” (1956): a modern six-point model of communication, including artistic expression (addresser, addressee, message, code, channel, context and their corresponding six functions)
- Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (1916): includes a pioneering view of language as a *system* in which the parts form coherent wholes; *langue* ‘language’ as a cognitive, psychological mechanism as well as a social entity
- Victor Shklovsky, “Art as technique”: literary experience as *defamiliarization*, as a process that transforms that the normal and the habitual into the strange and the striking

Narrative

- Aristotle, *Poetics*: a model of tragedy and elements of a general narrative theory; mimesis as representation and transformation
- Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*: a formal model of narrative, identifying seven key character roles and thirty-some essential action sequences; genial intuitions as well about the overall structural organization of the fairy tale. Seminal text discussed by Lévi-Strauss, Greimas, and many other “structuralists”
- Roland Barthes, “Introduction to the Structural Study of Narrative” (1966): stories possess an underlying logical structure
- A. J. Greimas, “Reflections on Actantial Models,” from *Structural Semantics* (1966): drama as a central action articulated by three oriented relations (desire-phobia, knowledge-communication, & power-struggle) and their corresponding six interrelated character roles (Subject, Object, Sender, Receiver, Helper, Opponent)
- Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* (1985-87, excerpts): a hermeneutics of narrative that envisions the convergence of story and history, interpretation and time
- Jerome Bruner, “The Narrative Construction of Reality” (1991): the cognitive processes that allow us to construct stories
- Leonard Talmy, “Narrative Structure in a Cognitive Framework,” from *Cognitive Semantics* (2000): the linguistic semantic building blocks of narrative

Point of view

- Mieke Bal, “Focalization,” from *Narratology* (2nd ed., 1997): from a structuralist perspective, succinctly summarizes key issues at stake in “point of view”
- Julio Cortázar, “Blowup”: this short story evokes more dramatically than can any essay the transformative relations between characters and reader
- Bertold Brecht on *distanciation*: the artist aims not to cause the spectator to identify with a character, but rather to reject all of the textual agents and to *reflect on* why one does so, dialoguing with the artist; issues of point of view, identification, and the social function of art and theater

Metaphor and Figurative Language

--George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (1980): far from being restricted to poetical discourse, metaphor permeates everyday language, and represents a key cognitive device for inventing new ideas

--Gilles Fauconnier, *Mental Spaces* (1985), *Mappings in thought and language* (1997), and with Mark Turner, *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities* (2002): this research in contemporary cognitive poetics shows how linguistic expressions for point of view, space, and time create distinct, multiple modules within a particular text, which are interrelated by a network of mappings; combining components of different modules produces new concepts.

--Paul Ricoeur, « On Interpretation » (1983): summarizing more than a decade of his research on language and literature, the hermeneutic philosopher Ricoeur argues that fiction and non-fiction (including history) share a common fundamental narrative structure that highlights *time* and that is capable of *reconfiguring* (reordering, reinventing) the human world. Similarly, innovative metaphors also reorganize and renovate existence and ideas.

Text, Reader, Interpretation

--Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader* and *The Act of Reading*: each text defines an “implied reader” whose “wandering viewpoint” composes expectations, significations, and ellipses

--Hans Robert Jauss, “The Poetic Text within the Change of Horizons of Reading,” from *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception* (1982): each historical period possesses its “horizon” of expectations (*Erwartungshorizont*) from which readers approach texts

--Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader* (1979, excerpt): the ‘open’ work of art actively involves the experiencer in its production, whereas the “closed” work distances the viewer/reader and aims at a limited and predetermined response

Text and Social Contexts

Gender

--Susan Lanser, “Toward a Feminist Narratology” (1986): central ways in which gender constructs and modifies narratives

--Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman* (1974, excerpt), *This Sex Which Is Not One* (1977, excerpt): gender and sex in language and discourse (cf. Hélène Cixous’ “women’s writing” and Julia Kristeva’s *chora* and *semiotic*)

Multiculturalism, Multilingualism, Polyphony, Intercultural exchange

--Sociolinguistics: contemporary linguistic concepts of multilingualism, code-switching, and prestige language

--Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* (1970s, 1981; excerpts): the novel as the dialogue and debate among multiple languages and dialects within society

--Juri Lotman, “The Semiosphere” (from *The Universe of the Mind*, 1966, 1991): the “explosion of culture” and a model for the cycle of intercultural exchanges among a prestige/dominant culture and a subordinate culture

--Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint. Tobacco and Sugar* (1940): rejecting the prevalent notion of *acculturation* which envisions subjects adapting and conforming to the norm, Ortiz proposes the notion of *transculturation* which analyzes the interaction, dialogue, and struggle between cultures

--José María Arguedas, “Why I am not an Acculturated Man” (in *The Fox from above and the Fox from below*) and “The Novel and the Problem of Literary Expression in Peru”

--Estelle Tarica, “José María Arguedas and the Mediating Voice,” from her *The Inner Life of mestizo nationalism* (2008)

--Antonio Cornejo Polar, “Mestizaje, Transculturation, Heterogeneity” (1995) and “The Migrant Condition and Multicultural Intertextuality: the Case of Arguedas” (1998)

--Edouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse* (1980) which articulates his concept of *métissage*; cf. his *Poetics of Relation* (1990)