

Maxim Dobrushin
Summer Session II
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LIT 102

Office hours: T/TH 5-6 PM, or by appointment

Office location: HUM 1, Room 234

Class hours/location: T/TH 6-9:30 PM, SOC SCI 1, Room 161

Translation Theory

“Translation is a mode,” Walter Benjamin says. If it is a “mode”--“a way or manner in which something is done or takes place” (OED definition for “mode”)--how is it done, and in what manner? How does it take place? This course will concentrate around two larger, philosophical questions: Why do we need translation? How do we do it?

Through five different units, we’ll explore these questions and consider how translation and interpretation operate in literary texts and in our everyday lives. We’ll also consider how translation theories always contain assumptions about language, and consequently how these assumptions extend to language operations in literary texts. At the end of the course, you’ll be able to articulate your own translational philosophy through a final project that will ask you translate a text and articulate your approach to translation.

Course Learning Outcomes

- 1) Students will describe various theories of translation and language.
- 2) Students will apply theories of translation to their own projects on translation.
- 3) Students will analyze the limits and possibilities of translation.

Assignments and Grading

- 1) Four short weekly assignments, due each week 10% each, for a total of **40%**. Each of these assignments asks for clarity, analytical value, and specificity. These assignments should stay away from plot summary and all generalities. They ask for your original, insightful contribution and for a deep engagement with the text.
- 2) Attendance and participation: **25%**. Your attendance is integral to the functioning of the course, since this is a discussion-based class. I ask that for each class you come prepared, having read all the texts, and are present and engaged. I encourage everyone to speak at least once in every class, and I will call on people who do not speak. Please see the discussion rubric for grade expectations.
- 3) Final project: **35%** (5% for your translation and footnotes/5% for your class presentation/25% for your 5-page commentary). Select a text (poem, short story, or excerpt from a book chapter) and translate it. After you translate the piece, discuss your translation in a theoretical/analytical manner, highlighting how your theoretical outlook dictated your translational effort.

Late Work/Attendance

I will not accept any late assignments. If you miss more than one class, you will automatically fail the participation and attendance part of the course (25% of total grade); if you miss more than two classes, you will automatically fail the course.

Schedule of Readings and Assignments

Week 1: Defining “Translation”

Class 1 (7/31): Introduction and Reading Roman Jakobson, “On Linguistic Aspects of Translation” (In-Class).

Class 2 (8/2): (1) Read Matthew Reynolds “Crossing Languages” and “Definitions” from *Translation: A Very Short Introduction* (PDF); (2) Read Walter Benjamin “The Task of the Translator” (PDF); (3) Read Hegel “Independence and Dependence of Self-Consciousness: Lordship and Bondage [Master-Slave Dialectic]” (PDF).

Assignment 1 (due 8/2 by 5PM): 2-page analytical response on Benjamin. What is translation for Benjamin? How does translation work? Your response must have a thesis and contain specific, supporting evidence. One suggestion for this paper is to focus on a key term that Benjamin meditates upon. For example, he has an extended discussion of the word “original.” Start by finding all the places where Benjamin uses this word; then explore its uses, definitions, and roles in the process of translation.

Week 2: Memes of Translation: Untranslatability/Fidelity/Equivalence

Class 1 (8/7): (1) Read Jiří Levý “Translation as a Decision Process” (PDF); (2) Read Andrew Chesterman “Survival Machines for Memes” (PDF); (3) Read Vladimir Nabokov “Problems of Translation: ‘Onegin’ in English” (PDF).

Class 2 (8/9): (1) Read Jacques Derrida “What is a ‘Relevant’ Translation?” (PDF); (2) Read Jacques Derrida “Des Tours de Babel” (PDF).

Assignment 2 (due 8/9 by 5PM): 2-page paper on the following question: What is a “relevant” translation? What are the components of relevancy?

Week 3: Anthropology/Ethnography/Cultural Studies

Class 1 (8/14): (1) Read Talal Asad, “The Concept of Cultural Translation in British Social Anthropology” (PDF); (2) Read Anna Brickhouse “Mistranslation and Unsettlement” from *The Unsettlement of America: Translation, Interpretation, and the Story of Don Luis de Velasco, 1560-1945* (PDF).

Class 2 (8/16): (1) Read Walter D. Mignolo and Freya Schiwy “Double Translation: Transculturation and Colonial Difference” (PDF); (2) Read David Frye “Introduction” in Angel Rama *Writing Across Cultures: Narrative Transculturation in Latin America*; (3) Read Fernando Ortiz excerpts from *Cuban Counterpoint*.

Assignment 3 (due 8/16 by 5PM): 2-page response paper on the following question: How is translation intertwined with coloniality and modernity? How does “double translation” work?

Week 4: Case Study 1: 9/11

Class 1 (8/21): (1) Read Emily Apter “Introduction” and “Translation after 9/11: Mistranslating the Art of War” in *The Translation Zone* (PDF); (2) Read Emily Apter “Translation after 9/11” (PDF).

Assignment 4 (8/21 by 5PM): 2-page paper on the ethics and politics of mistranslation. Explore a contemporary news event/political occurrence/literary work where mistranslation skewed interpretation. How does it happen? What is mistranslated?

Class 2 (8/23): Watch Sydney Pollack’s *The Interpreter* in class.

First stage of final project (8/23 by 5PM): A literary translation with 3 footnotes of a section of a poem, a long poem, or a page of prose.

Week 5: Case Study 2: Jean-Luc Godard’s “Breathless”

Class 1 (8/28): (1) Read Flynn “Philosophy is a Way of Life” in *Existentialism: A Very Short Introduction* (PDF); (2) Read Sartre “The Body as Being-for-Itself Facticity” from *Being and Nothingness*, pages 306-339 (PDF). Watch Jean-Luc Godard’s “Breathless” in class.

Class 2 (8/30): Read David Sterritt’s “Breathless” (PDF)

Second stage of final project (due 8/30 in class): A brief 3-5 minute presentation of difficulties you encountered during your translation process as you worked from your source language into English. You can discuss a particular instance of a translation problem, differences between languages, and your approach to translation.

Final stage of final project (due 9/2 by 5PM): A commentary of 5 double-spaced pages that reflects on your method of translation using terminology from the field of translation studies. This commentary offers a rationale for your method of translation, presents issues encountered during the process of translation, and identifies specific differences between your source language and English.

Required Texts

All texts will be online. You must have access to Canvas. All articles will be located on the class Canvas website. Go to canvas.ucsc.edu to log in.

Drop Deadlines

Drop: Monday, August 6

Withdraw: Friday, August 17

Neither Summer Session nor instructors drop students for non-attendance or non-payment. Students must drop themselves. Dropping results in full tuition reversal/refund. Withdraw posts a W for the grade and full tuition is charged (no refund). For all dates and deadlines, including 'change of grade option' (P/NP) and grades due, here is the summer academic calendar:

<https://summer.ucsc.edu/fundamentals/academic-calendar.html>

Accessibility Information

The Disability Resources Center reduces barriers to inclusion and full participation for students with disabilities by providing support to individually determine reasonable academic accommodations. If you have questions or concerns about exam accommodations, or any other disability-related matter, please contact the DRC office, located in Hahn 125 or at 831-459-2089 or drc@ucsc.edu.

Academic Integrity

Please note: All work submitted for this course must be your own. If you do not understand fully the standards of academic integrity enforced at UC Santa Cruz, inform yourself by consulting *The Navigator* at <http://registrar.ucsc.edu/navigator/section1/academic-integrity.html>, Section 1, Academic Integrity. Breaches in academic integrity will result in failure of this course and may incur suspension or dismissal from the university.