

# ARHM 6310: Team-Taught Interdisciplinary Seminar

## What is Interpretation?

Fall 2021

### Instructors:

**Matthew J. Brown**

[mattbrown@utdallas.edu](mailto:mattbrown@utdallas.edu)

972-883-2536

Office: JO 5.522

Office Hours: R 1:00-3:00pm

or by appointment

**Charles Hatfield**

[charles.hatfield@utdallas.edu](mailto:charles.hatfield@utdallas.edu)

972-883-2780

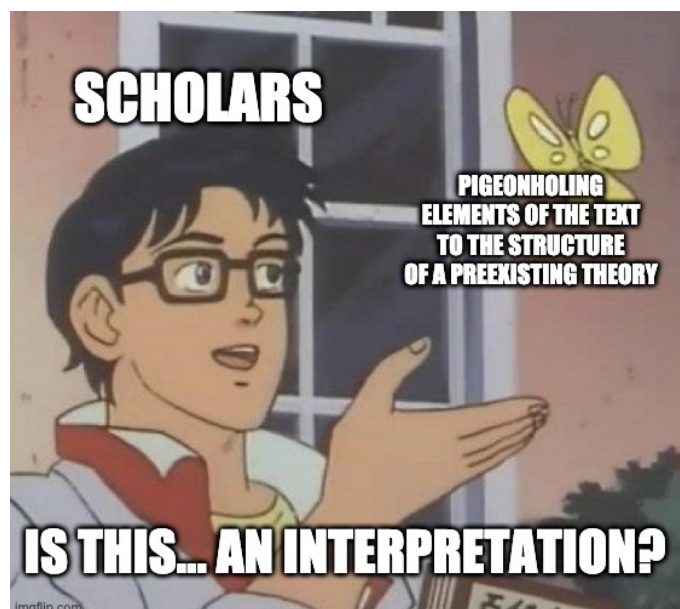
Office: JO 5.516

Office Hours: T 2:00-4:00

or by appointment

## Course Description

It is commonplace to say that the goal of most scholarship in the humanities is to provide an *interpretation* of some materials, i.e., to discover the *meaning* of a text, an artwork, a film, the historical record, etc. Likewise, it is common to think of the theories, methods, and disciplinary approaches of the humanities as needed to provide better interpretations, ones that go beyond the mere *surface* of the text. But what is this process, interpretation, and what is the nature and status of its product, *an* interpretation or *the* meaning of the text? Where is the meaning of a text to be found? Is there a meaning lurking behind each text, in Plato's world of Ideas or Frege's world of *Sinn*? Or does meaning live in the mind of the author? The audience? Is there one correct meaning or multiple meanings? Is the process of interpretation different from the process of discovering and theorizing unobservable entities in the sciences? How is it related to translating a text from one language to another or adapting it from one medium to another? Or are there questions besides *meaning* altogether that we scholars of Arts & Humanities should be asking? In this class, we will use classic and contemporary texts from, e.g., philosophy of language, literary theory, aesthetics and philosophy of art, legal theory, film theory, psychoanalysis, hermeneutics, philosophy of literature, historiography, and philosophy of history to explore the nature of interpretation and meaning, in order to better understand the aims of scholarship in the Humanities.



## Required Textbooks and Materials

All required readings will be available electronically on the Course Homepage in eLearning.

## Schedule of Readings and Assignments

Week Date	Readings	Assignments
Week 1 8/24	Seminar Introduction; Review Syllabus	
Week 2 8/31	Wimsatt & Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy" (1946) De Man, "Form and Intent in the American New Criticism" (1983)	
Week 3 9/7	Hayden White, "Interpretation in History" (1973) Charles Taylor, "Understanding in Human Science" (1980)	
Week 4 9/14	Frege, "On Sense and Reference" (1892) Russell, "On Denoting" (1905)	
Week 5 9/21	Austin, "The Meaning of a Word" (1940) Cavell, "Must We Mean What We Say?" (1958)	
Week 6 9/28	Quine, from <i>Word and Object</i> Ch 1-2 (1960)	Submit Short Paper #1 to eLearning by 11:59 p.m. on Tuesday, September 28
Week 7 10/5	Dewey from <i>Art as Experience</i> (1934) Fried, "Art and Objecthood" (1967)	
Week 8 10/12	Barthes, "The Death of the Author" (1967)	
Week 9 10/19	Derrida, "Signature Event Context" (1971) Searle, "Reiterating the Differences: A Reply to Derrida" (1977)	
Week 10 10/26	Dworkin, Ronald. "Law as Interpretation." (1982) Fish, "There Is No Textualist Position" (2005)	

Week 11 11/2	Jameson, "On Interpretation: Literature as a Socially Symbolic Act" (1981)	
Week 12 11/9	Hall, "Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse" (1973) hooks, "The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators" (1992) Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975)	
Week 13 11/16	Davidson, "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme" (1973) Haack, "Post 'Post-Truth': Are We There Yet?" (2019)	Submit Short Paper #2 to eLearning by 11:59 p.m. on Tuesday, November 16
11/23	FALL BREAK - NO CLASS	
Week 14 11/30	Knapp & Michaels, "Against Theory" (1982) Michaels, "The Blank Page" (2013)	
Week 15 12/7	Bernstein, from <i>Beyond Objectivism and Relativism</i> (1983)	
Monday 12/13	Submit Short Paper #3 to eLearning by 11:59 p.m. on Monday, December 13	

## Grading Policy

Your course grade will be determined by:

1. Participation – Participate in class discussion and peer activities regularly and well, in such a way that demonstrates you are well prepared. (10%)
2. Short Papers – 1,500 words, in response to a specific prompt (30% each)

## Course & Instructor Policies

The information contained in the following link constitutes the University's policies and procedures segment of the course syllabus: <http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies>