

## English 485: Senior Seminar

### *The Return to Philology*

*Professor Newstok*

Fall 2009

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MW 3:00-4:15pm

Office: Palmer 310

Barret 216

Office hours: Tu 10am-1pm; MWF 10–noon; or by appointment

*For, though the origin of most of our words is forgotten, each word was at a stroke of genius, and obtained currency, because for the moment it symbolizes the world to the first speaker and to the hearer. The etymologist finds the deadest word to have been once a brilliant picture. Language is fossil poetry.*

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, “The Poet”

*It's thought that philology is finished—and I think it hasn't yet begun.* —Friedrich Nietzsche, “We Philologists”

#### **Course description**

A critical investigation of the contested notion of “philology,” the historical foundation for literary studies today. In the nineteenth century, the term “philology” came to describe an approach to literature that concentrated on reconstructing the history of languages; its monumental achievement is the Victorian *Oxford English Dictionary*. For much of the twentieth century, however, such methods were often dismissed as lacking theoretical sophistication. Yet many critics are now arguing for a “return” to philology as a radical way to re-ground literary studies. This course will survey the fascinating tradition of philological criticism, via figures such as Friedrich Nietzsche, Raymond Williams, Erich Auerbach, Paul de Man, and Edward Said. We will test their insights through selected works of pre-1800 literature, in which authors such as Geoffrey Chaucer, William Tyndale, William Shakespeare, Jonathan Swift, and Samuel Johnson enacted proto-philological meditations (including troubling debates surrounding English translations of the Bible). Independent projects will involve a philological study of a conceptually rich “keyword,” arguing for its evolution across major Anglophone writers. Although the emphasis of the course will be on medieval and renaissance texts, it may be possible for students to develop final projects that include modern literature.

As the capstone seminar in the English department, students will be expected to evaluate scholarly resources a regular basis; write brief but regular critical reflections on primary and secondary reading; and complete a lengthy (20-25-page) final research project that argues for their own interpretation in dialogue with the critical tradition within this field. While the topics for each section of the senior seminar diverge, they all have in common an in-depth analysis of a particular issue or question during the first half of the term, followed by intensive independent research in the second half of the term, culminating in a final essay.

#### **Required Texts**

- Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*
- J. A. Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*

#### **Recommended bookmarks on your computer**

- *The Oxford English Dictionary (OED)*: <http://www.oed.com/>
- *Early English Books Online (EEBO)*: <http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>
- *Lexicons of Early Modern English (LEME)*: <http://leme.library.utoronto.ca/>
- *Middle English Dictionary (MED)*: <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/>
- Any pertinent **concordances** you discover for favorite authors

**Schedule—subject to revision, per class interest and instructor's discretion**

Wednesday	Aug. 26	Introduction: What is philology?
Monday	Aug. 31	Raymond Williams, <i>Keywords</i> —
Wednesday	Sep. 2	Other approaches to keywords—Barfield, Empson, Lewis, Bennett
Friday	Sep. 4	<b>Begin Wiki-commonplacing (Moodle)</b>
Monday	Sep. 7	<i>No class: Labor Day</i>
Wednesday	Sep. 9	Martianus Capella, <i>The Marriage of Philology and Mercury</i>
Friday	Sep. 11	<b>Reflective essay on Major reading thus far (500 words + bibliography)</b>
Monday	Sep. 14	Plato, <i>Cratylus</i> ; Carroll, “Humpty-Dumpty” (6. <i>Through the Looking Glass</i> )
Wednesday	Sep. 16	Vico, <i>The New Science</i> ; Joyce, <i>Finnegan’s Wake</i> ; Derrida, “He War”; Auerbach
Monday	Sep. 21	Friedrich Nietzsche, “We Philologists” and “On Truth and Lies”; Porter
Wednesday	Sep. 23	“The Return to Philology,” de Man, Patterson, Culler, Said, Harpham <b>Paired presentations on each “Return” essay</b>
Monday	Sep. 28	Chaucer, “The Reeve’s Tale”; Tolkien, “Ch. as a Philologist”
Wednesday	Sep. 30	16 <sup>th</sup> c. debates re: biblical translation
Friday	Oct. 2	<b>Comparison of Matthew passages</b>
Monday	Oct. 5	Shakespeare, Sonnets; Cormack, “Latinity and Desire”
Wednesday	Oct. 7	Stallybrass, “Against Thinking”; Blair, “Reading Strategies”
Friday	Oct. 9	<b>EEBO assignment</b>
Monday	Oct. 12	The emergence of lexicography (Blount; Johnson; Swift; Wallace)
Wednesday	Oct. 14	Murray and the <i>New English Dictionary on Historical Principles</i>
Friday	Oct. 16	<b>LEME &amp; OED assignment</b>
Monday	Oct. 19	<i>No class: Fall Break</i>
Wednesday	Oct. 21	Emerson, “Compensation”; Thoreau, “Life without Principle”; Best
Friday	Oct. 23	<b>Submit 5 potential proposals (200 words each)</b>
Monday	Oct. 26	<i>Forbidden Planet</i> ; Lerer essay
Wednesday	Oct. 28	Knapp, “Recycling Philology”; Pollock, “Future Philology?”
Friday	Oct. 30	<b>Revise &amp; expand 2 proposals (500 words each)</b>
Monday	Nov. 2	[?] Joint session with Bigelow on Auerbach, “Philology and <i>Weltliteratur</i> ”
Wednesday	Nov. 4	Research and consultation with Newstok
Friday	Nov. 6	<b>Annotated Bibliography due</b>
Monday	Nov. 9	<b>Present key primary &amp; critical passage to class for discussion, I</b>
Wednesday	Nov. 11	<b>Present key primary &amp; critical passage to class for discussion, II</b>
Monday	Nov. 16	<b>Draft of 5 pages due; peer feedback</b>
Wednesday	Nov. 18	Research and consultation with Newstok
Monday	Nov. 23	<b>Draft of 10 pages due; peer feedback</b>

Wednesday	Nov. 25	No class: Thanksgiving Break
Monday	Nov. 30	<b>First FULL Draft Due in class (20–25 pages)</b>
Wednesday	Dec. 2	<b>Public presentations, I (class will run until 5pm)</b>
Monday	Dec. 7	<b>Public presentations, II (class will run until 5pm)</b>
Wednesday	Dec. 9	Final reflections
Friday	Dec. 11	<b>Revised Final Papers due</b>

## FURTHER READING

### KEYWORD STUDIES [beyond Williams, Empson, Barfield, Lewis, and Rosenthal]

Two special issues of *Critical Quarterly* (Media, Excellence, Personality, Interest, Representation)

Nicholson Baker, “Lumber,” *The Size of Thoughts*

Philip Nicholas Furbank, *Reflections on the Word “Image”*

Marjorie Garber, “‘Greatness’: Philology and the Politics of Mimesis,” *boundary 2*

Richard Gilman, *‘Decadence’: The Strange Life of an Epithet*

Roland Greene, *Five Words* (forthcoming)

Matthew Kaiser, “A History of ‘Ludicrous,’” *ELH* 71.3

Norman Knox, *The Word ‘Irony’ and Its Context, 1500–1755*

Kate Masur, “The Word ‘Contraband’ and the Meaning of Emancipation in the United States”

Robert K. Merton and Elinor Barber, *The Travels and Adventures of Serendipity*

Sianne Ngai, “Merely Interesting,” *Critical Inquiry*

Patricia Parker, on “Preposterous,” in *Shakespeare from the Margins*

Jesse Sheidlower, *The F Word*

Susie Tucker, *Enthusiasm: A Study in Semantic Change*

### MEDIEVAL

Busby, Keith, ed., *Towards a Synthesis? Essays on the New Philology*

David C. Greetham, “The Resistance to Philology”

Stephen Nichols, *The New Philology*, special issue of *Speculum*

Jan Ziolkowski, ed. *On Philology*

### THE RENAISSANCE

Judith Anderson, *Words that Matter: Linguistic Perception in Renaissance English*

Brian Cummings, *The Literary Culture of the Reformation: Grammar and Grace*

Martin Elsky, *Authorizing Words: Speech, Writing, and Print in the English Renaissance*

Anthony Grafton, *Commerce with the Classics: Ancient Books and Renaissance Readers*

Madhavi Menon, *Wanton Words*

Erika Rummel, *Erasmus’ Annotations on the New Testament: From Philologist to Theologian.*

## THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Maurice Olender, *The Languages of Paradise: Race, Religion, and Philology in the Nineteenth Century*

James I. Porter, *Nietzsche and the Philology of the Future*

Ernest Renan, *The Future of Science*

Dennis Taylor, *Hardy's Literary Language and Victorian Philology*

Marcus Tomalin, *Romanticism and Linguistic Theory: William Hazlitt, Language, and Literature*

Michael West, *Transcendental Wordplay*

## PROFESSIONAL HISTORY

Gerald Graff, *Professing Literature*

Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *The Powers of Philology: Dynamics of Textual Scholarship*

Shannon Jackson, *Professing Performance: Theatre in the Academy from Philology to Performativity.*

Seth Lerer, *Error and the Academic Self*

D. G. Myers, "When Philology Was in Flower," *The Elephants Teach: Creative Writing Since 1880*

## PHILOLOGICAL STUDY TODAY

Emily Apter, *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature*

Mieke Bal, "Between Altar and Wondering Rock: Towards a Feminist Philology"

Alton L. Becker, *Beyond Translation: Essays Toward a Modern Philology*

Tim Brennan, "Places of Mind, Occupied Lands; Edward Said and Philology"

Bernard Cerquiglini, *In Praise of the Variant: A Critical History of Philology*

Michael Holquist, "Why We Should Remember Philology"

Michael Holquist, "Auerbach and the Fate of Philology Today"

Mark Johnston, "Philology in the Epoch of the Cogito"

Seth Lerer, ed. *Literary History and the Challenge of Philology: The Legacy of Erich Auerbach*

Sheldon Pollock, "Future Philology? The Fate of a Soft Science in a Hard World."

Michelle Warren, "Post-philology," *Postcolonial Moves: Medieval Through Modern*

## Requirements

**Engagement (25%)** is mandatory, and is broadly conceived to include active **participation** (*listening and responding* to your peers as well as the professor), consistent **preparation** of course readings, **enthusiasm** for assignments, **collaboration** with your peers, and **respect** for the course.

I presume that seniors will read and re-read assignments thoroughly in advance of discussion, arrive on time to class, and participate thoughtfully every day of the semester. As we meet only twice a week, and are devoting approximately half of the term to common readings, it is particularly important that you dedicate yourself to attending every class session.

**Assignments (25%)** involve weekly exercises designed to help prepare you for your final paper. Unless otherwise indicated, please submit hard copies (not email attachments) **on Fridays by 4pm in my office (Palmer 310)**. **No late work**—there is not enough time in the semester to fall behind with your writing. Numerical ‘grades’ (a rough score out of 10) will be assigned to give you a sense of your progress. We will discuss the requirements for theses in further detail as they approach.

- *Wiki-commonplacing (Moodle)*
- *Reflective essay on Major reading thus far (500 words + bibliography)*
- *Paired presentations on each “Return” essay (10 minutes + handout)*
- *Comparison of Matthew passages (500 words)*
- *EEBO assignment (500 words)*
- *LEME & OED assignment (500 words)*
- *5 potential proposals (200 words each)*
- *Revise & expand 2 proposals (500 words each)*
- *Annotated bibliography (1500 words)*—single-spaced, exploring approximately a dozen sources that you might conceivably use in your final paper. Each entry should offer a brief (4-5 sentence) overview of the piece, and evaluate its possible use for your fellow students.
- *Present key primary & critical passage to class (15 minutes)*
- *Draft of 5 pages*
- *Draft of 10 pages*
- *First FULL Draft (20–25 pages)*
- *Public presentations (20 minutes)*

**Senior papers (50%)** involve engaging in a **critical dialogue** with other readers (critics) in the history of philology, leading to a **20–25-page** research paper on a topic of your own choice. You are encouraged to ground at least part of your paper in pre-1800 materials.

**Grading:** A ‘C’ represents satisfactory work; a ‘B’ represents good work; a ‘B+’ represent very good work; and an ‘A-’ (and the occasional ‘A’) represent extraordinary achievement. This holds true for all of your assignments in the course.

**Policies:** As always, please observe and respect Rhodes guidelines regarding the **Honor Code**; academic dishonesty will not be tolerated, and an Honor Code violation (including plagiarism) will be grounds for **failure in the course**. Your essay for this course must consist of **original work** not previously submitted to another course. Respect the integrity of the course: please turn off **cell phones** and **remove hats** before entering the classroom; please **do not eat during class**. Treat email exchanges with one another and with the professor as **formally composed correspondence**. Finally, please also observe the attached policies, which apply to all courses in the English Department.