

Jacques Derrida (CMLIT 580)
W 2:30-5:30 (463 Burrowes)

Professor Eric Hayot
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Office hours: By appointment; I'm on campus daily.
<http://www.personal.psu.edu/euh2/>

Texts:

Derrida, *Of Grammatology*
Derrida, *Limited Inc.*
Derrida, *Archive Fever*
Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*
Derrida, *Of Hospitality*

In addition to these we will cover a variety of primary and secondary sources, all of which will be available for via Canvas.

Course information:

We are fifty years from the publication of Jacques Derrida's landmark *Of Grammatology*, a classic of contemporary thought. Like all classics, the book is as much remembered as it is forgotten; its remembering, one might say, happens via a certain forgetting, the forgetting necessary to the kind of remembering one does of *Of Grammatology*.

Our goal in this class will be to remember the text otherwise, to live with it, and to attempt to make it live in the present. Among the major goals of this course is to provide you with the opportunity for slow and careful reading.

Through the questions raised by the possibility of a grammatology (a science of writing), Derrida takes up a wealth of not just linguistic but also philosophical, literary, anthropological, and historical issues important to and in many way definitive of (so he argues) the Western tradition. The organization of the first part course follows that of the book, with the first third or so focusing on the philosophical complexities of writing, and the remainder focusing more on the literary and anthropological dimensions of writing. To aid the reading of our central text, we also read ourselves some of Derrida's most important and recurrent references, especially Rousseau.

The other major "learning objective" of the course is to provide you with the opportunity to feel what it's like to really get to know the work of a single author. With that in mind our six weeks with the *Grammatology* will be followed by eight more weeks of Derrida's other work, as well as relevant secondary sources (including some of Benoit Peters's Derrida biography).

At the end of the course I've left us three weeks to think about. We may continue to read Derrida, or we may choose together to move on, considering the work of other deconstructive thinkers (Paul de Man, J. Hillis Miller, Barbara Johnson, Lee Edelman, Gayatri Spivak, Jane Gallop), the work of various explainers of Derrida (Culler, Bennington, Hagglund), or of other thinkers from the Derridean moment (Habermas, Foucault). We'll see when we get there.

Work and grading:

One short paper each week from Week 2 forward. Strict maximum of two pages double-spaced in 12-point Garamond or Times New Roman, one-inch margins. Papers should make arguments, cite the text, work through specific issues. Feel free to be experimental, as long as you are holding yourself to the highest standard of your own work.

You may skip one paper. Failing to hand in two papers (or more) will affect your grade.

As for grades, I take an A- to indicate acceptable, normal work done by a graduate student of your stage (this standard is different, therefore, for students in different stages). As are given for superior work, B+s for work that is not up to that standard. Bs indicate serious problems.

Graduate audit policy:

It is devoutly hoped that auditors will do the reading and show up to class. Beyond that, no expectations. Auditors who wish to do the written work should speak to me about it.

Lateness and absences:

There are no excused absences unless you need to represent the university in some official way (as an athlete, for instance) or it is a religious holiday for you. Don't be late to class.

I don't accept late work unless you talk about it with me in advance. Unexcused late work will receive a grade of 0. If you are not in class when something is due (or when we take an exam), you will receive a grade of 0, unless you have an excused absence.

Plagiarism and academic honesty:

If you use someone else's ideas, whether through direct quotation or paraphrase, you need to say so. Use parenthetical references and a works cited list (as explained in the *MLA Style Guide*, available in the library or at the bookstore) to show your reader where your ideas are coming from.

Dishonesty of any other kind will not be tolerated. Dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, fabricating information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students. Acts of dishonesty will result in academic sanctions and will be reported to the University's Judicial Affairs office for possible further disciplinary sanction.

Equal access:

Penn State encourages qualified people with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities and is committed to the policy that all people shall have equal access to programs, facilities, and admissions without regard to personal characteristics not related to ability, performance, or qualifications as determined by University policy or by state or federal authorities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation in this course or have questions about physical access, please tell me as soon as possible.

Daily syllabus. Have everything read before coming to class.

Week 1 January 11
 Grammatology, 3-28

- *Plato. Phaedrus (excerpt)
- *G. W. F. Hegel. Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences (§459)
- *Friedrich Nietzsche. “On Truth and Lie in a Nonmoral Sense”
- *Martin Heidegger. “Introduction to ‘What is Metaphysics?’”

- Week 2 January 18
Grammatology, 29-104
 *Ferdinand de Saussure. “Introduction” and “The Nature of the Linguistic Sign” in Course in General Linguistics
 *Roman Jakobson. “The Phonemic and Grammatical Aspects of Language in Their Interrelations”
 *Roland Barthes. “Introduction” and “Signifier and Signified” in Elements of Semiology
- Week 3 January 25
Grammatology, 109-152
 *Claude Lévi-Strauss. “The Science of the Concrete” from *The Savage Mind*
 *Claude Lévi-Strauss “A Writing Lesson” and “A Glass of Rum” from *Tristes Tropiques*
- Week 4 February 1
Grammatology, 179-292
 *Jean-Jacques Rousseau. *Essay on the Origin of Languages*
 *Jean-Jacques Rousseau. *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality among Men*
- Week 5 February 8
Grammatology, 293-344
- Week 6 February 15
 Spivak, introduction to *Of Grammatology*, xxvii-cxi
- Week 7 February 22
 *Derrida, “Différance,” “Force of Law,” “Freud and the Scene of Writing”
- Week 8 March 1
 *Derrida, “White Mythology”
 *Benoit Peters, *Derrida* (excerpt)
- Spring Break ---
- Week 9 March 15
 Derrida, *Limited Inc.*
 *Austin, *How to do Things with Words* (excerpt)
- Week 10 March 22
 Derrida, *Archive Fever*
 *Benoit Peters, *Derrida* (excerpt)

- Week 11 March 29
Derrida, *Of Hospitality*
- Week 12 April 5
Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*
*Benoit Peters, Derrida (excerpt)
- Week 13 April 12
Reading TBD by class discussion
- Week 14 April 19
Reading TBD by class discussion
- Week 15 April 26
Final discussion: What is the Use of Derrida? / Reading TBD