

## Graduate Seminar: Language and Phenomenology

Rebecca Wiseman

Recent scholarly interest in cognitive theory as a mode of critical inquiry has sparked renewed attention to questions about the status of private mental experience and the relationship between language and thought. In this seminar, we will examine the ways in which subjectivity derives from and is limited by language and by the cultural forces embedded in and expressed by it. We will address a set of related questions: How does language create identity? Is thought without language possible? Is knowledge of one's own existence predicated upon a self-conscious reflection upon, and within, language? By investigating treatments of language in the fields of linguistics, sociology, philosophy, psychology, and literary criticism, we will explore together how language mediates subjectivity – and how language is complicit in maintaining structures of political, cultural, and psychological power.

### Required Texts

Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course on General Linguistics*

Sigmund Freud, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*

Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*

Jacques Lacan, *The Language of the Self*

Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*

Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*

Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*

Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked*

### Assignments

***In-Class Presentation.*** You will be responsible for giving one 20-minute presentation on a date of your choosing. In your presentation, you should present an argument based on the assigned reading and raise questions for discussion.

***Final Paper.*** The final paper, 20-25 pages in length, will require you to perform a reading of a literary work through the lens of one of the assigned theoretical texts. You will have the opportunity to share preliminary paper thoughts with the class and receive feedback on your work during the final weeks of the term.