

## **Translation Theory**

In recent years, translation studies have moved beyond the process of converting one language into another. With new technologies blurring distinctions between the "original" and its reproductions, and with globalization redefining national and cultural boundaries, "translation" is now emerging as a reformulated subject of lively, interdisciplinary debate. Our course enters these debates with an overview of translation studies through the figure of the Tower of Babel, focusing on key concepts and terms: translatability and untranslatability; fidelity and adaptation; languages, dialects and Creoles. Weekly units thereafter include: 1. how translation connects to the study of language through historical and structural linguistics and 2. how translation studies have intersected with several different fields, most prominently, anthropology, comparative literature and postcolonial studies. Our case studies will focus on translation in the Americas, posing the question of what's different about translation in an Americas context. Special attention to the interfaces between translation and colonialism will help to bring into view the asymmetrical power relations that have always determined the practice of translation at the same time that they have underestimated the translator's role in the formation of cultures and the constitution of identities. Our aim is to make the translated text a subject of academic study for each student, in the spirit of Walter Benjamin's analysis of translation as an intellectual activity in its own right.

### **Course Texts and Readings** (available at BayTree bookstore)

Lawrence Venuti, ed., *The Translation Studies Reader* (3rd ed., Routledge, 2012)

Selected articles will be sent to you via email [see **E** below for selections]

### **Class**

Each unit of study will consist of a theoretical discussion, a historical analysis and a study of a text and some of its translations. The assigned readings will be discussed in section; section attendance is therefore mandatory. Lectures will be easier to follow if the assigned readings are done in advance. For our cases studies of texts and translations, knowledge of the original language of the texts is not presumed.

### **Written Work/Evaluation**

Four Weekly Reader Responses 10% of the final grade each; one final project (6-8 pages): 40% of the final grade; engagement in lecture and section: 20% of final grade.

For the final project, you have the choice of ONE of two options:

Option #1: select a short text (1-2 pages of prose; 8-14 lines of verse; a brief film sequence, etc). and 3 translations of it (2 of them may be inter-semiotic). Analyze and compare the translations, focusing on the theories that they evince, either implicitly or explicitly. You will not be expected to evaluate the translation or to substitute your own, but rather to discuss the translation in terms of its underlying theory.

Option #2: select a text and translate it. Support your translation with a detailed theoretical and analytical discussion.

### **Schedule of Readings**

## I. Translation Studies: State of the Field

### Week #1 (July 28th & 31st)

#### Overview/Keywords: translatability/untranslatability; fidelity/betrayal

- Naomi Seidman, "Introduction: Translator as Double Agent," in *Faithful Renderings: Jewish-Christian Difference and the Politics of Translation* (Chicago, 2006) [R]
- Robert Stam, "Beyond Fidelity: The Dialogics of Adaptation," in James Naremore, ed., *Film Adaptation* (Rutgers UP, 2000) [E]

#### Translation and Linguistics I: philosophy and history of language

- John McWhorter, *The Power of Babel: A Natural History of Language* (2001) [E]
- Venuti, Chapter 23 (Kwame Anthony Appiah)
- Venuti, Chapter 27 (David Damrosch)

### Week #2 (August 4th & 7th)

#### Translation and Linguistics II: structuralism, post-structuralism

- Venuti, Chapter 11 (Roman Jakobson)
- Roman Jakobson, "The Speech Event and the Functions of Language," in Linda R. Waugh and Monique Monville-Burston, eds., *On Language: Roman Jakobson* (Harvard UP, 1990) [E]
- Venuti, Chapter 25 (Jacques Derrida)
- Venuti, "Translating Derrida on Translation: Relevance and Disciplinary Resistance," *Yale Journal of Criticism* 16:2 (Fall 2003): 237-262 [E]

#### Translation and Linguistics III: language theory

- Venuti, Chapter 7 (Walter Benjamin)
- Venuti, Chapter 12 (Eugene Nida)
- Venuti, Chapter 15 (Gideon Toury)

## II. The Translation Turn: Translation Studies and Other Fields in the Americas

### Week #3 (August 11th & 14th)

#### Anthropology/Ethnography/Cultural Studies

- Talal Asad, "The Concept of Cultural Translation in British Social Anthropology," Jim Clifford and George Marcus, eds., *The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (UC Press, 1986) [E]
- James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Harvard UP, 1997) [E]
- Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (Routledge, 1992) [E]

#### Postcolonial/Empire Studies

- Venuti, Chapter 22 (Gayatri Spivak)
- Eric Cheyfitz, *The Poetics of Imperialism: Translation and Colonization from The Tempest to Tarzan* (U. of Pennsylvania Press, Exp. ed., 1997) [E]
- Vicente L. Rafael, *The Promise of the Foreign: Nationalism and the Technics of Translation in the Spanish Philippines* (Duke UP, 2005) [E]

PM

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**Week #4** (August 18th & 21st)

**Comparative Literature and the Culture of Our America**

- Venuti, Chapter 9 (Jorge Luis Borges)
- Roberto Fernández Retamar, "Caliban: Notes Toward a Discussion of Culture in Our America," in *Caliban and Other Essays*, trans. Edward Baker (1989) [E]

**American Babel**

- Jonathan Arac, "Global and Babel: Two Perspectives on Language in American Literature," *ESQ* 50: 1-3, Special Issue: "American Literary Globalism" (2004); rpt. in eds. Dimock and Buell, *Shades of the Planet* (Princeton UP, 2007) [E]
- Wai Chee Dimock, "African, Caribbean, American: Black English as Creole Tongue," in *Shades of the Planet* [E]
- Marc Shell, "Babel in America," Introduction to ed. Shell, *American Babel: Literatures of the US from Abnaki to Zuni* (Harvard UP, 2002) [E]

**Week #5** (August 25th & 28th)

**Translation, Identity, Invisibility**

- Venuti, Chapter 21 (Annie Brisset)
- Venuti, Chapter 24 (Keith Harvey)
- Venuti, "Invisibility," in *The Translator's Invisibility* (1995) [E]

**Provisional conclusions: Language, Translation, Community**

- Venuti, Chapter 31
- Edwin Gentzler, *Translation and Identity in the Americas: New Directions in Translation Theory* (Routledge, 2008)