THEORY & PRACTICE OF LITERARY TRANSLATION

COMPARATIVE LITERATURE 195:606 | SPANISH & PORTUGUESE 940:598

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY
FALL 2010
TUESDAY 9.15-12.15
CARPENDER 103B | C/D

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COURSE OVERVIEW
This course is both a seminar on the theory of literary translation and a workshop in which we will share, revise and refine our own translations-in-progress. We will read and discuss the major theoretical texts that make up the field of translation studies, including works by Dryden, Schleiermacher, Goethe, Benjamin, Jakobson, Borges, Heidegger, Steiner, Berman, Derrida, Spivak and Apter and reflect on the recent trends in the field toward the politics and ethics of translation. In our discussions, we will consider questions of translatability, fidelity, the hierarchical division between original texts and their translations, and the charged politics of translation. Throughout the semester, we will compare different translations of literary texts in order to examine how each version works and discuss how translators make decisions of language, style, format, and cultural equivalency. We will also hear from several guest translators throughout the semester. At the end of the term, each student will prepare a final paper, which may be either a literary or theoretical analysis or an original translation accompanied by a critical translator’s introduction. The prerequisites for this class include a demonstrable knowledge of a language other than English.

REQUIRED TEXTS
John Biguenet and Rainer Schulte, eds., The Craft of Translation (1989)
Rainer Schulte and John Biguenet, eds., Theories of Translation: An Anthology of Essays from Dryden to Derrida (1992)
Emily Apter, The Translation Zone (2005)
Raúl Zurita, Purgatory (trans. Anna Deeny, 2010)
a course reader and workbook of translations

RECOMMENDED TEXTS
Sandra Bermann and Michael Wood, Nation, Language and the Ethics of Translation (2005)
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- attendance is mandatory and active, thoughtful, and articulate participation in our course discussions and workshops will comprise a significant portion of final grade
- weekly two-page response papers (not due when class is a workshop)
- an oral presentation on an article or group of articles from our weekly reading
- a translation into English of a short text or series of poems to be presented and discussed in class and revised several times
- a final project, to take one of the following forms:
  - a 20 page essay on a particular theory of translation, translation studies or an analysis of a published translation;
  - a translation of a short prose work or series of poems accompanied by a five-ten page critical translator’s introduction.

OFFICE HOURS & CONTACT INFORMATION

I will hold office hours on Thursdays from 10-12, as well as by appointment. My office is in Carpender Hall 303. You may reach me at 732.932.9412 x27 or on email at kebishop@rci.rutgers.edu. Emails will be returned within 48 hours. Please note that it is difficult to maintain extended conversations by email; please make use of office hours if your query requires on-going or complex dialogue.

*IF YOU ARE A STUDENT WITH A DISABILITY, PLEASE SPEAK WITH ME AT THE BEGINNING OF THE SEMESTER ABOUT ANY ACCOMMODATIONS YOU MAY NEED.

*THIS SYLLABUS IS PROVISIONAL AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

CALENDAR OF READINGS & ASSIGNMENTS

*TT = Theories of Translation
*CT = Craft of Translation
*CR = course reader

WEEK 1 :: SEPTEMBER 7 :: INTRODUCTION
intro to the class; overview of field of translation studies; intro to central concerns of translation theory

WEEK 2 :: SEPTEMBER 14 :: THE WORD ITSELF: LANGUAGE & MEANING
Jakobson, "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation" (TT, 144-151) and "Quest for the Essence of Language” (CR)
Heidegger, “Language” (CR)
Borges, "An Investigation of the Word” (CR)
Paz, “Translation: Literature and Letters” (TT, 152-162)

**Further reading:
George Steiner, “Understanding as Translation” and “Language and Gnosis” from After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation
WEEK 3 :: SEPTEMBER 21 :: THE TASKS OF THE TRANSLATOR
Rainer Schulte and John Biguenet, introduction to Theories of Translation (TT, 1-10)
Hugo Friedrich, “On the Art of Translation” (TT, 11-16)
John Dryden, “On Translation” (TT, 17-31)
Friedrich Schleiermacher, “On the Different Methods of Translating” (TT, 36-54)
Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, “Translations” (TT, 60-63)
Walter Benjamin, “The Task of the Translator” (TT, 71-82)
**Further reading:
Ezra Pound, “Guido’s Relations” (TT, 83-92)
Walter Benjamin, “Translation – For and Against” and “The Knowledge that the First Material on Which the Mimetic Faculty Tested Itself”

WEEK 4 :: SEPTEMBER 28 :: TRANSLATION WORKSHOP
Analysis of published translations and discussion on translatability, fidelity, stylistic responsibility and decision-making; selections from workbook TBD
Gregory Rabassa, “No Two Snowflakes are Alike: Translation as Metaphor” (CT, 1-12)
William Weaver, “The Process of Translation” (117-124)

WEEK 5 :: OCTOBER 5 :: THE ETHICS OF TRANSLATION
Antoine Berman, “The Manifestation of Translation” (CR) and “Translation and the Trials of the Foreign” (CR)
George Steiner, “The Hermeneutic Motion” (CR)
Jacques Derrida, “Des Tours de Babel” (TT, 218-227) and “What Is A Relevant Translation” (CR)

WEEK 6 :: OCTOBER 12 :: TRANSLATION IN BORGES, BORGES ON TRANSLATION
**Further reading: Sergio Waisman, Borges and Translation: The Irreverence of the Periphery (2005)

WEEK 7 :: OCTOBER 19 :: TRANSLATION WORKSHOP
Short translations due and discussed in class

19-24 OCTOBER 2010 :: AMERICAN LITERARY TRANSLATORS ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING
Conference trip proposed for weekend of 22-24 October
Friday, 22 October 2010, 3 p.m.: coffee and talk with translator Suzanne Jill Levine after session 22C, Session 3, in Philadelphia

WEEK 8 :: OCTOBER 26 :: THE SUBVERSIVE SCRIBE
Suzanne Jill Levine, The Subversive Scribe: Translating Latin American Fiction
WEEK 9 :: NOVEMBER 2 :: THE POLITICS OF TRANSLATION
Gayatri Spivak, “The Politics of Translation” (CR)
Kwame Anthony Appiah, “Thick Translation” (CR)
revisions of short translations due

WEEK 10 :: NOVEMBER 9 :: CULTURE IN TRANSLATION
student-selected works in translation (TBD) that problematize how culture gets transposed
Dennis Tedlock, “Toward a Poetics of Polyphony and Translatability” (CR)
Henry Staten, “Tracking the ‘Native Informant’: Cultural Translation as the Horizon of Literary Translation” (CR)

WEEK 11 :: NOVEMBER 16 :: INVITED GUEST SPEAKER
invited guest speaker Anna Deeny

WEEK 12 :: NOVEMBER 23 :: TRANSLATION WORKSHOP
workshop projects-in-progress

WEEK 13 :: NOVEMBER 30 :: TRANSLATION STUDIES AT THE MILLENIUM
Emily Apter, *The Translation Zone*

WEEK 14 :: DECEMBER 7 :: CONCLUSION
conclusions to class
student presentations of final projects

Thursday, December 16 :: final projects due by 5 p.m.