

אוניברסיטת בן-גוריון בנגב
הפקולטה למדעי הרוח והחברה

המחלקה לספרויות זרות ובלשנות, תש"פ 2019-20

Name of the course: Trends in 21 Century Literary Theory

Lecturer name: Yael Segalovitz

Course number: 132.2. 0180

Office hours: Monday, 14:00-16:00

Short course description (5-10 lines) with key words at the end of the paragraph

The 21st century—with its mass digitalization, rapid globalization, intensified consumer culture, powerful conservative pull, and radicalized identity politics—continually introduces new challenges into literary theory and practice. Urgent questions emerge: what does it mean to slowly close read a literary work at a time when computers are able to process 100 million words per second? How should we think of character formation when not only gender but sex boundaries are opened up to re-exploration by new pharmaceutical products and medical procedures? How are we to understand the phenomenology of reading when reaching such mental states as attention and concentration becomes progressively impossible in the face of an environment bursting with constantly changing stimuli? In this course we will explore several exciting trends in 21 century literary theory that address these challenges: Digital Humanities, Affect Theory, Trans Theory, New Formalism, and Contemporary Psychoanalysis. We will not only engage these thinkers' theoretical texts but will also follow them in their practice of interpretation, reading with them literary works they claim gain from new modes of analysis. In this vein, for example, we will shadow Sianne Ngai as she reads Clarice Lispector's *The Passion According to G.H.* through the lens of Affect Theory; we will join Jackie Stacy in her contemporary psychoanalytic exploration of *The Argonauts*, a text central to Trans Theory as well; and we will watch Hitchcock's *Strangers on a Train* through D.A. Miller's paranoid "too-close" perspective.

Key words: Literary Theory, Digital Humanities, Affect Theory, Trans Studies, Contemporary Psychoanalysis, New Formalism.

Course requirements:

Attendance required: yes

1. Participation 10% (active participation in class)
2. In Class Presentations 30%
3. Mid-Year Paper (10 pages) 30%
3. Final Paper (10 pages) 30%

Trends in 21 Century Literary Theory

Dr. Yael Segalovitz
Department of Foreign Literatures and Linguistics
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
Fall 2019-Spring 2020

Course # ??
Monday, 14:15-15:45, Room TBA

Office hours: Thursday 10:00-12:00
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Course description

The 21st century—with its mass digitalization, rapid globalization, intensified consumer culture, powerful conservative pull, and radicalized identity politics—continually introduces new challenges into literary theory and practice. Urgent questions emerge: what does it mean to slowly close read a literary work at a time when computers are able to process 100 million words per second? How should we think of character formation when not only gender but sex boundaries are opened up to re-exploration by new pharmaceutical products and medical procedures? How are we to understand the phenomenology of reading when reaching such mental states as attention and concentration becomes progressively impossible in the face of an environment bursting with constantly changing stimuli? In this course we will explore several exciting trends in 21 century literary theory that address these challenges: Digital Humanities, Affect Theory, Trans Theory, New Formalism, and Contemporary Psychoanalysis. We will not only engage these thinkers' theoretical texts but will also follow them in their practice of interpretation, reading with them literary works they claim gain from new modes of analysis. In this vein, for example, we will shadow Sianne Ngai as she reads Clarice Lispector's *The Passion According to G.H.* through the lens of Affect Theory; we will join Jackie Stacy in her contemporary psychoanalytic exploration of *The Argonauts*, a text central to Trans Theory as well; and we will watch Hitchcock's *Strangers on a Train* through D.A. Miller's paranoid "too-close" perspective.

Texts

- The majority of reading materials will be available on Moodle (<https://moodle2.bgu.ac.il/moodle/>)
- Maggie Nelson, *The Argonauts*, to be found in Tzomet Sfarim
- Alison Bechdel, *Are you My Mother?*, to be found in Tzomet Sfarim

Requirements:

Attendance is mandatory. You are allowed up to five unexcused absences during the year, including *Tkufat Hashinuyim*. **Any additional absence will affect your grade.** If you need to be absent for more than five classes due to a medical or family emergency, please get in touch with me in advance about possible arrangements. **You are responsible for material you miss during an absence.** Please consult another student in the course about the material you missed or come to see me in office hours rather than emailing.

Read the assigned text(s) prior to each class meeting. Twice a year you will be required to open class discussion with a **10 minutes presentation** of the materials assigned to that class.

Participate productively in class discussions. **Please come prepared to discuss your take of the text in class.** Participation is an incredibly important aspect of this course, which will frequently involve class discussions. **If you are nervous about participating and/or public speaking in general, please come talk with me in office hours as soon as possible** – we can brainstorm ways to make you feel more comfortable in class and consider alternative methods of participation.

Write one mid-year essay (10 pages), and one final essay (10 pages).

Sources: In your papers, you must document each and every source you consult as **I do not tolerate plagiarism.** You will find a number of resources on Moodle; use them to understand the issues we discuss, and ask questions whenever anything is not entirely clear to you.

Grade distribution

Participation 10% (participation in class)

In-Class Presentation 30%

Mid Year Paper (10 pages) 30%

Final Paper (10 pages) 60%

Course Schedule

FALL SEMESTER

28/10 Introduction

Section One: Digital Humanities

4/11 **Franco Moretti**, selection from *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary Theory* (2005)

11/11 **Stephen Ramsey**, selection from *Reading Machines: Towards an Algorithmic Criticism* (2011)

18/11 **Visiting Lecturer**, Itay Marienberg Milikowsky; **Jonathan Sachs and Andrew Piper**, “Technique and the Time of Reading,” *PMLA* (2018)

Section Two: Affect Theory

25/11 **Lauren Berlant**, “Affect in the Present,” in *Cruel Optimism* (2011)

2/12 **Sara Ahmed**, “Happy Objects,” in *The Affect Theory Reader* (2010)

9/12 **Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick**, selection from *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (2003)

16/12 **Clarice Lispector**, sections from *The Passion According to G.H.* (1964) + **Sianne Ngai**, “Afterword: On Disgust,” from *Ugly Feelings* (2005)

Section Three: Trans Theory

- 23/12 **Susan Stryker**, "Transgender Studies: Queer Theory's Evil Twin" *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* (2004), and "(De)subjugated Knowledges: An Introduction to Transgender Studies" *The Transgender Studies Reader* (2006);
- 30/12 **Cael Keegan**, "Getting Disciplined: What's Trans* about Queer Studies Now?" *Journal of Homosexuality* (2018)
- 6/1 **Maggie Nelson**, *The Argonauts*
- 13/1 **Maggie Nelson**, *The Argonauts*
- 20/1 **Visiting Lecturer**, Zohar Weiman Kelman (?)

Date TBA Mid-Year Paper

SPRING SEMESTER

Section Four: Contemporary Thought on Psychoanalysis & Literature

- 17/3 **Benjamin and Thomas Ogden**, selection from *The Analyst's Ear and the Critic's Eye: Rethinking Psychoanalysis and Literature* (2013)
- 24/3 **Jackie Stacy**, "On being a good-enough reader of Maggie Nelson's *The Argonauts*"
- 31/3 **Adam Phillips**, selection from *Attention Seeking* (2019), and from *Missing Out: In Praise of the Unlived Life* (2013)
- 7/4, 14/4 **PASSOVER, NO CLASSES**
- 21/4 Alison Bechdel, *Are you My Mother?* (2013)
- 28/4 **Memorial Day (Yom HaZikaron), NO CLASS**
- 4/5 Alison Bechdel, *Are you My Mother?* (2013)
- 12/5 **Judith Butler** [on Melanie Klein], "On Cruelty" (2014)

Section Five: New Formalism and Other Alternative Reading Practices

- 19/5 **Marjorie Levinson**, "What is New Formalism?," *PMLA* (2007)
- 26/5 **D. A. Miller**, selection from *Hidden Hitchcock* (2017)
- 2/6 Screening of Alfred Hitchcock's *Strangers on a Train*
- 9/6 **Frances Ferguson**, "Now It's Personal: D. A. Miller and Too-Close Reading"
- 16/6 **Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus**, "Surface Reading: An Introduction" (2009)

Date TBA Final Paper

