

PHIL 463/563
Author: Jacques DERRIDA

Fall 2016
Noon - 1:50pm, T & TH, 250C SCH

Instructor: Professor Beata Stawarska
Office Hours: T 2-3:50pm & by
appointment
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Description

This class surveys representative works by the contemporary Algerian-Jewish-French philosopher Jacques Derrida (1930-2004). We will focus especially on the tasks and methods of deconstruction, which is first and foremost a style of *reading* texts attending to their logical and rhetorical dimensions. A related focus will be on Derrida's critique of Western metaphysics of presence with its set of violent and vertical dichotomies such as interiority and exteriority, speech and writing, male and female, self and other, and on his attempt to thematize difference in a more complex, dynamic, and non-hierarchical manner – both at the level of theory and practice. These two main foci determine the design of this class, which examines Derrida's deconstructive reading of Husserl's phenomenology of consciousness with its commitment to the primacy of sound and/or voice (*The Voice and Phenomena*); Plato's *Phaedrus* and the undecidable status of writing as a *pharmakon* (remedy and/or poison) (*Dissemination*); and J. L. Austin's and John Searle's speech acts theory and its conception of the performative (*Limited Inc*). We will then address Derrida's more recent, socially and politically situated work, especially the question of sexual difference and feminism (select essays from *Psyche*), of an indeconstructible and other-oriented justice ('Force of Law: the Mystical Foundation of Authority'), and of linguistic and cultural identity within a post-colonial context (*Monolingualism of the Other*).

Course requirements:

ATTENDANCE: This is a small seminar style class, and you are expected to attend all the meetings and participate actively in the conversation. One unexcused absence is allowed per term.

READING. This course has a sizable reading load, and you will be required to read the assigned texts carefully, and be prepared to discuss them in class. In addition to attending the class, you will need to plan your schedule to allow sufficient time to read the texts assigned for each class.

Grads are expected to read most if not all of the recommended readings. They are optional for Undergrads, but UGs are encouraged to read them as well.

WRITING. Undergrads: Each Thursday at noon (excluding weeks 1 and 10) you will submit a one to two pages typed up response to the readings assigned for the week. The response is not expected to be a polished piece of writing (but needs to be readable and free from spelling/grammatical errors); it provides an opportunity for you to actively engage the

material, and offer your own perspective on the readings. Please submit your response on Canvas (under 'Assignments'/Reading Response).

There will be one midterm and one term paper. The midterm is 5-7 pages long. The term paper is 8-12 pages long. Topics and guidelines for both papers will be provided in advance; in some cases, the students may write the final on a topic of their own choice (approved in advance by the instructor).

Grads: students select their own topic for the final, and submit a 1-2 pages long prospectus with a topic outline and literature review for approval and comments. The prospectus is due in week 9. You are advised to meet with me at least once before submitting the prospectus. Paper guidelines will be distributed in advance.

All written assignments should be typewritten, double-spaced, font size no smaller than 11. They need to include the class title, your name - and my name for the midterm and final papers.

PRESENTATIONS. Grads will offer a 20-30- min. in-class presentation dealing with one of the required readings covered in class; presentation guidelines will be distributed in advance. Grads will also give a brief 5-10 min. presentation of their final essay project on the last day of class.

Learning Outcomes:

Students will be able to identify and discuss main debates, terms, and methods deployed by Jacques Derrida, one of key authors in contemporary Continental Philosophy.

Grade components (undergrads):

Participation: 10%

Weekly reading response: 10%

Midterm paper: 30%

Final paper: 50%

Total: 100%

Grade components (grads):

Participation, including one in-class presentation: 20%

Prospectus, and final paper presentation (week 10): 20%

Final paper: 60%

Total: 100%

Grading

What kind of paper deserves an "A," "B," etc.? The following rubric reflects the general standards of the Philosophy Department at the University of Oregon.

A = excellent. No mistakes, well-written, and distinctive in some way or other.

B = good. No significant mistakes, well-written, but not distinctive in any way.

C = OK. Some errors, but a basic grasp of the material.

D = poor. Several errors. A tenuous grasp of the material.

F = failing. Problematic on all fronts indicating either no real grasp of the material or a complete lack of effort.

Please note: what counts as “excellent” or “OK,” for example, depends in part upon the nature and level of the class in question.

Late paper policy: the overall grade for the paper will be reduced by 0.3 grade if no extension has been granted by the instructor before the paper is due.

Plagiarism: a failure to cite your sources and give credit to others for their work is a violation of academic honesty, and can result in an F grade for the class.

Final Paper due at noon on Thursday in the Finals Week, SCH 211.

Required Texts by Derrida:

UO Bookstore:

Voice and Phenomena (Northwestern UP, 2011 [1967]); *Dissemination* (Chicago UP, 1981 [1972]); *Limited Inc* (1988 [1977]); *Monolingualism of the Other* (1998 [1996]).

Books are on reserve at Knight Library (please have a copy of the reading with you in class). All other readings are available on Canvas.

Class Schedule:

WEEK 1 (9/28-10/2)

1. Intro session: Derrida in his own words.

Readings: Interviews. “The Almost Nothing of the Unrepresentable;” “Unsealing (“the old new language”)” (*Points*); “Deconstruction of Actuality” (*Negotiations: Interventions and Interviews 1971-2001*)

Recommended: “The time of a thesis: punctuations” (*Philosophy in France Today*). In-class viewing of *Derrida’s Elsewhere*.

I. Deconstruction. Reading Husserl with Derrida:

2. Readings: *Voice and Phenomena* (1967). Introduction, chapters 1 and 2; Husserl *Logical Investigations*, s. 1-4 (Canvas). Recommended: Translator’s Introduction (*Voice and Phenomena*).

WEEK 2 (10/3-9)

3. *Voice and Phenomena*, ch. 3 and 4; Husserl *Logical Investigations* s. 5-8.
4. *Voice and Phenomena*, ch. 5 and 6.

WEEK 3 (10/10-16)

5. *Voice and Phenomena*, ch. 7. “Differance” (1972); “Implications. Interview with Henri Ronsse” (*Positions*).

II. Dissemination. Reading Plato with Derrida:

6. Readings: Plato’s Pharmacy, I, 1-3 (*Dissemination*). Recommended: Translator’s Introduction.

WEEK 4 (10/17-23)

7. Readings: Plato’s Pharmacy, I, 4-5 (*Dissemination*).
8. Plato’s Pharmacy, II, 6-7 (*Dissemination*).

WEEK 5 (10/24-30)

9. Plato’s Pharmacy, II, 8-9 (*Dissemination*).

III. Deconstruction and Speech Act Theory. Reading Austin and Searle with Derrida:

10. Readings: "Signature, Event, Context" (1972) in *Limited Inc* (1977), pp. 1-23.
Recommended: J. L. Austin, *How to do Things with Words*.

WEEK 6 (10/30-11/6)

11. *Limited Inc*, pp. 25-55 (includes Searle's Reply: "Reiterating the Differences").
12. *Limited Inc*, pp. 55-79 (recommended 79-96).

WEEK 7 (11/7-13)

13. *Limited Inc*, pp. 79-107. Afterword: toward an Ethic of Discussion (esp. pp. 114-142).

IV. Deconstructive Politics: Difference, Sexuality, the Other:

14. *Geschlecht*: Sexual Difference, Ontological Difference (*Psyche: Inventions of the Other* II, 1987). Recommended Heidegger, Introduction to *Being and Time*.
E. Grosz, Ontology and Equivocation: Derrida's Politics of Sexual Difference (*Feminist Interpretations of Derrida*).

WEEK 8 (11/14-20)

15. Force of Law: the Mystical Foundation of Authority (*Acts of Religion*, 1990).
16. *Monolingualism of the Other* (1996), 1-3.

WEEK 9 (11/21-27)

17. *Monolingualism of the Other*, 4-6.
Final paper prospectus due in class on Tuesday (Grads).
18. Thanksgiving holiday.

WEEK 10 (11/28-12/4)

19. *Monolingualism of the Other*, 7-8.
20. Final paper presentations (Grads) and workshop (Grads & Undergrads).

Note: I reserve the right to change the reading schedule throughout the term.