

ML 6501 (Fall 2026)

Theory and Foundations Seminar 3 credits.

Instructor Information

Instructor
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Office Hours
Wednesdays, 9 - 11 AM
Virtual/in-person, by appointment

General Information

Description

This advanced course in theory and methodology is designed to provide master's-level students of French, German, Japanese, and Spanish with a comprehensive understanding of the key theoretical frameworks and research methodologies relevant to language, intercultural, and textual/media studies. The course will explore foundational concepts in critical theory and equip students with the tools needed to analyze cultural production and conduct research in their respective language disciplines. The readings cover a range of influential concepts in contemporary theory and methodologies, from semiotics to structuralism to post-structuralism, to environmental humanities, translation studies, media studies, and gender, queer, and feminist studies. The Theory and Foundations seminar will be centered around in-depth discussion. In addition, students will undertake both creative production and analytic critique in order to gain a solid understanding of the works discussed in class and perform research in the humanities.

Pre- &/or Co-Requisites

Master's Level

Course Goals and Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students will:

- ✓ Gain an understanding of the contemporary contexts of critical theory
- ✓ Improve vocabulary for argumentation
- ✓ Improve their oral fluency in expressing opinions, interpreting works, and discussing current events, texts, and films
- ✓ Understand the role of theory in the intersections of cultural studies, literary criticism, current events, and political movements
- ✓ Have read excerpts of seminal texts in theory needed for graduate students in French, German, Japanese, and Spanish
- ✓ Research historical, social, political and cultural contexts around philosophical concepts and moments
- ✓ Improve their formal writing skills with focus on syntax, argumentative writing, and critical analysis
- ✓ Improve their formal presentational and public speaking skills by presenting on theoretical concepts
- ✓ Be able to apply theoretical methodology when interpreting and discussing a variety of multimedia "texts"

Course Requirements & Grading

Assignment	Date	Percentage of Final Grade
Attendance and participation		30%
In-class presentations (2)		20% (10% each)
Student postings		30%
Final assignment	12/10	20%

Description of Graded Components

Class participation: Students should come to class having read the assigned readings, and are expected to engage actively in class discussions. This is a course that will rely heavily on class discussion and participation is the largest grade component for the course, so students should keep that in mind when they attend class. If you have an unexcused absence, your participation for that day will be recorded as zero. However, while class attendance and participation for each day of class will be tracked, students will also be evaluated based on in-class attentiveness and engagement with the material *over the semester as a whole*.

Please also check “Attendance and Participation” policy in the syllabus.

Students are permitted one unexcused absence without penalty.

Presentations: Students will sign up to present on two of the readings over the course of the semester. This presentation does not need to be formal with a powerpoint, but it does require the student to give an overview of the assigned reading, offer some interpretations of some of the passages, provide counterarguments to the author, and lead classmates in discussion.

Student Postings: On Mondays, students should submit a **minimum 500 word** response on the assigned readings.

You are not required to adhere to strict citation styles for weekly postings, but **you should cite the readings (page number, author) or any other relevant source when quoting them in your posting**, unless the posting prompt specifies otherwise. Postings should have a clear argument or central thesis statement, supported by what you have gleaned from the readings or other relevant materials. Your writing should demonstrate your understanding of the week’s course materials, and clearly state your viewpoint on the arguments made in the readings; the postings should not be simple summarizations or descriptions of any of the course materials. **Postings that do not cite any readings/sources to support their argument, or do so in a perfunctory fashion that does not effectively engage with the readings, will be deducted points.**

Prompts will be given for each weekly posting, but students should also feel free to include discussions of other aspects of the media/reading materials in their postings as they see fit, as long as the main prompt questions are answered. Writing far over 500 words is also fine.

These weekly postings will be referenced in class for discussions. The instructor may call on students to elaborate on an argument they made or clarify their thoughts in their posting.

Final Project: TBD

Grading Scale

Your final grade will be assigned as a letter grade according to the following scale:

A 90-100%

B	80-89%
C	70-79%
D	60-69%
F	0-59%

Course Materials

Course Website and Other Classroom Management Tools

Announcements, course readings and other materials will be made available on Canvas.

Additional Materials/Resources

These books will be referenced frequently throughout the semester.

eds. Youna Kim, Joseph Nye, *The Korean Wave: Korean Media go Global*, New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2013. Available online through Georgia Tech library.

eds. Youngmin Choe, Kyung Hyun Kim, *The Korean Popular Culture Reader*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2013. Available online through Georgia Tech library.

Course Expectations & Guidelines

Content Warnings

Some of the audiovisual material assigned for the course will feature graphic, violent content. For students who wish to be better prepared for viewing these materials, content warnings will be provided and students are welcome to contact the instructor for further information. However, the viewing of these materials is a **requirement** and substitution will not be an option.

Academic Integrity

Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. For information on Georgia Tech's Academic Honor Code, please visit <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/policies/honor-code/> or <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/18/>.

Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarizing on a quiz, exam, or assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, who will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations.

Course Policy on Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

- AI-generated written work is prohibited in this course. AI tools include but are not limited to ChatGPT, Claude, Grammarly, etc. Written assignments should be based on the student's own absorption and understanding of the assigned materials and researched information, and therefore communicate the student's thoughts and responses with appropriate citation of sources. Writing that fails to cite its sources is plagiarism.
- Written assignments will be graded on substantiveness. While some students may want to use spell-check or grammar-check tools, mistakes in spelling or grammar will not result in any deductions. Poor writing - that is, lack of sound reasoning, illogical and un-fluid structure, vacuous and cliched language, and absence of substantive reflection - will be penalized.
- When researching information, students are expected to draw from academic, institutional, or journalistic sources for their writing; unreliable sources such as blogs, social media posts, or e-commerce websites are not considered valid sources for factual information, though they can be cited as *examples* of a phenomenon or trend. The student is also wholly responsible for any false citations,

AI-hallucinated facts, or incorrect information in the assignment, and the assignment will be graded accordingly for shoddy research.

- Students are required to disclose the instances of AI usage in the brainstorming or research process, clearly highlighting in the assignment how AI was utilized, along with an explanation of why the use of AI was necessary. The explanation does not count toward the final word count of the assignment.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, contact the Office of Disability Services at (404)894-2563 or <http://disabilityservices.gatech.edu/>, as soon as possible, to make an appointment to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Please also e-mail me as soon as possible in order to set up a time to discuss your learning needs.

Attendance and Participation

Students are expected to come to class fully prepared to participate in class activities. If students engage in activities that indicate their **inattention or non-participation** in the classroom activities (e.g. falling asleep, text-messaging, doing homework, reading irrelevant materials, etc), this will be reflected in their participation score. Students may use their electronic devices in class inasmuch as they use the devices to reference the readings and engage with the course material. Failure to comply with this will result in lowering their participation and performance grades. **Students are allowed to miss a class** without penalty once.

At the same time, the GT rules and regulations (<http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/4/>) will be honored, which allow the absences due to the participations in institute activities, attendance in funerals, participation in particular religious observation, jury duties, etc.

Students who miss class due to illness or emergency should notify the instructor when they can and then should file an [IAA form](#) with the Registrar's Office. The instructor will be notified by e-mail if the absence is approved.

Collaboration & Group Work

Students should complete all homework assignments and projects by themselves unless otherwise specified in the syllabus/by the instructor.

Extensions, Late Assignments, & Re-Scheduled/Missed Exams

Late assignments will be downgraded a letter grade for every day they are late. If you have major conflicts or extenuating circumstances, **please contact the instructor at least 24 hours in advance** to request an extension. Again, students who have an illness or an emergency should notify the instructor when they can and then should file an [IAA form](#) with the Registrar's Office. Lateness due to illness/emergency will not be penalized.

Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement

At Georgia Tech we believe that it is important to strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgement, and responsibility between faculty members and the student body. See <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/22/> for an articulation of some basic expectation that you can have of me and that I have of you. In the end, simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and cordial interactions will help build the environment we seek. Therefore, I encourage you to remain committed to the ideals of Georgia Tech while in this class.

Student Use of Mobile Devices in the Classroom

Electronic devices will be allowed to reference readings and take notes during discussion if students prefer not to print. Laptops must be closed during presentations and video screenings.

Campus Resources for Students

Georgia Tech offers many resources for students in need including counseling services, personalized research assistance, tutoring, and academic support. Please check out http://ctl.gatech.edu/sites/default/files/documents/campus_resources_students.pdf for more details, and feel free to ask me if you need any assistance in finding these resources.

Course Schedule

Date	Topic	Reading, Notes, due dates, and more
8/25	Week 1: Introductions Read syllabus, Q&A	No reading
8/27	Week 1: Critical Theory	Posting: Find 1-2 articles that speak to you on the topic of “theory and foundations” - the article(s) should come from an academic journal or a literary magazine. Read: Judith Butler “What is Critique?” p. 1-3 Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/critical-theory/
9/1 9/3	Week 2: Futurity and Afrofuturism	Read: <i>Afrotopia</i> Introduction-p. 90
9/8 9/10	Week 3: Nations, Nationalism, Communication	Read: Mary Louise Pratt, “Arts of the Contact Zone” Erika Harris, <i>Nationalism: Theories and Cases</i> , chapter 1 Andrew Higson, “The Concept of National Cinema”
9/15 9/17	Week 4: Semiotics and Structuralism	Read: Ferdinand de Saussure, <i>Course in General Linguistics</i> Claude Levi-Strauss, <i>Structural Anthropology</i>
9/22 9/24	Week 5: Poststructuralism	Read: Gilles Deleuze, <i>Difference and Repetition</i> Edouard Glissant <i>Poetics of Relation</i>
9/29 10/1	Week 6: Mass Culture	Read: Theodore W. Adorno, Max Horkheimer “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception,” <i>Dialectic of Enlightenment</i>
10/6	Fall Break - no class	Read: Iwabuchi Koichi, <i>Recentering Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism</i> , Duke University Press, 2002: 23-50
10/8	Week 7: Frameworks for Globalism	
10/13 10/15	Week 8: Genealogical Method	Read: Michel Foucault, <i>The Order of Things</i>

Date	Topic	Reading, Notes, due dates, and more
10/20	Week 9: Media Frameworks	Read: Susan Sontag, <i>Regarding the Pain of Others</i>
10/22		Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" Mary Ann Doane, "The Indexical and the Concept of Medium Specificity"
10/27	Week 10: Bodies and Body Genres	Read: Julia Kristeva, <i>The Power of Horror</i>
10/29		Linda Williams, <i>Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the 'Frenzy of the Visible'</i>
11/3	Week 11: Reception Theory	Read: Roland Barthes "The Death of the Author"
11/5		+ Wolfgang Iser, <i>The Act of Reading</i>
11/10	Week 12: Transmedia, Fandom, and Narrative Consumption	Read: Henry Jenkins, <i>Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture</i> . New York: Routledge, 2013.
11/12		Otsuka Eiji, "World and Variation: The Reproduction and Consumption of Narrative"
11/17	Week 13: Postcolonialism, Decolonization	Read: China Achebe, "Racism in Conrad's Heart of Darkness"
11/19		Edward Said, <i>Orientalism</i> Edward Said, <i>Culture and Imperialism</i>
11/24	Week 14: Platform and Media, Platform as Media	Read: Marshall McLuhan, <i>Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man</i> , New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964.
11/26	Thanksgiving Break - no class	
12/1	Week 15: Environmental Humanities	Read: Travis Holloway, <i>How to Live at the End of the World: Theory, Art, and Politics for the Anthropocene</i>
12/3		Catherine E. Walsh, Walter D. Mignolo <i>On Decoloniality</i> Achille Mbembe <i>Brutalism</i>
12/8	Week 16: Post-Human	Read: Donna Haraway, <i>A Cyborg Manifesto</i> Caroline Levine, <i>The Activist Humanist</i>
12/15	Final Project due	
12/22	Grades available	