

Derrida – PHIL 629-01
SP 2020

M 12:00-02:40
Room 324 College Hall

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This is a course on Jacques Derrida's theory of language, meaning, and signifiers, concentrating on his great early works of the 1960's and 1970's. Derrida has had an enormous influence on the philosophy of language, on political philosophy, and on the interpretation of the history of metaphysics. The issues around language and signifiers are connected to Derrida's theories about writing, difference, presence, and deconstruction. His invention of "deconstruction" has often been misunderstood, but it is extremely interesting, important, and useful for anyone interested in meaning. Derrida's writing is difficult, and his ideas are highly controversial, but studying Derrida is essential for anyone who wants to understand and do philosophy in a contemporary way. In addition to reading his great book *Of Grammatology*, we will read a number of his essays, including "Differance", "Signature Event Context", "The Pit and the Pyramid", as well as a chapter from *Speech and Phenomena*. Since Derrida almost always develops his own ideas by means of a reading of other authors, we will be considering his ideas in relation to those of Husserl, Hegel, Rousseau, Saussure, Austin, and many other theorists. We will study Derrida's texts closely (sympathetically as well as critically), and consider his work in relation to philosophy, linguistics, and semiotics (the theory of signs). The most important thing that students will take from this course is a range of options for thinking about how "signifiers" work.

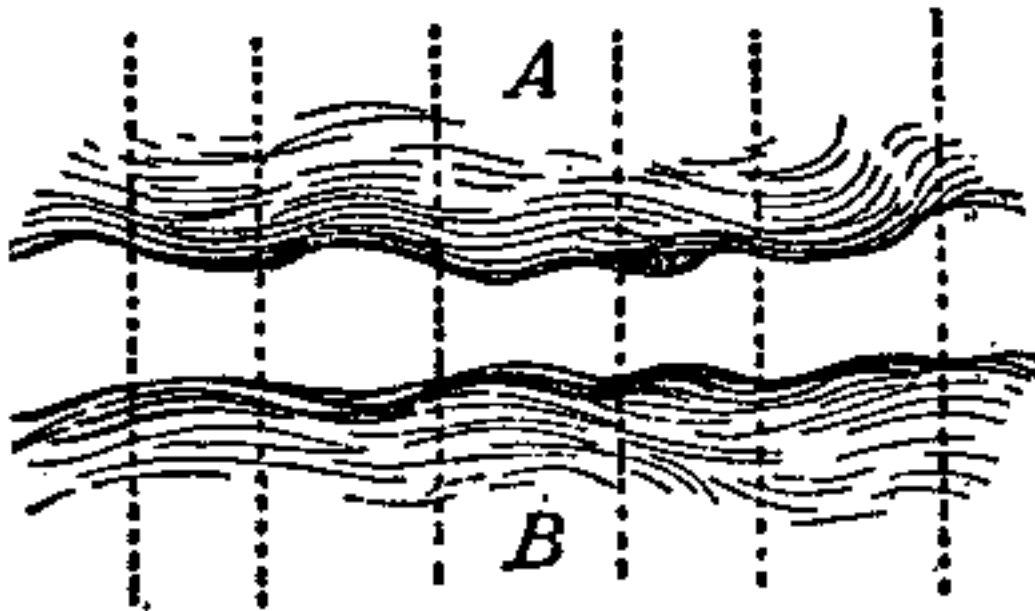
This course fulfils the Contemporary Philosophy requirement.

Texts:

Derrida, *Of Grammatology*

Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*

Derrida, *Speech and*



Phenomena