

# LtTh115. Translation Theory and Practice

Professor: Amelia Glaser  
11am-11:50 Centr 217B  
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Office hours: M 9:45-10:45, W: 3:15-5:15  
*This syllabus is subject to revision.*

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TIF (JAM) Client is required  
are needed to see this picture.

M.C. Esher, "Reptiles"

This course will advance your understanding of literature through an in-depth consideration of translation. The first seven weeks of class will be devoted to discussions of readings in literary theory, and will include occasional short translation and language exercises. We will discuss translation as it relates to questions of culture, authorship and readership, with particular emphasis on the role of translation in readers' conceptions of world literatures. Each student will be required to submit a short mid-term theory paper, which discusses a problem of translation, in light of one theoretical text. The last three weeks will be spent work-shopping students' final translation projects-in-progress, and discussing the practical problems of literary translation. The final translation project will be completed in groups of two or three, from a language that at least one person in the group can read at an intermediate to advanced level.

## Required Reading

- Lawrence Venuti, *The Translation Studies Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2000 [**TS**]
- George Steiner, *After Babel*. Oxford, NY: Oxford U. Press, 1998 [**Steiner**]
- Sandra Bermann and Michael Wood, Ed., *Nation, Language, and the Ethics of Translation*. Princeton: Princeton U. Press, 2005 [**Nation**]
- Articles and book chapters available on electronic reserves ([reserves.ucsd.edu](http://reserves.ucsd.edu)), and on print reserve at Geisel. Films are on reserve at Geisel.

**Recommended Reading:** A few copies of two optional books are available at the bookstore: Emily Apter's *The Translation Zone* and Sanford Budick and Wolfgang Iser, Ed., *The Translatability of Cultures: Figurations of the Space Between*.

## Grading and Requirements

- Participation (including attendance, in-class assignments, comments): 20%
- Mini assignments (5 total): 30% (5% each)
- Midterm Theory paper (3-5 pg): 20%
- Final Translation project (translation with a 5-7 theoretical introduction): 30%
- Copies of all work should be included in a portfolio, submitted Monday of Finals Week.

## Class Schedule

### Week 1. Introduction

Mon. Jan 7. Introduction to the course. In-class translation exercise (from the Hungarian).

Wed. Jan. 9. L. Venuti, "How to Read a Translation"

(<http://www.wordswithoutborders.org/article.php?lab=HowTo>)

Cynthia Ozick, "Envy, or, Yiddish in America" (handout)

Assignment 1. Polish your translation exercise at home. Write a response poem. (Due Friday, Jan 11.)

Fri. Jan. 11. George Steiner, "Understanding as Translation" (Ch. 1 in *After Babel*)

Begin reading Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*

### Week 2. Approaches to translation

Monday, Jan 14. Alexander Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin*. Chapter I in translations by Charles Johnston, Dennis Litoshick (<http://www.lib.ru/LITRA/PUSHKIN/ENGLISH/>), Douglas Hofstadter (handout), and Vladimir Nabokov (Handout)

Nabokov, "Problems of Translation: Onegin in English" [TS 115]

Recommended: *Evgenii Onegin* (Complete novel – Johnston's translation.)

Wednesday, Jan. 16. Translator's Introduction by Hoffstadter (handout)

Petr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, Eugene Onegin (film-reserves: [FVL DV 4699-1](#) )

Assignment 2. 1-page paper (200-300 words): Assess the translations we have read of Evgenii Onegin. Which is the most successful? Why?

Friday, Jan. 18. Friedrich Schleiermacher, "On the Different Methods of Translating" (1813), trans. Susan Bernofsky [TS, 43]

Guest speakers from UCSD's Linguistics department – compiling dictionaries in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: Sharon Rose and Farrell Ackerman.

### Week 3. Translation through the ages

Monday, Jan. 21. No Class: Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday, observed.

Wednesday, Jan. 23. Religion and translation.

"The Five Books of Moses" reviewed in *Bible Books* [handout]

William Propp, Translation. Exodus, III-VII, note on "Translation," "Appendix E: Afterthoughts"

Recommended. Friedrich Nietzsche, "Translations" (Trans. Walter Kaufmann) [TS 67]

Friday, Jan. 25. Jerome, "Letter to Pammachius" (Trans. Kathleen Davis) [TS, 21]

John Dryden, from the preface to Ovid's *Epistles* [TS, 38]

Edward Said, "The Public Role of Writers and Intellectuals" [Nation, 15]

Recommended: Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet, "A Methodology for Translation" (1958), trans. Juan C. Sager and M.-J. Hamel [TS]

### Week 4 A Modern Babel

Mon. Jan. 28. Jorge Luis Borges "The Translators of the One Thousand and One Nights" (Trans. Esther Allen) [TS 94]

Borges, "Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*" (Trans. James E. Irby)

[[http://web.archive.org/web/20041109092837/http://www.english.swt.edu/cohen\\_p/avant-garde/Literature/Borges/Menard.html](http://web.archive.org/web/20041109092837/http://www.english.swt.edu/cohen_p/avant-garde/Literature/Borges/Menard.html)]  
Borges, "The Library of Babel" [[http://jubal.westnet.com/hyperdiscordia/library\\_of\\_babel.html](http://jubal.westnet.com/hyperdiscordia/library_of_babel.html)]

Wed. Jan. 30. Jacques Derrida, "What is a 'Relevant Translation?'" in Venuti, *The Translation Studies Reader* (423-46)

Friday, Feb. 1. Steiner, Chapter 2 (Language and Gnosis)

### Week 5. Defining the Task

Monday, Feb. 4. John Felstiner, Excerpts, on translating Celan – examples of Celan's poetry (handout), Zukovskys translations of Catullus (handout) *In Class*: Begin Assignment 3. Jerome Rothenberg, "Total Translation: An Experiment in the Translation of American Indian Poetry" ([http://www.ubu.com/ethno/discourses/rothenberg\\_total.html](http://www.ubu.com/ethno/discourses/rothenberg_total.html))

Wed., Feb. 6. Walter Benjamin, The Task of the Translator [TS 75]  
Recommended: Samuel Weber, "A Touch of Translation: On Walter Benjamin's 'The Task of the Translator,'" [Nation, 65]

Assignment 3: Complete your homophonic translation of Dante's First Canto of *Inferno* (Due Friday, Feb. 8)

Fri., Feb. 8. Michael Davidson articles, TBD [handout]  
Recommended: Steiner, Chapter. 5

### Week 6. Reading, Transcribing, Erasing

Mon., Feb. 11. Nikolai Gogol, "The Overcoat" (bookstore)

Wed., Feb. 13. Boris Eichenbaum: "How Gogol's Overcoat was Made"  
Irving Howe, "Gogol's Overcoat, Eichenbaum's Stitching" (e-reserves)

Fri., Feb. 15. Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author" (e-reserves)  
In Class – Shakespeare's sonnet 66 in translation. (To be completed next week.)  
Recommended: Ezra Pound, "Guido's Relations" [TS 86], Steiner, Ch. 4

### **Midterm Papers due Friday, Feb. 15.**

### Week 7. Translation across media

Monday, February 18: No Class – Presidents' Day.

Wed., Feb. 20. Lynn Visson, "Simultaneous Interpretation: Language and Cultural Difference" [Nation, 51]  
Jesse Browner, "The Translator's Blues" [<http://www.slate.com/id/2133922/>]

Assignment 4: Search engine Shakespeare translation project.  
(Due Friday, Feb. 22.)

Fri., Feb. 22. Workshop  
Recommended: Michael Wood, "The Languages of Cinema" [Nation, 79]

Week 8. Translation Comparative Literature Today

Mon., Feb. 25. Stanley Corngold, "Comparative Literature: the Delay in Translation" [Nation, 139]

Susan Bassnett, "From Comparative Literature to Translation Studies" (e-reserves)

Wed., Feb. 27. Lori Chamberlain, "Gender and the Metaphorics of Translation" [TS 306]

Emily Apter, "Translation with No Original: Scandals of Textual Reproduction" [Nation, 159]

Slections from *Literature from the Axis of Evil* (e-reserves)

Fri., Feb. 29. Workshop

Recommended: Adre Lefevere "Mother Courage's Cucumbers: Text, System and Refraction in a theory of literature" [TS 239]

Week 9. Translation in the Global Community

Mon., March 3. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Translating into English" [Nation, 93]

Gloria Anzaldúa, "The Homeland, Aztlán" (e-reserves)

Wed., March 5. Mary Louise Pratt, "Language and National Security: Making a New Public Commitment"

[<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=00267902%28200422%2988%3A2%3C289%3ALANSMA%3E2.0.CO%3B2-9>]

Assignment 5: Review one of your classmates' early translations. Write a 1-page response, discussing accuracy, faithfulness, language. (Due Friday, March 7.)

Fri., March 7. Workshop.

Week 10. Translation as subject.

Mon., March 10. Vilashini Cooppan, "National Literature in Transnational Times: Writing Transition in the 'New' South Africa" [Nation, 346]

David Damrosch, "Death in Translation" [Nation, 380]

Wed., March 12. Film and translation: "Bladerunner"

Optional: Choose another film with a translation topic for comparison.

Friday, March 14. Workshop.