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## Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*

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### Description

“Every philosopher runs away when he or she hears someone say, ‘Let’s discuss this.’ ... Philosophy has a horror of discussions. It always has something else to do.”

—Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 28-29

What is desire? What is transformation and how do you know when you’ve accomplished it? How is transformation different than exchange? What is a state and when does it occur? These are pivotal questions in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus*. They are also central for a literary theory and criticism still organized around the concepts of subversion, transgression, critique, dialectic, identity, constitutive lack, and performative subjectivity. In contrast to these critical tools, Deleuze and Guattari’s work offers a non-resentful version of desire, signs, and thought that ultimately issues in an affirmation of the power of literary language. What ties Deleuze and Guattari’s disparate thought together is the notion that language does what it claims to do: no longer are we locked in the self-loathing of representation, in which the real world, which really matters, is out of our reach.

This course revolves around one book, not because *A Thousand Plateaus* is the bible of literary theory and not in order to turn you all into Deleuzian critics or theorists. Rather, the premise here is that an introduction to literary theory occurs best through intensive examination of a school of thought, its predecessors and its targets, and its subsequent early adopters. Thus, we’re reading Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus* in conjunction with Freud and Hegel, as well as later appropriations of and responses to it, Nealon and Grosz. The broader aim in focusing on this one book is to give you a set of tools and criteria that you might use when determining the most fruitful and useful theoretical discussions for your own projects.

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### Reading

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, trans. James Strachey (Norton, 1961).

G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, trans. H.B. Nisbet (Cambridge UP, 1975).

Elizabeth Grosz, *Space, Time, and Perversion: Essays on the Politics of Bodies* (Routledge, 1995).

Jeffrey T. Nealon, *Post-Postmodernism: Or, The Cultural Logic of Just-in-Time Capitalism* (Stanford UP, 2012).

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### Requirements

*Undergraduate students*: four short analysis papers, one concept report, one final research paper.

*Graduate students*: four short analysis papers, one oral presentation, one seminar paper.