

## SYLLABUS (2/3/19)

### SPAN 602. Seminar in Spanish and Latin American Critical Theory

#### After the Death of Reading: Error, Blindness, Misunderstanding

Spring 2019  
Section: 62295R  
M 11-1:50  
Location: VKC 206

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Off. hrs.: by appt.



**Course description:** How do we read today, after the so-called death of reading (or of literature, or of the book)? Taking as its point of departure Paul de Man's argument that "the existence of a particularly rich aberrant tradition [...] is [...] no accident, but a constitutive part of all literature, the basis, in fact, of literary history," this seminar explores the errors and blind spots constitutive not only of literature, but also of ethics and politics. In this course, intended for graduate students of Spanish and Latin American Studies, Comparative Literature, or other related Humanities disciplines, we will engage and wrestle with motifs of blindness and insight, misunderstanding and untranslatability, error and equivocation, in order to propose a mode of reading that would take into account the blind spots that reside at the heart of the literary tradition and that traverse, dangerously and exhilaratingly, the realms of ethics and politics (an ethics based in the untranslatability of the demand of the other, a politics, or a literary politics, that would *not* be grounded in ideological intelligibility). The texts that we interpret will largely hail from the terrain of Latin American literature, film, music, and performance art (Aira, Bolaño, Borges, Carri, Internacional Errorista, Martel, Piglia, Tijoux, Vargas Llosa) and criticism (Draper, González Echevarría, Moreiras, Rodríguez Monegal, Sommer), but will be in constant, urgent conversation with works of continental philosophy and political theory (Apter, Benjamin, Cassin, de Man, Derrida, Levinas, Lezra, Rancière, Szendy). Readings and class discussion will be in Spanish and English, depending upon the background of the students enrolled. As is typical of a graduate-level seminar, rigorous in-class and online participation will be expected of everyone.

## Schedule:

### I. Introduction

#### Week 1 (1/7). Literary misunderstanding

- Introduction
- Presentation assignments
- Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Literature* (Part I)\*\*

### II. Blindness and Insight

#### Week 2 (1/14). Beyond allegory

##### Required:

- Fredric Jameson, “Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism”\*\*
- Paul de Man, “Allegory (Julie)” in *Allegories of Reading*\*\*
- César Aira, *El congreso de literatura*\*\*
- J.L. Borges, “Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius” (<https://ciudadseva.com/texto/tlon-uqbar-orbis-tertius/>)
- Alberto Moreiras, “Pastiche of Identity and Allegory of Allegory”\*\*

##### Recommended:

- Doris Sommer, *Foundational Fictions*
- Roberto González Echevarría, *The Voice of the Masters*
- Carlos Alonso, *The Spanish American Regional Novel*
- Walter Benjamin, “Trauerspiel and Tragedy”
- Kate Jenckes, *Reading Borges after Benjamin*

#### Week 3 (1/21). NO CLASS (MLK, Jr. Day)

#### Week 4 (1/28). Blindness and Insight

- Lucrecia Martel, *La mujer sin cabeza* (film; in class)
- Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight* (Ch. I and VII)\*\*

#### Week 5 (2/4). Blind reading

##### Required:

- Ricardo Piglia, *El último lector* (Prólogo, Ch. 1 and 4)\*
- Iván Trujillo, “Historicidad interna, literatura sin condición y ficción sin imaginario. De *La escritura y la diferencia* a *La diseminación*”\*\*
- Visit by Prof. Iván Trujillo

##### Recommended:

- Jacques Derrida, “Injunctions of Marx” in *Specters of Marx*\*\*

### III. Anarchaeological Latinamericanism

#### Week 6 (2/11). Deconstruction and its precursors

- J.L. Borges, “Kafka y sus precursores” (<http://lanarrativabreve.blogspot.com/2011/06/kafka-y-sus-precursores.html>)
- Jacques Derrida, “Plato’s Pharmacy”\*\*
- Roberto González Echevarría, “BdeORridaGES (BORGES Y DERRIDA)”\*\*
- Emir Rodríguez Monegal, “Borges y Derrida: boticarios”\*\*

#### Week 7 (2/21). Beyond inquisitional logic

**NO CLASS on 2/18 (President’s Day) – Make up class to be held on Thursday, 2/21**

- Roberto Bolaño, *Amuleto*\*
- Susana Draper, “Fragmentos de futuro en los abismos del pasado”\*\*
- Erin Graff Zivin, “El pensar-marrano; o, hacia un latinoamericanismo an-arqueológico”\*\*

#### Week 8 (2/25). Anarchaeological Latinamericanism

12pm: Screening of Alejo Mogueillansky, Fia-Stina Sandlund. *El escarabajo de oro* + Q&A with Alejo Mogueillansky, TCC 227 (Rosen Family Screening Room, Tutor Center)

#### Week 9 (3/4). Exposition and exposure

- César Aira, “Picasso”\*\*
- César Aira, *Triano*\*\*
- Jacques Derrida, “Provocation: Forewords”\*\*
- Geoffrey Bennington, “Sovereign Stupidity and Autoimmunity” in Cheah and Guerlac, *Derrida and the time of the political*\*\*

#### Week 10 (3/11). NO CLASS (Spring Break)

### IV. Misunderstanding the Ethico-political

#### Week 11 (3/18). The ethics of (mis)recognition

Required:

- Emmanuel Levinas, “Philosophy and the Idea of the Infinite”\*\*
- Mario Vargas Llosa, *El hablador*\*
- Samuel Weber, “Caught in the Act of Reading”\*\*
- John W.P. Phillips, “Secrecy and Transparency: An Interview with Samuel Weber”\*\*
- Peggy Kamuf, “Double Features: An Interview with Samuel Weber”\*\*
- FINAL PAPER ABSTRACTS DUE

Recommended:

- Enrique Dussel, “Lo político en Levinas”\*\*
- Doris Sommer, “About-Face: The Talker Turns”\*\*

\*5pm public lecture by Samuel Weber (THH 309K)

**Week 12 (3/25). The Politics of (Mis)reading**

- Peter Szendy, “The Image of Power and the Power of Reading”\*\*
- Szendy, “Loose Words, or Arche-Reading”\*\*
- Visit by Prof. Szendy

\*5pm public lecture by Peter Szendy (THH 309K)

**Week 13 (4/1). The Ethics of Untranslatability**

- J.L. Borges, “Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote” (<http://www.literatura.us/borges/pierre.html>)
- Walter Benjamin, “The Task of the Translator”\*\*
- Barbara Cassin, “Untranslatables and their Translations”\*\*
- Emily Apter, “Untranslatables: A World System”\*\*
- Jacques Lezra, “The Indecisive Muse”\*\*
- Lezra, “This Untranslatability Which is Not One”\*\*
- Visit by Prof. Jacques Lezra

**Week 14 (4/8). Aesthetics and Politics of Error**

Required:

- César Aira, *El error*\*
- Internacional Errorista, “Manifiesto Errorista”\*\*
- Ana Tijoux, “Somos todos erroristas” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y3prIngW19k>)
- Albertina Carri, *Los rubios* (film; in class)

Recommended:

- Stanley Corngold, “Error in Paul de Man”\*\*
- Paul de Man, “A Letter from Paul de Man”\*\*
- Erin Graff Zivin, “The Aesthetics and Politics of Error”  
(<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/p/pc/12322227.0010.008?view=text;rgn=main>)

**V. Conclusion**

**Week 15 (4/15). Presentations**

- Final presentations

## **Week 16 (4/22). Presentations**

- Final presentations
- FINAL PAPER DUE

## **Course Materials:**

\*Please purchase the following books (marked with one asterisk), all of which should be available for purchase on Amazon (or elsewhere online).

- César Aira, *El error*
- Roberto Bolaño, *Amuleto*
- Ricardo Piglia, *El último lector*
- Mario Vargas Llosa, *El hablador*

\*\*Readings marked with two asterisks will be provided by instructor.

## **Course Requirements:**

**PARTICIPATION.** Each student should read the required readings specified above before each class session. Films will be shown in class on the date specified. You are expected to voluntarily contribute to class discussions, which will be reflected in your participation grade. This means that you should prepare notes with comments and questions to bring up in class.

**FACEBOOK.** You will be required to make weekly contributions to our class Facebook group, “SPAN 602. Seminar in Spanish and Latin American Critical Theory,” which can be found at (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/2160233304033765/>). These contributions are twofold. First, you will be expected to post a response to one of the required readings for the week, due by midnight the Sunday night before class. Second, you will be expected to comment on each of your classmates’ posts, due by midnight on the Sunday following class. No late posts will be accepted for credit.

**PRESENTATIONS.** You will be responsible for two in-class presentations. The first presentation will be based on one of the required readings, and will involve a summary and critique of the piece (approximately 20 minutes), after which you will facilitate a discussion with the rest of the class (approximately 30 minutes). The second will be a conference-style presentation of your final paper (approximately 20 minutes).

**FINAL PAPER.** The final paper is due on April 22. You may choose between writing an article-length paper (approximately 20 pages) or a conference paper (8-10 pages). Papers handed in late will receive a lower grade. In addition, you will be required to turn in a one-page abstract for your final paper on March 18, which will describe in prose form your main thesis and supporting arguments. Late or missing abstracts will result in a lower grade for the final paper.

**FINAL GRADE.** The final grade will be calculated in the following manner: in-class participation (20%), Facebook participation (10%), presentations (10% each), final paper (50%).

**Statement for Students with Disabilities:**

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in GFS 120, and is open 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is 213-740-0776.

**Statement on Academic Integrity:**

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. The Trojan Integrity Guide can be found at <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/forms/tio.pdf>. A Guide for Graduate Students can be found at <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/forms/GradIntegrity.pdf>.