Rhetoric of the Novel

Seminar Leader: James Harker
Times: Wednesday 9:00 – 10:30
Friday 13:30 – 15:00
Location: P 24, Room U15
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Course Description
A few generations ago, rhetoric was primarily the study of how argumentative texts work. Literary theory focused mostly on poetry and the epic. But in the twentieth century, “rhetorical criticism” was expanded to include other kinds of text, including literary ones. Meanwhile, narrative forms such as the folktale and the novel became more significant objects of literary-critical interest. In this course, we will consider how these paths merged. To get there, we will survey critical innovations in literary and narrative theory from New Criticism to the present, while we attend to the ways in which rhetoric informs these methodologies. Thus we will consider the “narrative of rhetoric” in addition to the “rhetoric of narrative”. Our reading of narrative theory will be informed by analysis of narratives in several styles, but we will focus on the most influential form of narrative literature in the modern era: the novel. We will use our emerging rhetorical and critical vocabularies to describe the novel’s formal developments, from its eighteenth-century origins to its dominant nineteenth-century form, “realism”, as well as modernist and postmodernist practices. Novels will include Madame Bovary, Flaubert; The Good Soldier, Ford; Jealousy, Robbe-Grillet, and Austerlitz, Sebald.

Schedule of Classes

Week 1

Wed, Sept 4: Introduction and key terms: rhetoric, narrative, fiction, novel

Fri, Sept 6: Classical Rhetoric in theory and practice
Read: excerpt of Aristotle’s Rhetoric (Reader)

Week 2

Wed, Sept 11: Rhetoric and Poetics
Read: excerpt of Aristotle’s Poetics (Reader)

Fri, Sept 13: From Classical Rhetoric to Modern Literature
Read: Barthes’ “The Old Rhetoric” (Reader)
Week 3

Wed, Sept 18: The New Rhetoric and New Criticism
Read: Wimsatt and Beardsley’s “The Intentional Fallacy” and “The Affective Fallacy” (Reader)

Fri, Sept 20: The Rise of the Novel
Read: excerpt of Watt’s *The Rise of the Novel* (Reader)

Week 4

Wed, Sept 25: A Case Study in Realism
Read: Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary*, Part 1 (pages 1-58) and Part 2, chapters 1-9 (pages 61-144)

Fri, Sept 27: Read: Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary*, Part 2, chapters 10-15 (pages 144-202)

Week 5

Wed, Oct 2: Read: Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary*, Part 3 (pages 205-311)

Fri, Oct 4: The Meaning of Detail
Read: Barthes’ “The Reality Effect” (Reader)
Due: Essay 1 (1000-1500 words)

Fall Break

Week 6

Wed, Oct 16: Two Theories of the Novel
Read: James’s Preface to “Portrait of a Lady” (Reader) and Chapters 1-4 of Forster’s *Aspects of the Novel*

Fri, Oct 18: Read: Chapters 5-8 of Forster’s *Aspects of the Novel*

Week 7

Wed, Oct 23: Impressionism and Modernism
Read: Ford’s *The Good Soldier*, Parts 1 and 2 (pages 9-72)

Week 8


Fri, Nov 1: Literary Form and Ideology
             Read: Lukács’s “The Ideology of Modernism” (Reader)

Week 9

Wed, Nov 6: The New Novel
             Read: Robbe-Grillet’s *Jealousy*, pages 9-70 (Reader)

Fri, Nov 8: Read: Robbe-Grillet’s *Jealousy*, pages 70-103 (Reader)

Week 10

Wed, Nov 13: The Return to Rhetoric in the Novel
              Read: Booth’s *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, chapters 1-2 (Reader)

Fri, Nov 15: Read: Booth’s *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, chapters 6 (Reader)

Week 11

Wed, Nov 20: In Class Essay Exercise

Fri, Nov 22: The “Post-Modern” Novel
             Read: Sebald’s *Austerlitz*, pages 3-117

Week 12

Wed, Nov 27: Read: *Austerlitz*, pages 117-227

Fri, Nov 29: Discussion of *Austerlitz* continued
             Due: Essay 2 (1500-2000 words)

Week 13

Wed, Dec 4: Read: *Austerlitz*, pages 227-298

Fri, Dec 6: Cognition and Narration
             Read: Fludernik’s “Natural Narratology and Cognitive Parameters”
**Week 14**

*Wed, Dec 11:*  Reconsidering Metaphor  
Read: Turner’s “Double-scope Stories” (Reader)

*Fri, Dec 13:*  Conclusion and Short Presentations

**Week 15**

Completion Week  
Final Paper Due (2500-3000 words) December 16