

# Impossible Economies: Love and Prostitution

German 16:470:672  
CompLit 16:195:516:01  
Index #15656

Wednesdays, 4:30-7:10pm (AB 4050)

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Office Hours: Mondays, 11:30am-1:30pm

This seminar explores the figurations, rhetoric, and economies of trading sex in a variety of literary master texts and films: If it is true that the figure of the prostitute serves as a mere projection or screen for deviant fantasies in literature and film, what is the impact of such writing over an exchanged body? In what way does the love of the “prostitute” inform Russian Realism, French Symbolism, or German Expressionism? How can we think the gift of/in prostitution? What is really being exchanged in the sporadic encounter with a sex worker? What is the relation between love, sex trade, and the gift? Literary participants in this investigation will be the Marquis de Sade, Fyodor M. Dostoevsky, Charles Baudelaire, Frank Wedekind, Robert Musil, Elfriede Jelinek, Werner Schwab, and Dennis Cooper. Filmic contributions by Michael Glawogger, Luis Buñuel, and Ulrich Seidl; music by Giuseppe Verdi and Alban Berg. Discussions will be framed and guided by Theodor W. Adorno/Max Horkheimer, Georges Bataille, Walter Benjamin, Jacques Derrida, Sigmund Freud, Luce Irigaray, Jacques Lacan, Jean-François Lyotard, Catharine MacKinnon, and Karl Marx.

Taught in English.

**Course Requirements:** 1 formal presentation (30%), 1 peer review (20%), 1 final research paper (50%).

**Learning Goals:** (1) Students will demonstrate familiarity with a variety of world literatures as well as methods of studying literature and culture across national and linguistic boundaries and evaluate the nature, function and value of literature from a global perspective. (2) Students will analyze a specific body of research and write a clear and well-developed paper or project about a topic related to more than one literary and cultural tradition.

**Required Books** (all other readings will be uploaded on Sakai):

1. Jacques Derrida, *Given Time I: Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (U of Chicago P, 1994) [ISBN-13: 978-0226143149]
2. Fyodor M. Dostoevsky, *Notes from the Underground*, trans. Richard Pevear (Vintage Classics, 1993) [ISBN-13: 978-0679734529]
3. Robert Musil, *The Confusions of Young Törless*, trans. Mike Mitchell (Oxford World Classics, 2014) [ISBN-13: 978-0199669400]
4. Elfriede Jelinek, *The Piano Teacher*, trans. Joachim Neugroschel (Grove Press, 2009) [ISBN-13: 978-0802144614]
5. Jean-François Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, trans. Iain Hamilton Grant (Continuum Impacts, 2004) [ISBN-13: 978-0826477002]
6. Marquis de Sade, *The 120 Days of Sodom*, trans. Will McMoran (Penguin Classics, 2016) [ISBN-13: 978-0141394343]
7. Frank Wedekind, *Mine Haha, or On the Bodily Education of Young Girls*, trans. Philip Ward (Applause Books, 2004) [ISBN-13: 978-1843914556] (Sakai)

### **Tentative Seminar Schedule**

Week 1 (Jan 23): Introduction: The Gift of the Prostitute; excerpts: *Whore's Glory* (Glawogger, 2011)

#### **The Libertine Deal: Universal Prostitution**

Week 2 (Jan 30): de Sade, *The 120 Days of Sodom* (1785), part I; Adorno/Horkheimer: "Juliette or Enlightenment and Morality" (*Dialectics of Enlightenment*, pp. 63-93).

#### **Trade/Marriage**

Week 3 (Feb 6) Verdi, *La Traviata* (1852); Marx, "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts"; Lyotard, "Trade" (*Libidinal Economy*, pp. 156-201).

#### **Holy Whore**

Week 4 (Feb 13): Dostoevsky, *Notes from the Underground* (1864). Derrida, "To Forgive: The Unforgivable and the Imprescriptible."

### The Gift of the Prostitute

Week 5 (Feb 20): Derrida, *Given Time I: Counterfeit Money* (pp. 1-70).

Week 6 (Feb 28): Derrida, *Given Time I: Counterfeit Money* (pp. 71-172).

### Sex Education

Week 7 (March 6): Wedekind, "Mine Haha, or On the Bodily Education of Young Girls" (1903); Freud, "A Special Type of Object Choice Made By Men," and "On Narcissism."

(March 13): SPRING RECESS

Week 8 (March 20): Musil, "The Confusions of Young Törless" (1906); Lacan, "The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious, or Reason since Freud".

### Bachelor Machines: Production of Desire (Surrealism)

Week 9 (March 27): FILMS: *Doctor Mabuse, The Gambler* (Lang, 1922) and *The Joyless Street* (Pabst, 1925). Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* (Convolute O: "Prostitution, Gambling"); "Metaphysics of Youth," "Beggars and Whores".

Week 10 (April 3): FILM: *Belle du Jour* (Buñuel, 1967); Bataille, *Erotism* (Introduction, pp. 11-28, and "Prostitution," pp. 129-139).

Week 11 (April 10): Benjamin, "Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia" (1929); Rivière, "Womanliness as a Masquerade" (1929).

### Cultures of Waste: Pimp and Prostitute

Week 12 (April 17): Jelinek, *The Piano Teacher* (1975) and *About Animals* (2007); Irigaray, *The Sex Which Is Not One* ("Women on the Market," pp. 170-191, and "Commodities Among Themselves," pp. 192-197).

Week 13 (April 24): Werner Schwab, "The Round of Pleasure" (Der reizende Reigen nach dem Reigen des reizenden Herrn Arthur Schnitzler, 1996) (<https://vimeo.com/60685009>); Catharine MacKinnon, *Only Words* (1993).

Week 14 (May 1): *Import/Export* (Seidl, 2007); Dennis Cooper, *Wrong* (1992).