

PHL 578.101: Derrida II (# 15876) / PHL 577.201: Derrida I (# xxxxx)

Derrida/Cixous

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M: 6:00-9:15
Arts & Letters 405

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(or by appointment)

Description and Objectives

In this twenty-week, two-quarter seminar on Derrida/Cixous, we will try to provide an introduction to the very different but nonetheless closely related projects of Jacques Derrida and H el ene Cixous. We will read both Derrida and Cixous with an eye to such shared themes as sexual difference, writing (and especially “feminine writing”), life, survival, literature, the archive, and so on. We will also attempt to understand how the respective projects of these two great thinker/writers intersected and informed one another for over thirty years. We will thus look at Derrida texts with no apparent relationship to Cixous, works of Cixous with little explicit relation to Derrida, but then at Derrida texts devoted to Cixous, Cixous texts on Derrida, and the one work signed by both Derrida and Cixous.

We will spend the first few weeks of the first quarter reading in great detail Part I of Derrida’s important 1967 work *De la grammatologie*. We will consider especially Derrida’s understanding of writing, the trace, life, and survival as these themes were developed in this early work. We will then shift gears rather dramatically in the middle of this first quarter by reading two or three relatively short and recent (post 2000) “novels” of Cixous (*Reveries of the Wild Woman*, *The Day I Wasn’t There*, *So Close*), followed by her important 1975 theoretical text “The Laugh of the Medusa.” Toward the end of the quarter, we will try to draw some parallels—and establish some substantial differences—between Derrida’s work and Cixous’s on questions of writing, sexual difference, the nature of literature (as opposed to photography), and so on.

During the winter break, we will all offer ourselves the pleasure of reading George Du Maurier’s (English) novel *Peter Ibbetson* and we will watch the movie *Peter Ibbetson* (with Gary Cooper). All this will prepare us for Cixous’s brilliant novel *Philippines*. We will then read Derrida’s two book-length works on Cixous, paying special attention to the themes of life, survival, sexual difference, power, and the archive that Derrida develops in those works. After that we will return to Cixous and read two more novels (*Hemlock* and *Eve Escapes*) that Derrida did not and could not comment on since they were written after his death—an event that resonates throughout both works. These novels will allow us to ask questions about Derrida’s and Cixous’s respective understanding of the trace, autobiography, haunting, death, and the power of literature.

In the final weeks of the seminar, we will turn to the one text written by both Derrida and Cixous, *Veils*, a text that combines a brief story by Cixous and an extended commentary on that story by Derrida. We will conclude with Cixous’s work *Insister of Jacques Derrida*, a very powerful work written in the wake of Derrida’s death in 2004 that might be considered the final

installment of *Veils* and, in some sense, the end of their decades-long engagement with one another's work.

Required Reading

Cixous, Hélène, *So Close*. Trans. Peggy Kamuf. Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2010. (ISBN: 13: 978-0-7456-4436-3) [*Si près*, Paris : Éditions Galilée, 2007.]

_____. *Hemlock: Old Women in Bloom*. Trans. Beverley Bie Brahic, MA: Polity Press, 2011. (ISBN : 13 : 978-0-7456-4868-2) [*Ciguë: Vieilles femmes en fleurs*. Paris: Editions Galilée, 2008.]

_____. *Eve Escapes: Ruin and Life*. Trans. Peggy Kamuf, MA: Polity Press, 2012. (ISBN : 13 : 978-0-7456-5097-5) [*Ève s'évade : La Ruine et la Vie*. Paris: Editions Galilée, 2009.]

_____. *Philippines*. Trans. Laurent Milesi. Malden, MA : Polity Press, 2010. (ISBN : 13 : 978-0-7456-4816-3 [*Philippines: Prédelles*. Paris: Editions Galilée, 2009.]

_____. *Reveries of the Wild Woman*. Trans. Beverley Bie Brahic. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2006. (ISBN: 0-8101-2363-0) [*Les rêveries de la femme sauvage: Scènes primitives*. Paris : Éditions Galilée, 2000.]

_____. *The Day I Wasn't There*. Trans. Beverley Bie Brahic. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2006. (ISBN: 0-8101-2364-9) [*Le jour où je n'étais pas là*. Paris : Éditions Galilée, 2000.]

_____. *Insister of Jacques Derrida*. Trans. Peggy Kamuf. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007). (ISBN: 13 : 978-0-8047-5908-3) [*Insister: À Jacques Derrida*. Paris : Éditions Galilée, 2006.]

_____. "Le Rire de la Méduse," in *Le Rire de la Méduse et autres ironies* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 2010), 35-68. Handout. "The Laugh of the Medusa," trans. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, in *Signs*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (Summer, 1976): 875-893. Handout.

Cixous, Hélène and Jacques Derrida. *Veils*. Translated by Geoffrey Bennington. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001 (ISBN: 0-8047-3795-9) [*Voiles*. Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1998.]

Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. Trans. and preface by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976. (ISBN: 0-8018-1879-6). [*De la grammatologie*. Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1967.]

_____. *Geneses, Genealogies, Genres, & Genius: The Secrets of the Archive*. Trans. Beverley Bie Brahic. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006 (ISBN: 978-0-231-13979-3). [*Genèses, généalogies, genres, et le génie : Les secrets de l'archive*. Paris: Éditions Galilée, 2003.]

_____. *H. C. for Life, That Is to Say . . .* Trans. Laurent Milesi and Stefan Herbrechter. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006. (ISBN: 0-8047-5402-0) [*H.C. pour la vie, c'est à dire . . .* Paris: Éditions Galilée, 2002.]

Suggested Readings

Derrida, Jacques. *Athens, Still Remains*. Trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas. Fordham University Press, 2010 (ISBN: 978-0-8232-3206-2) [*Demeure, Athènes: Photographies de Jean-François Bonhomme*. Paris: Galilée, 2009.]

“Fourmis.” In *Lectures de la difference sexuelle*. Paris : Des femmes, 1994. [On Cixous]

Cixous, Hélène, *Portrait of Jacques Derrida as a Young Jewish Saint*. Trans. Beverley Bie Brahic. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004. [*Portrait de Jacques Derrida en Jeune Saint Juif*, Paris : Editions Galilée, 2001.]

Freud, Sigmund, *Gradiva*.

Du Maurier, George. *Peter Ibbetson*

Requirements

1. For each quarter, a final 10-page research paper due at noon on the Friday following our final class. (For the first quarter, I will be looking for an *explication de texte* or analysis of some concept from *De la grammatologie*. For the second quarter, students will be free to pursue any theme from either Derrida or Cixous or both.) Absolutely no extensions will be given for this paper. (No title pages, cover sheets, or plastic binders are needed for these papers; just hand in 10 pieces of paper with your name on the top right, stapled or paper-clipped on the top left.)

2. Every student will be expected to give a brief (15-20 minute) presentation on a Derrida or Cixous text or part of a text that we will be treating during the seminar. We will discuss this further during our initial meeting.

3. Attendance: everyone is allowed one absence for the quarter. Any more than one absence will result in the lowering of the final grade one to two notches. Two late arrivals *for* class, or early departures *from* class (for example after the break), will count for one absence.

Class attendance, attention, and participation are, therefore, *extremely* important, so come tired, come with a hangover, come with a friend if you like, but come.

Grades

The final paper will count for 75% of the final grade. Class presentations, participation, and attendance will make up the balance of the grade. (More than one class absence will result in the lowering of the final grade one to two notches—e.g., from A- to B+ or even B.) There will be no incompletes for this class. If you have not completed your paper by noon on the Friday after our last class meeting, then you should come to the department anyway and I will give a final exam topic and allows you to write a final exam from 12-2 PM.

Schedule

Because it is difficult to predict exactly how much material we will cover in a given class, definitive reading assignments will be given out only the class before. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to contact a friend in the class to get the exact assignment.

(Very) Tentative Weekly Schedule

Autumn Quarter

1. Introduction: *Phaedrus* and the critique of writing; *Of Grammatology*, Preface, Exergue, 3-5.
2. *Of Grammatology*, "The End of the Book and the Beginning of Writing," 6-26.
3. *Of Grammatology*, "Linguistics and Grammatology," 27-73.
4. *Of Grammatology*, "Linguistics and Grammatology," 27-73.
5. *Of Grammatology*, "Of Grammatology as a Positive Science," 74-93.
6. *Reveries of the Wild Woman*
7. *The Day I Wasn't There*
8. *The Day I Wasn't There*
9. *So Close*; "The Laugh of the Medusa"
10. Conclusion. Recap.

Winter Quarter

11. *Philippines*, George Du Maurier (1834-1896), *Peter Ibbetson* (can be read on line); movie with Gary Cooper, "Marble Halls"
12. *H. C. For Life, That Is to Say . . .*
13. *Geneses, Genealogies, Genres, & Genius: The Secrets of the Archive*
14. *Hemlock*
15. *Hemlock*
16. *Eve Escapes*
17. *Veils*
18. *Veils*
19. *Insister of Jacques Derrida*; must be read after *Veils*
20. Conclusion