

Adaptation: Form, Politics, Methods

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Office Hours: 1pm-2pm, Tue/Fri

Tutorial Description:

As novels become films, comic books blossom into Broadway musicals, and canonical works generate armies of parodies, critiques, and feminist retellings, what do we make of the adaptation? What kind of productions do we label as adaptations, and what criteria do we use to judge them? How do new technologies affect the way we tell old stories, and why do we restage the same stories over and over again? (Why do we need so many Elizabeths to confront so many Darcies, or so many Alices to fall down their rabbit holes?) Is adaptation a parasitic art form, or does it constitute a changing form of historical, political, or aesthetic consciousness?

This tutorial will begin to answer these questions as we observe how stories jump across media, genres, historical periods, and cultural contexts. In three units, we will follow three basic lines of inquiry, which allowing us to investigate the theme of “adaptation” - the artifact, the process, and the metaphor – from a variety of critical lenses:

- How does the process of adaptation change old forms and genres? How do new artists, emerging media, and changing distribution methods refashion existing stories?
- How does the process of adaptation shape our relationship to canonical art? How does adaptation create canon, and how does the refashioning of old stories engage with our own literary and political history?
- How does cross-cultural adaptation rewrite narrative? How do we translate narratives, characters, and aesthetics across linguistic and cultural borders? How does our negotiation with cross-cultural artifacts reflect our own national narratives?

Tutorial Goals

To introduce Adaptation Theory as a growing cultural field and lens through which to consider the portability of stories across time, medium, and space. You will be able to:

- Identify different scholarly methods and place them in dialogue with texts, other methods, and your own thoughts
- Close-read comparatively across different artistic media, utilizing appropriate terminology and concepts for each analytical discipline
- Articulate how the historical, cultural, and political contexts of adaptations impact their formal presentation and reception

General Goals

To introduce the discipline and practice of English literary studies at an upper-division level, & to write 20-25pp research paper in preparation for an honors thesis. You will be able to:

- Choose a topic and ask productive research questions

- Develop a critical bibliography around research questions, incorporating diverse methods and viewpoints
- Put secondary criticism in conversation with your own ideas and with other criticism
- Hone, edit, and otherwise *adapt* existing drafts in individual and collaborative settings
- Write with greater clarity and precision

Assignments:

Short Essay (Week 4, 10%): A 5-7 page paper, an extended close reading of a primary text; this will be followed by an individual student conference to discuss the paper

Prospectus & Annotated Bibliography (Week 6, 15%): two page prospectus of the project before they begin working on it. An annotated bibliography of 8-10 sources should accompany the prospectus. The bibliography should reproduce in a few sentences the main argument of the work you intend to make use of. It should also include, in a few sentences, how you plan on engaging with the thesis of the work you have summarized.

Final Paper (Reading Period, 45%): 18-25 page paper on a major literary work *not* read in this class; please incorporate at least three critical articles and consider, as you plan your draft, more than one methodological perspective.

Conference Presentation (ungraded but required): a 5-minute paper on their research

Participation & Preparation (20%): A small seminar like this one thrives only when you have read and thought about the texts – be they novels or Broadway cast recordings - before we've met.

Minor Assignments:

- Response Papers (2): Twice during the semester, students will compose one-page mini essays responding to that week's primary and secondary sources, which will be used as discussion starters. Students will choose the weeks of their response papers in advance. Due by email by 5pm the evening before seminar.

Required Texts:

Novels/Plays/Memoirs/Criticism:

Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* (Mariner 2007)

J.M. Coetzee, *Foe* (Penguin 1988)

Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (Norton 2016)

Dashiell Hammett, *The Maltese Falcon* (Vintage 1992)

Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (Routledge 2006)

Piper Kerman, *Orange is the New Black: My Year in a Women's Prison*

Suzan-Lori Parks, *The Red Letter Plays* (TCG 2001)

Jeanine Tesori and Lisa Kron, *Fun Home* (libretto) (Samuel French 2015)

***William Shakespeare, play TBD

Album:

Jeanine Tesori and Lisa Kron, *Fun Home: A New Broadway Musical* (P.S.Classics 2015)

Films/TV:

Blow Up (1966)

Chimes at Midnight (1965)

Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker's Apocalypse (1991)

The Magnificent Seven (1960)

The Maltese Falcon (1941)

Matthew Bourne's Swan Lake (2012)

Orange is the New Black (2013 -)

Seven Samurai (1954)

Film Screenings: We will work out a regular schedule of screenings during Week 1, unless students reach a consensus that they prefer to buy/rent/stream at their convenience

Critical Readings:

Film and Television Studies:

- Bela Belasz, *Theory of the Film* (London: Dobson 1952)
- Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed* (Harvard University Press 1979)

Historical Materialism:

- Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media* (Benknop 2008)

Adaptation Theory:

- Kamilla Elliot, *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate* (Cambridge University Press 2003)
- Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (Routledge 2006)
- Thomas Leitch, "Twelve Fallacies in Contemporary Adaptation Theory," *Criticism* 45.2 (Spring 2003)

Queer Theory:

- José Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (NYU Press 2009)
(NB: Would also fit under the category "Performance Studies")

Theater/Performance Studies:

- Brian Eugenio Herrera, *Latin Numbers: Playing Latino in Twentieth-Century U.S. Popular Performance* (University of Michigan 2015)
- Margherita Laera, *Theatre and Adaptation: Return, Rewrite, Repeat* (Bloomsbury 2014)
- Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (Routledge 1993)

History/Cultural Studies:

- Kenneth Davis, *Two-Bit Culture: The Paperbacking of America* (Houghton Mifflin 1984)
- Michael Dobson, *The Making of the National Poet: Shakespeare, Adaptation, and Authorship 1660-1769* (Clarendon 1995)

Postcolonial Theory/Criticism:

- Homi Bhabha, *Nation and Narration* (Routledge 1990)
- Elizabeth Kraft, "The Revaluation of Literary Character: The Case of Crusoe," *South Atlantic Review* 72.4 (Fall 2007)

Race/Ethnicity/Diaspora Studies:

- Edwidge Danticat, *Create Dangerously* (Vintage 2008)

Theory of the Novel:

- Mikhail Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," *The Dialogic Imagination* (University of Texas 1982)

Translation Theory

- Naoki Sakai, *Translation and Subjectivity* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota 2008)

Schedule

NB: ** - Asterisks mark texts available online through Project Muse, Jstor, or other Harvard Library Resources. One asterisk a text available through Project Muse, and two denotes a text available online through a quick search of Hollis.

+ - Pluses marks texts I will make available on the course website.

Unit 1: Adaptation and Form

Week 1 Adaptation and Technology: Novel, Paperback, Film

Response Paper Sign Ups

Reading: Dashiell Hammett, *The Maltese Falcon*

Film: John Huston, *The Maltese Falcon* (1941)

Reading: Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" +

Reading: Thomas Leitch, "Twelve Fallacies in Contemporary Adaptation Theory"**

In-Class: ppt. slides of Hammett novel covers

Week 2: Adaptation as Process

Reading: Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*

Documentary: Fax Bahr and George Hickenlooper, *Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker's Apocalypse* (1991)

Reading: Linda Hutcheon, Chapter 1 and Chapter 3, *A Theory of Adaptation*

Reading: Bela Belazs, from *Theory of the Film*+

In Class: Excerpt from Jessica Hagedorn, *Dream Jungle* +

Junior Tutorial Workshop - Mandatory

Week 3: Alison Bechdel and the Paradoxes of Genre

Reading: Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*

Libretto: Jeanine Tesori and Lisa Kron, *Fun Home*

Album: *Fun Home (A New Broadway Musical)*

Reading: Kamilla Elliot, "Analogy and Category" from *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate* +

Reading: Mikhail Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel" +

Schedule Individual Paper Conferences for Next Week

Week 4: Streaming, Seriality, and Fictionalization

5-6 Page Short Paper Due Friday, 5pm

Reading: Piper Kerman, *Orange is the New Black: My Year in a Women's Prison*

Television: Jenji Kohan, *Orange is the New Black*, Season 1-2 ("I Wasn't Ready,"

"Fucksgiving," "Low Self Esteem City," "We Have Manners, We're Polite")

Reading: Stanley Cavell, from *The World Viewed*+

Assignment: Bring a peer-reviewed academic article related to any of the texts or themes from this unit; summarize its argument in 1-3 sentences and identify its critical method.

Junior Tutorial Workshop – Mandatory

Unit 2: Adaptation and Canon

Week 5: Adaptation and the Construction of National Canon

Individual Paper Conferences

Reading: Michael Dobson, “Romance and Revision” and “Nationalizing the Corpus”
from *Shakespeare: The Making of a National Poet* **

Film: *Chimes at Midnight* (1965)

Film: Clips from *Henry V* (1944), *Henry V* (1989), *My Own Private Idaho* (1991)

Reading: William Shakespeare, *Henry IV Part I*

Week 6: Library Visit

Prospectus and Annotated Bibliography Due

In-Class Discussion of Paper Topics

Junior Tutorial Workshop – Mandatory

Week 7: Adaptation as Literary Revaluation

Reading: J.M. Coetzee, *Foe*

Reading: Excerpts from Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*

Reading: Derek Walcott, “The Castaway”+

Elizabeth Kraft, “The Revaluation of Literary Character: The Case of Crusoe” **

Week 8: Adaptation as Historical Intervention

Reading: Suzan Lori-Parks, *The Red Letter Plays* (both plays and “The Author’s Elements of Style”)

Reading: Margherita Laera, Introduction, *Theatre and Adaptation: Return, Rewrite, Repeat* +

Reading: Peggy Phelan, “The Ontology of Performance” from *Unmarked* +

Schedule a meeting with Department Writing Fellow

Week 9: Queering as Adaptation

Film: *Matthew Bourne’s Swan Lake* (originally produced 1995, DVD 2012)

Film: Clips from Nureyev’s *Swan Lake*, Les Ballet Trockadero de Monte Carlo’s *Swan Lake*, *Rupaul’s Drag Race* episode “Black Swan: Why It Gotta Be Black?”

Reading: José Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, Introduction and Chapter 1*

Unit 3: Cross-Cultural Adaptation

Week 10: Translation as Adaptation

Reading: Julio Cortázar, “Blow Up” / “Las Babas del Diablo” **

Film: *Blow Up* (1966)

Reading: Walter Benjamin, “The Task of Translator” +

Reading: Naoki Sakai, Introduction, *Translation and Subjectivity* +

Week 11: In Class Draft Workshop

Reading: Edwidge Danticat, "Create Dangerously"

15-20 page Draft Due

Week 12: Adaptation and the Paradoxes of Nation

Film: Akira Kurosawa, *Seven Samurai* (1954)

Film: John Sturges, *The Magnificent Seven* (1960)

Reading: Homi Bhabha, Introduction to *Nation and Narration* +

Week 13: Multiculturalism, Pedagogy, and Global Citizenship in Children's Literature

Verna Aardema, *Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears: A West African Tale*

Tomie dePaola, *Adelita: A Mexican Cinderella Story*

Susan Lowell and Jim Harris, *The Three Little Javelinas*

Gerald McDermott, *Arrow to the Sun: A Pueblo Indian Tale*

Ed Young, *Lon Po Po: A Red Riding Hood Story from China*

- **NB:** Since we're reading children's picture books, which will take only a few minutes total to read, I will keep a set of copies "on reserve" in Child Library

Paper due after Week 13, followed by Junior Tutorial Conference.

Academic Honesty: Plagiarism is the use of another person's ideas or writing without giving them proper credit. Consequences of plagiarism can range from failure on the paper to dismissal from the course to even more serious actions. You are responsible for familiarizing yourself with Harvard FAS's Honor Code: "*Members of the Harvard College community commit themselves to producing academic work of integrity – that is, work that adheres to the scholarly and intellectual standards of accurate attribution of sources, appropriate collection and use of data, and transparent acknowledgement of the contribution of others to their ideas, discoveries, interpretations, and conclusions. Cheating on exams or problem sets, plagiarizing or misrepresenting the ideas or language of someone else as one's own, falsifying data, or any other instance of academic dishonesty violates the standards of our community, as well as the standards of the wider world of learning and affairs.*"

Collaboration: You are absolutely encouraged to talk with other students about the course and its readings, and to read each others' work. In individual assignments (which may include midterm or term papers, short writing assignments, homework or reading questions and responses, or take-home exams), academic collaboration and external sources should be always cited.

Attendance: Your attendance in tutorial is necessary to your own success as well as to the success of the class as a whole; so is your attendance in Junior Tutorial General Meetings and at other required events. Each student is allowed one unexcused absence. Missing more than one class will decrease your participation grade, and excessive absence could result in

failing the course. Also, being late really disrupts the work we're doing together: 2 lates = 1 absence. If you have attenuating circumstances, please communicate with me in a timely manner so that we can discuss how to deal with it.

Due Dates & Late Grades: Unless otherwise specified, assignments are due by 11:59pm on the date listed in the schedule. Late assignments will be docked 1/3 letter grade per day, except for the final paper, which must be turned in before the due date. Students failing to turn in a final paper, or turning it in late without an official excuse, will fail the tutorial. If, well in advance of an assignment, you expect you will need an extension, please talk with me.

Email: I'll use our course listserv to distribute important info throughout the semester—from emailing you handouts to adjusting assignments and deadlines. You are responsible for checking your email on a daily basis. If you have a question that you need to ask me by email, be sure to give me at least 24 hours, or you may not get a response until it's too late. Also, please let me know if you'd like to use a non-Harvard email address.

Accommodations for students with disabilities: *“Students needing academic adjustments or accommodations because of a documented disability must present their Faculty Letter from the [Accessible Education Office](#) (AEO) and speak with the professor by the end of the second week of the term, (). Failure to do so may result in the Course Head's inability to respond in a timely manner. All discussions will remain confidential, although Faculty are invited to contact AEO to discuss appropriate implementation.”*