

The New York-St. Petersburg Institute of Cognitive and Cultural Studies
6th Annual Summer Institute
July 7-25, 2008

Cultural Studies Seminars

CULT-A: It's Pitiabile; or, There's Retribution: Transnational Politics and the post-9/11 Novel (Joseph Conte, University of Buffalo) (ADVANCED!!)

This Seminar is intended only for students with background in literary and/or cultural studies

Every nation contends with its own domestic politics including election campaigns, the health of its economy, and problems of regional government. Nations may express a foreign policy in which the interests of a nation are allied with or opposed to the interests of other sovereign states. In this seminar, however, we will examine transnational politics—issues that require adjudication across national, geographic, cultural, linguistic, religious, and racial borders. These are global problems that are unlikely to be solved without the cooperation and understanding of diverse peoples willing to set aside their sectarian interests. As an example, the documentary film by Albert Gore, *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006), poses an ecological problem, the threat of global warming, which would require transnational agreements to remediate. We will read the work of three novelists, in short excerpts, who believe in the power of dialogue to promote understanding and devise innovative solutions to global issues. They encourage their readers to reach beyond the limited politics of identity and find communal interests in resolving conflict.

Week One: In the Age of Terror

Don DeLillo, "Bill Lawton," a.k.a Osama Bin Laden and Al Qaeda "On Marienstrasse," from *Falling Man* (2007)

Slavoj Žižek, "Welcome to the Desert of the Real!" (2002).

Week Two: The Secular State and Religious Fundamentalism

Orhan Pamuk, "The First and Last Conversation Between the Murderer and His Victim" and "The Secret Meeting at the Hotel Asia," from *Snow* (2002).

Divine Intervention (2002), dir. Elia Suleiman. Film screening.

Week Three: Lessons in Ethics

J. M. Coetzee, "The Lives of Animals" and "The Problem of Evil," from *Elizabeth Costello* (2003).

An Inconvenient Truth (2006), dir. Davis Guggenheim. Film screening.

CULT-B: Straight-up Poetry (Polly Gannon, St. Petersburg State University)

This Seminar is available to all students. No background required. Recommended for students interested in literature, poetry and comparative culture.

In this seminar we will look at some of the primary impulses in contemporary anglophone (but not only) poetry—Spoken Word, poetry slams, Language Poetry, among others—and try to find some commonalities among them. At the same time we will consider why every attempt to define or categorize poetry, every attempt to capture it, falls short of the mark. Thus, we will try to listen, hear, and be changed by it, rather than to pin it down. (One does not necessarily exclude the other, of course—but we will set the pins aside for now, or just use them for sewing.) Which does not prevent us from asking questions:

Is poetry a "thing with feathers"? Is it Mayakovsky's Soviet Passport? A wall that must be mended before it can be built? Is it something that "happens," or something that already "is"? Finally (but not really finally, ever), whose muse is whose?

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Poets? Carl Sandburg, Randall Jarrell, Harryette Mullen, Seithlhamo Motsapit, Rita Dove, Andrea Gibson, and others. Among others, ourselves.

To discover where poetry meets film, we will also view Sally Potter's film-in-verse, *Yes*.

CULT-C: Film, War, and Memory (Izabela Kalinowska-Blackwood, Stony Brook University)

This Seminar is available to all students. No background required. Recommended for students interested in film studies and comparative cultural studies. Attending some evening film screenings will be required.

The course offers an exploration of issues related to the representation of war in cinematic texts dealing primarily, but not solely, with armed conflicts in East Central Europe from World War I to the recent wars in the Balkans and in Chechnia. The course focuses on how cinematic forms invoke concepts and represent experiences related to war and war-induced trauma.

Films screened for the course and discussed in class:

Andrzej Wajda, *Kanal* (Poland)
Stanley Kubrick, *Paths of Glory* (USA)
Andrei Tarkovskii, *My Name is Ivan* (Soviet Union)
Sergei Bodrov, *Prisoner of the Mountains* (Russia)
Francis Ford Coppola, *Apocalypse Now* (USA)
Milcho Manchevski, *Before the Rain* (Macedonia)
Emir Kusturica, *Underground* (Yugoslavia)

CULT-D: The Gangster Saga in Russia and the United States

(Konstantine Klioutchkine, Pomona College)

This Seminar is available to all students. No background is required. Recommended for students interested in cultural studies, media studies, and comparative American-Russian studies. No knowledge of Russian required but familiarity with either Russian or US TV series recommended.

Focusing on *Brigada* (2002) and *The Sopranos* (1999-2007), the course examines the ways in which an ostensibly marginal television genre explores the central paradigms in Russian and American culture. After establishing the analytical framework by reviewing the methodologies of cultural studies and media theory, we will address the differences between the two countries' television environments and their distinct approaches to the production of television texts. Our ultimate focus will be on the representations of characteristically national narratives, traditional conceptions of personality, the prevalent views on the relations between men and women, and the respective political landscapes. In addition to class meetings, expect to attend up to four hours of screenings as part of the course.

CULT-E: The Self in Motion: Theorizing Travel and Tourism in Contemporary Culture (Leah Lowe, Connecticut College)

This Seminar is available to all students. No background required. Recommended for students interested in comparative cultural studies

This course draws on the work of performance studies theorists to theorize the role that travel and tourism play in an increasingly smaller world. What do we learn about ourselves and others through the leisure travel? How are cultural expectations challenged and confirmed through the experience of new places? How are history, nationality, and ethnography performed through museums, tourist attractions, and other sites designed for sightseers?

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Class topics will include:

- The self and other in travel narratives
- Performances of nationality in tourist attractions
- The museum and its performance of history
- Graceland--the Home of the King (Elvis!)
- The course will focus on readings by Dean MacCannell, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Lucy Lippard, Susan Stewart, and others.

CULT-F: Saint Paul: Philosopher (James McFarland, Connecticut College) **ADVANCED!!**

This Seminar is intended only for students with background in philosophy and cultural studies

The 21st Century has seen a sudden burst of interest in the philosophical relevance of St. Paul. From the German-Jewish political philosopher Jacob Taubes', *The Political Theology of Paul* to the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben's, *The Time that Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans* to the French philosopher Alain Badiou's, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, reflections on our current cultural situation have found in the radical Paul a touchstone for understanding our own apocalyptic time. This course will consider these discussions both sympathetically and critically.

CULT-G: Culture(s) and Anthropology (Elizabeth Reichel-Dolmatoff)

This Seminar is available to all students. No background required. Recommended for students interested in comparative cultural studies

The course introduces students to Social and Cultural Anthropology's concepts of 'culture' and presents an overview of key definitions of 'culture' from the main anthropological paradigms and schools. Lectures and readings will focus on theories and methods regarding 'culture', with case studies from the range of human societies covering traditional and modern societies and also contemporary globalization processes. Ethnographic methods in fieldwork and comparisons between the 'emic' (the vernacular) and 'etic' (the analyst's) approaches will be explored to understand ways of experiencing and of representing culture. Some readings will focus on the importance of culture for socio-environmental dynamics and sustainable development. Other topics will also be covered according to the students' interests such as arts, language, music, film, psychology etc.

Topics:

1. Anthropology and Culture(s)
2. Fieldwork and Ethnography
3. Culture, Society and Economy in Bands, Tribes, Chiefdoms and States
5. Culture and Religion
6. Changing Culture(s)
7. Globalization

CULT-H: Asian Cinema (E.K. Tan)

This course is an introduction to the history of Asian cinemas, ranging from the geopolitical study of China, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Taiwan, and Korea. By focusing on issues relating to nationhood, cultural production, gender relations, and the impact of colonialism and globalization, the course will explore the commonalities, and/or particularities between the various cinemas, based on a set of overlapping themes and cultural aesthetics.

Films: • *Devdas* (dir. Sanjay Leela Bhansali, 2002)—India • *Hero* (dir. Zhang Yimou, 2002)—China • *In the Mood for Love* (dir. Wong Kar-wai, 1998)—Hong Kong • *A City of Sadness* (dir. Hou Hsiao-hsien, 1989)—Taiwan • *Rashomon* (dir. Akira Kurosawa, 1951)—Japan • *My Sassy Girl* (dir. Kwak Jae-young, 2001)—Korea • *Tampopo* (dir. Juzo Itami, 1986)—Japan

Cognitive Studies/Linguistics Seminars

COG-A: Universals of Language: An Introduction to Generative Syntax

(Carlos de Cuba, Stony Brook University)

This Seminar is available to all students. No background required. Recommended for everyone interested in the modern study of linguistics.

One of the most striking cognitive faculties that human beings share as a species is our ability to acquire language. The field of linguistics attempts to shed light on this ability, and to answer three basic questions about our knowledge of language:

- (1) What exactly do we know when we know a language?
- (2) How is that knowledge acquired? (and how is it acquired so quickly?)
- (3) How is that knowledge used? (e.g., in speech and understanding).

In short, linguistics is trying to find out something about human minds, and what they contain. In order to attack these questions in a more manageable way, linguists have divided up the problem into subparts, roughly corresponding to knowledge of pronunciation (Phonology), knowledge of vocabulary (Semantics), and knowledge of grammar (Syntax).

In this course, we will concentrate on the Syntax module, examining the basic grammatical patterns of language and what gives rise to them. We will follow the hypothesis that all humans are born with a “language instinct” - an innate, hardwired faculty of the mind that facilitates language acquisition. An interesting question that arises as a logical consequence from this hypothesis is, “If we all share the same innate language faculty, why do languages appear to be so different from each other?” In this course, we will examine one approach to this question, which focuses on comparing sentence structures (i.e., syntax) in a variety of different languages. If humans truly do have an innate cognitive language faculty, then we would expect all languages of the world to share certain linguistic features. The argument will be that all languages are strikingly similar, despite superficial differences. The primary goal of this course is to familiarize you with one of the most influential theoretical approaches to the study of linguistic universals in Cognitive Science.

COG-B: The Sounds of English Dialects: Dialectology meets Phonology

(Patrick Honeybone, University of Edinburgh)

This Seminar is available to all students. Recommended for those interested in phonology, dialectology and linguistic theory.

English is spoken in many different settings in the world, and this means that there is remarkable variation among its dialects. This variation is largely due to the different ways in which these dialects have changed in their individual settings. In this course we will investigate some of the variety that exists in the dialects of English at the phonological level, with two goals in mind. The first aim is simply to understand the structure and patterning of the dialects themselves better. The second is to investigate how this variation fits in with issues in general phonological theory. We will consider some of the basic concepts needed to understand linguistic variation and the development of ‘new dialects’, and we will also investigate how the phonology of the dialects that we discuss allows us to argue for, or against, some key notions in linguistic theory, such as the

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naturalness or unnaturalness of phonological processes, the status of opacity, and the predictability of phonological change. We will examine selected features of dialects of English from the UK, from North America and from the Southern Hemisphere.

- Early meetings: (i) how can dialects differ? (ii) why do dialects differ? (iii) some basic differences among dialects of English.
- Middle meetings: (i) consonants in the north of England and vowels in Scotland: ‘natural’ and ‘unnatural’ phonology; (ii) consonants and vowels in Canadian English: opaque interaction between processes; (iii) vowels in northern US English: chain shifts, words and phonemes.
- Later meetings: (i) natural change and dialect contact in dialect formation; (ii) new dialect formation in New Zealand English

COG-C: The Ins and Outs of Psycholinguistic Experimentation

(Nina Kazanina, University of Bristol)

This Seminar is available to all students. Recommended for those interested in cognitive studies, psycholinguistics and language processing.

The aim of the course is to provide practical skills for designing and implementing psycholinguistic experiments. The students will design, develop materials, run participants and analyze the results of a psycholinguistic experiment. The topic of the experiment is to be determined, but most likely it will use one of the following techniques: lexical decision, priming or self-paced reading. More generally the course will aim at discussing how competing linguistic hypotheses can be tested using psycholinguistic techniques. The course is primarily geared towards linguistics and psychology majors.

COG-D: The Syntax and Semantics of Comparison

(Roumyana Pancheva, University of Southern California) **(ADVANCED!!)**

This Seminar is advanced, and is intended for students with some experience in generative syntax and/or formal semantics.

Expressions such as *more books than articles*, *too tall* and *the best athlete* compare the extent to which objects have a certain gradable property. There has been a lasting interest in the syntax and semantics of such expressions within the generative tradition, partly because languages employ a surprising variety of comparative structures that need to map to a consistent meaning, but also because the grammar of comparison subsumes a number of key phenomena such as quantification, scope, wh-movement, ellipsis resolution. This seminar examines the syntax and semantics of comparative constructions with the goals of understanding the outstanding analytical challenges and of stimulating cross-linguistic research in this domain.

Meeting 1-2: The meaning of gradable adjectives and the semantics of comparison; the overall architecture of comparatives and superlatives

Meetings 3-4: The comparative clause: wh-movement and ellipsis, extraposition

Meetings 5-6: Scope of the comparative and superlative operators

Meetings 7-8: Phrasal comparatives; other degree constructions

COG-E: Language in the Lab: Theoretical and experimental syntax with a special emphasis on heritage (incompletely acquired) language (ADVANCED!!)

(John F. Bailyn, Stony Brook University & Maria Polinsky, Harvard University)

This Seminar is advanced, and is intended for students with some experience in generative syntax.

What constitutes the knowledge of a language? This question has been at the core of linguistic theorizing for the last forty years. The main emphasis over these years has been on (i) linguistic description and (ii) theory construction. The data for such theory construction were mainly drawn from introspection by trained linguists or informal elicitations from native speakers of various languages. In the last 10-15 years, as linguistics has gotten closer to cognitive science, new experimental approaches to language have become increasingly available; the results of experimental studies of language phenomena provide valuable new information which can be used in theory construction. The relationship between theory construction and experimental work is still in its incipient stages; in order to push it forward, it is important to consider insights from both sides of the aisle. This is what this course is intended to do.

We will examine in depth several grammatical phenomena bearing on the structure of a clause and sentence from the theoretical and experimental perspective. After addressing the background information on main issues and challenges in experimental syntax, we will discuss and analyze several syntactic structures in detail. In analyzing each structure, three general questions will be addressed:

- (1) EXISTING THEORY: What is the appropriate theoretical treatment of this structure? Are there outstanding questions that have not been answered conclusively? What are the competing theoretical analyses of this structure?
- (2) EXISTING EXPERIMENTAL WORK: What are the main findings of experimental studies with respect to this structure? Have these findings been able to distinguish between competing theoretical approaches to this structure?
- (3) FUTURE WORK (THEORY AND EXPERIMENTATION): What kind of future experimental work is needed to resolve the outstanding issues?

Course work

I will present most of the theoretical work and outline the main issues in each case (bullet (1)); we will have extensive class discussion for points under 2, 3, and 4 (if available), so please be prepared for many seminar style discussions. We may not be able to get through the entire syllabus but we should get a general flavor of all the topics listed here.

Topics:

- I. Experimental syntax (background)
- II. Word Order
- III. Relative Clauses
- IV. Control and Raising
- V. WH-dependencies

Background reading: For those of you who are less familiar with various syntactic issues, I recommend additional readings from the *Handbook of Contemporary Syntactic Theory* (HCST) edited by Mark Baltin and Chris Collins (Blackwell, 2003). In the syllabus below, I have provided references to the relevant chapters (look for the author's name followed by HCST).

COG-F: Current Debates in Formal Pragmatics

(Philippe Schlenker, Institut Jean-Nicod & New York University) (ADVANCED!!)

This Seminar is advanced, and is intended for students who have had (i) some course in formal semantics or (ii) some knowledge of linguistics and mathematical logic.

In this 2-week course, we will study two recent debates in formal pragmatics: one concerns scalar implicatures, and the other concerns presupposition; both raise foundational issues about the interface between semantics and pragmatics.

Scalar implicatures: "I will invite Mary or Sue" is typically understood to mean that I will invite one or the other *but not both*. Quite a few arguments have been given over the years to show that the "not both" inference is not encoded in the meaning of "or", but is the result of a particular reasoning on the speaker's motives, called a "scalar implicature" (roughly: the speaker could have said "I will invite Mary and Sue", which would have been more informative; the reason he didn't is probably that this sentence was false, hence the inference). By its very nature, an implicature as standardly conceived involves a comparison between entire sentences, and it is thus a phenomenon that occurs 'after' the semantics. In recent years, however, several authors (Chierchia, Fox, and Spector) have argued that implicatures are a grammatical phenomenon which is computed in tandem with the semantics. We will sketch some aspects of this debate.

Presuppositions: "John knows that he is incompetent" can be asserted only in case it is already taken for granted that John is incompetent; and similarly for its negation "John doesn't know that he is incompetent". That John is incompetent is a "presupposition" of both sentences. Complex sentences sometimes do and sometimes do not inherit the presuppositions of their component parts: "If John is incompetent, he knows that he is" doesn't presuppose anything; by contrast "If John is realistic, he knows that he is incompetent" does presuppose that John is incompetent. The problem is thus to find a general algorithm to compute the presuppositions of complex sentences (this is called the 'projection problem' for presuppositions). In the 1980's, this problem was taken to argue in favor of a new theory of meaning, called 'dynamic semantics'. But in recent years this view came under attack because it was deemed insufficiently predictive. Several alternative theories have emerged in very recent past (some of them in the last year). We will give an introduction to this debate.

COG-G: How We Learn: Education and Cognitive Science

(Irina Sekerina, City University of New York)

This Seminar is available to all students. Recommended for those interested in cognitive science, educational theory, learning.

How does the mind work and especially, how does it learn? Teachers make assumptions all day long about how students best comprehend, remember, and create. These assumptions — and the teaching decisions that result — are based on a mix of theories learned in teacher education, trial and error, craft knowledge, and gut instinct. Such gut knowledge often serves us well. But is there anything sturdier to rely on? This course will present findings from the interdisciplinary field of cognitive science that are strong and clear enough to merit classroom application.

1. Inflexible Knowledge: The First Step to Expertise
2. "Brain-Based" Learning: 3 Popular Myths
3. Allocating Student Study Time
4. Students Remember What They Think about
5. Why Students Think They Understand When They Don't
6. How Knowledge Helps
7. Does Practice Make Perfect?
8. Praise — Does it Motivate or Stifle?

COG-H: The meaning and Structure of Words

(Edwin Williams, Princeton University)

This Seminar is available to all students. Recommended for those interested in cognitive science, linguistic theories, and in particular morphology and word formation..

The course will present the general theory of word formation for beginning students.

Topics will include: The lexicon, affixation, compound formation, inflection, idioms, and the argument structure of words.

One theme of the course will be the strict compositionality of the processes for forming words and determining their properties. Another will be the universality of some general features of the system.