

SCHOOL OF ARTS & SCIENCES PROSPECTUS SPRING 2022:

TRANSLATING CULTURES: WORKS IN AND ON TRANSLATION

GRMN 1120-401/ JWST 1120-401/ COML 1120-401

Tuesday-Thursday 1:45-3:15 PM

Professor Kathryn Hellerstein

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COURSE DESCRIPTION AND LEVEL:

Benjamin Franklin Seminar

“Languages are not strangers to one another,” writes the great critic and translator Walter Benjamin. Yet two people who speak different languages have a difficult time talking to one another, unless they both know a third, common language or can find someone who knows both their languages to translate what they want to say. Without translation, most of us would not be able to read the Bible or Homer, the foundations of Western culture. Americans wouldn't know much about the cultures of Europe, China, Africa, South America, and the Middle East. And people who live in or come from these places would not know much about American culture. Without translation, Americans would not know much about the diversity of cultures within America. The very fabric of our world depends upon translation between people, between cultures, between texts. With a diverse group of readings—autobiography, fiction, poetry, anthropology, and literary theory—this course will address some fundamental questions about translating language and culture. What does it mean to translate? How do we read a text in translation? What does it mean to live between two languages? Who is a translator? What are different kinds of literary and cultural translation? What are their principles and theories? Their assumptions and practices? Their effects on and implications for the individual and the society? In Spring 2022, the course will be enriched by several sessions on musical performance, the visual arts, and ethnography, as well, in order to expand the questions about translation beyond the media of language to those of sound and vision.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Attendance, Preparation and Participation: Come to class, and come well-prepared, with the readings printed out. Be ready to raise questions and tackle critical issues, demonstrating a thoughtful approach to the material, as well as to make periodic presentations.

Writing Assignments:

FORMAL ESSAYS: The course requires two formal essays. The first will be 3-5 pp., the second, 10-12 pp.

READING JOURNAL: Students will also keep a reading journal in the form of brief, structured responses (1 page each, posted both on Canvas in "Assignments") , due in class on the day of the assigned reading, as stated in the syllabus. Some of these will consist of a first paragraph summarizing and a second responding to the reading. Others will be creative. These reading journals may be helpful for working out in advance your ideas for the formal essays. They will be marked simply "complete," but will factor in cumulatively to the course grade.

TRANSLATION: Since the subject of this course is translation, students will also translate a very short text from another language. The translation will comprise a part of the second essay.

INFORMAL: I may assign in-class impromptu, informal writing exercises. I may also assign short exercises to be done on Canvas.

CLASS PRESENTATION: In the last week of class, all students will present their translations and discuss them briefly.

PERCENTAGES:

Class attendance, preparation and participation (10%)

Reading journals, as assigned, as well as possible pop-quizzes or other in-class exercises (20%)

Oral presentation (5%)

ONE short essay (3-5 pp.) (25%)

One final essay (10-12 pp.) (40%).

Class Structure for Spring 2023:

In Spring 2023, Penn continues with in-person instruction.

In class, we will build community through discussion, questions, and response among us all, frequent small-group activities in the classroom, and imaginative use of pens and paper, our Canvas site and other web resources.

Out-of-class, we will read and think about the texts assigned for that day and write the one-page reading journal (there are 19 in all). Collectively, we may occasionally decide to do some out of class small group work.

Guest speakers: We will have four special classes on translating beyond language (during our normal class meetings). **The tentative dates are:** _____ the musicians of the Daedalus Quartet; _____ two sessions at the Penn Museum of Archaeology; and _____ with Fine Arts professor and artist Sharka Hyland.

REQUIRED TEXTS: (in order of use) (NOTE: there may be some substitutions)

All books will be available for purchase at the Penn Book Store (36th and Walnut), or on Amazon. All will be on reserve in Rosengarten. All the items in the Photocopy Packet (P. P.) are online on our Canvas Site, including the Table of Contents, which lists the full bibliographical

information about each work. Please bring each day's reading from the Photocopy Packet (printed out, or on your screen).

- 1) Eva Hoffman, *Lost in Translation* (Penguin)
- 2) **Photocopy Packet (P. P.)—readings on Canvas Site, distributed in Modules**
- 3) John Felstiner, *Translating Neruda* (Stanford U P)
- 4) Ann Patchett, *Bel Canto* (Perennial, 2001)
- 5) Henry Roth, *Call It Sleep* (Farrar Straus)
- 6) Maxine Hong Kingston, *Woman Warrior* (Random House)
- 7) Dara Horn, *The World to Come* (W. W. Norton, 2006)

All students may consult with [Student Financial Services](#) to find out what support they are eligible to receive to cover course costs or other items that ensure their health, safety, and secure learning environment.