

N.B.: This course currently exists. It is a required course for the World Lit. major (proposed).

Sample Syllabus
Comparative Studies 373
Problems in Literary and Cultural Translation

Nina Berman and Dick Davis

This course familiarizes students with problems inherent to translating literatures and cultures. We will read a range of theoretical texts from the field of translation studies and identify key issues, such as the question of equivalence and/or incommensurability of different languages. The notion that translation always "rewrites" a text, the fact that translations are composed for specific audiences, the role of editors and publishing houses, and the most recent phenomenon of creating and translating texts and media for global audiences are among the issues discussed in this course. In addition, we will consider select situations where translation is crucial to cross-cultural communication.

The theoretical part of the course will be accompanied by a practical part, that is, every student will be asked to produce translations into English from a foreign language he or she is familiar with. These translations will then be discussed in class. The emphasis here will be on identifying problems that occur in the process of translating, and we will connect the classroom translations to central aspects of the theory discussed. Basic knowledge of a foreign language (two quarters minimum or equivalent) is sufficient to participate in this task. In order to illustrate this fact we would like to provide an example: If a German native speaker who is new to the US context hears an American ask the question, "How are you?", he or she will respond with an elaborate answer. The German will understand the English phrase literally and will assume that it means the same as the German phrase and direct translation "Wie geht es dir?" (which, in the German context, would be asked to elicit a detailed answer). The German will not translate the "How are you?" into "Hallo" which would be the accurate translation. As this example shows, problems of translation begin on such basic levels.

Texts:

Andre Lefevere, Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literary Fame

Andre Lefevere, Susan Bassnett, Constructing Cultures: Essays on Literary Translation

Umberto Eco, Experiences in Translation

(Multi)media Translation: Concepts, Practices, and Research, Gambier & Gottlieb, eds.

Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description"

George Steiner, After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation

Frances Karttunen, Between Worlds: Interpreters, Guides and Survivors

Susan Berk-Seligson, The bilingual courtroom: Court interpreters in the judicial process: with a new chapter

In addition, select examples from fiction, non-fiction, and film will serve to illuminate central problems of translations (such as mistranslations or miscommunications).

Grading:

Participation (20%), 2 translations (one draft, one final version; 40%), one term paper (either an annotated translation, an analysis of a translation, or a discussion of a translation related theoretical aspect; 40%)

Prerequisite: two quarters of foreign language study or equivalent

All students are responsible for reading, understanding, and following university rules regarding cheating and plagiarism, which will be strictly enforced (see Faculty Rule 3335-31-02 on Academic Misconduct in the Ohio State University Student Handbook).

Any students who feel that they may be academically disadvantaged due to the impact of a documented disability should contact the instructor(s) and the Office of Disability Services in Room 150 Pomerene Hall (292-3307) to arrange accommodations.

Weekly syllabus

Week One

- Introduction
- Class will compare different translations of the same narrative text into English (to be determined)

Week Two

- Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description" (30 pp)
- Andre Lefevere, Susan Bassnett, "Where are we in Translation Studies?" (11 pp)

Week Three

- Umberto Eco, Experiences in Translation
 1. "Translating and Being Translated" (6 pp)
 2. "Translation and Interpretation" (9 pp)
- Andre Lefevere, "The system: poetics"; "Translation: the categories"; "Translation: ideology" (47 pp)

Week Four

- Andre Lefevere, "Translation: Universe of Discourse": "Translation: language" (24 pp)
- Andre Lefevere, "Anthology," "Criticism," "Editing" (36 pp)
- student classroom presentations begin

Week Five

- excerpts from George Steiner, After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation (40 pp)
- student presentations continue

Week Six

- Susan Bassnett, "Transplanting the Seed: Poetry and Translation" (19 pp)
- Comparing different translations of the same poem into English (to be determined)
- student presentations continue

Week Seven

- Susan Bassnett, "Still Trapped in the Labyrinth: Further Reflections on Translation and Theatre" (19 pp)
- Andre Lefevere, "Acculturating Bertolt Brecht" (14 pp)
- student presentations continue

Week Eight

- selections from (Multi)media Translation: Concepts, Practices, and Research, Gambier & Gottlieb, eds. (30 pp)
- excerpts from Susan Berk-Seligson, The bilingual courtroom: Court interpreters in the judicial process (40 pp)
- student presentations continue

Week Nine

- Frances Karttunen, Between Worlds: Interpreters, Guides and Survivors (excerpts, 80 pp)
- student presentations continue

Week Ten

- student presentations conclude
- final discussion