“[I]f thought and knowledge are inscribed within life so as to regulate it—as is the case with man—this very life cannot be the blind and stupid mechanical force that one likes to imagine when one contrasts it to thought.” Georges Canguilhem

Declarative? Imperative? Interrogative? The title of this course gestures towards the complication—if not the confusion—that the conjunction of living and thinking inspire. In the introduction to the *Use of Pleasure*, the second volume of the *History of Sexuality*, Foucault explains the vital implications of thinking: There are times in life when the question of knowing if one can think differently than one thinks, and perceive differently than one sees, is absolutely necessary if one is to go on looking and reflecting at all. . . . In what does [philosophy today] consist if not in the endeavor to know how and to what extent it might be possible to think differently, instead of legitimating what is already known? Adopting Foucault’s intellectual ethos, we will ask: what relation does life bear to/on thought and thought to/on life? And (how) does thinking differently entail living differently and vice versa? In order to ruminate on these questions in a lively way, the syllabus will engage some key moments in the philosophical reflections on the relations between life and thought, including the following:

Henri Bergson. *Creative Evolution*
Georges Canguilhem. *The Knowledge of Life*
Michel Serres. *The Natural Contract*
Giorgio Agamben. *The Open*; Bernard Stiegler, “Take Care”
Nikolas Rose. *The Politics of Life Itself*
Melinda Cooper. *Life as Surplus*
Vincenue Despret. *What Animals Would Say If We Asked the Right Questions*
Bernard Stiegler: *For A New Critique of Political Economy*
Isabelle Stengers. *In the Time of Catastrophes*
Samantha Frost. *Biocultural Creatures*
Julie Livingston. *Self Devouring Growth*
Robin Wall Kimmerer. *Braiding Sweetgrass*
16:195:518:01 INDIVIDUAL STUDIES IN COMPARATIVE LITERATURE:
Hours by arrangement

16:195:522:01 Film Theory and World Cinema
Prof. Fresko
Tuesdays 2:50-5:50 pm

This course provides a theoretical and methodological overview of key areas animating the
discipline of Cinema Studies and situates them within the context of international film
movements. By studying a variety of theoretical concerns, including ontology, realism vs.
formalism, authorship, spectatorship, representations of race, ethnicity, and sexuality, and the
transnational circulation of films and film-related materials, students will gain the requisite
vocabulary and analytical skills necessary to teach and conduct research in the field. Readings
will be rich and varied and will draw from: Marxism, semiotics, psychoanalysis, postcolonial
thought, Black studies, feminist theory, and more. Each week students will view one or two
films, which will be discussed in class together with the readings. Readings and discussions will
be in English. Students are encouraged to read theoretical texts in their original language when
possible. This course is required for completion of the Graduate Certificate in Cinema Studies.
No experience in Cinema Studies is required.

16:195:601:01 THE NOVEL: Novel THEORIES, TUTOR TEXTS
Prof. Kitzinger
Mondays 1:10-4:10 pm

In an essay in his 1929 collection On the Theory of Prose, the Russian Formalist Viktor Shklovsky
called Laurence Sterne’s narrative-bending Tristram Shandy (1759–67) “the most typical novel in world
literature.” Shklovsky’s provocation was intentional, but the questions it raises endure. How do
choices about what is “typical” — a text, an author, a national literature, or a genre — shape the development
of literary theories? What scope can any theory claim beyond the text(s) and readings through which it is
articulated; conversely, how and why do single texts give rise to many theories? With the challenges to
the limits of canons themselves articulated throughout the later 20th century, and the more recent rise of “distant
reading,” what can we still do with theories that spring from interpretations of individual authors and works?

Beginning from this complex of questions, the seminar focuses on the place of what Roland Barthes called
“tutor texts” in the theory of the novel, from its modern inception in the early 20th century to its many
permutations today. Beginning with a discussion of two self-conscious origin-points of novel theory and the
examples on which they are built (Georg Lukács’s The Theory of the Novel [1914–16], and Henry James’s
Prefaces to the New York Edition of his novels [1907-9]), we will continue through a progression of “tutor
texts” and theorists that traces one possible history of the theory of the novel, and poises us to ask what we
can do with theory now. The provisional list of core texts includes Balzac’s “Sarrasine” (1830) (theorists:
Barthes, Jameson), Dostoevsky’s Notes from Underground (1864) (theorists: Bakhtin, Girard),
Hurston’s Their Eyes Were Watching God (1937) (theorists: B. Johnson, Gates), and
Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818) (theorists: Spivak, G. Stewart). The final weeks of the course will be devoted to student-led sessions, broadening our range of tutor texts, theorists, and theories in accordance with participants’ interests and current projects.

Requirements: discussion paper (3–4 pp.), final paper, and leading approximately one hour of a class session, either singly or in collaboration with another seminar participant.

In the event of remote instruction, we will meet weekly via Zoom at the scheduled time of the course. Students who are unable to participate synchronously should contact the instructor.

**16:195:610:01  COMPARATIVE LITERATURE IN DIALOGUE: POETIC AND PHILOSOPHICAL ENCOUNTERS**

Prof. Levine  
Friday 9:00-12:00 pm, AB-4050 (CAC)  
Cross-listing 16:470:672:01

The course examines crucial – but also crucially missed -- encounters between poets and philosophers in 20th- and 21st-century European thought. Texts discussed include Heidegger’s seminal readings of Hölderlin, Derrida’s writings on Mallarmé and Celan, Hamacher’s analysis of the famous encounter between Celan and Heidegger at the latter’s hut in the Black Forest, and Celan’s prose poem “Conversation in the Mountains” written in the wake of a missed encounter with Adorno. Of particular concern will be the political implications of Heidegger’s turn to poetry in the 1930s and Adorno’s famous dictum about the barbarity of writing poetry after Auschwitz. If one is to continue to write poetry after “that which happened“ (Celan), how must it be done differently? What new relations between poetry and philosophy does this entail? Students are encouraged to read texts in the original French and German but English translations will be provided for all works assigned and discussions will be conducted in English.

**16:195:634:01  COMPARATIVE LITERATURE THEORY: MARGINS OF PHILOLOGY: THE FUTURES OF LITERARY THEORY**

Prof. Zechner  
Monday 4:30-7:10 pm  
Cross-listing 16:470:671:01

Are the finest days of literary theory over, as some tendencies within today’s Humanities make it seem, or is its brightest future yet to come? This seminar will cast a thorough look at the past and future of literary theory as a mode of thinking language, one might call it a radical form of philology. Taking Werner Hamacher’s aphoristic work *95 Theses on Philology* as its starting point and guiding thread, the seminar will delve into a variety of discourses to determine the current state of critical theory, literary theory, and the philosophy of language. It will introduce students to various basic concepts pertaining to the study of literature (e.g. “form,” “performance,” “afformance,” “reading,” “reference,” “representation,” “translation,”
etc.), and familiarize them with a number of approaches to the question of reading and understanding, including hermeneutics (Gadamer; Szondi), structuralism (Barthes; Lacan), discourse analysis (Foucault), rhetorical reading (de Man), performance theory (Austin; Butler), and deconstruction (Derrida; Nancy; Gasché). This methodological trajectory will help us critically to assess contemporary conversations revolving around “post-hermeneutics” (Kittler; Wellbery; Gumbrecht) and “surface reading” (Best and Marcus; Felsky). In addition to the above-mentioned authors, with a special emphasis on Hamacher and contemporary discussions of his œuvre, students will be exposed to philosophical works by Friedrich Nietzsche, Walter Benjamin, and Martin Heidegger.

All graduate students with an interest in literary theory are welcome. Taught in English.