

INSTRUCTOR: Prof. Laurence de Looze

COURSE TITLE: Why (and how) are things similar?: Analogy, Example, Metaphor, Taxonomy

(What ties together the four words at the head of this course's title is that they all have something to do with similarity. As a result, to understand the title of this course – to perceive, in other words, that *similarity* is the similar feature running through all four words – is already to enter into the course content. How does one know that, despite the many differences among phenomena, one is supposed to look for and extrapolate a feature of similarity? And how does it happen that most people who encounter this course title will extract the very same similarity – that is, the *similarity* of *similarity* ?)

This course will ask two deceptively simple questions: How do we know when (or that) things are similar, and what is the relation between our perceptions of similarity and our notions of “reality” and/or “meaning”? Our time will be spent in examining the difficulties that arise in trying to formulate acceptable answers to these questions.

For the last few decades, theoreticians and critics have been greatly concerned with questions of difference/ *différance* . This course, however, is much more than a reversal of the difference/similarity equation. It may indeed be true that everything is different from everything else, as has been often put forward, but all human beings live as though this were not the case. Why do people perceive or create similarities, and on what basis (and by means of what strategies) do they establish resemblances? Moreover, what does it mean to say that everything is different from everything else except to imply that at a second level the trait of difference itself becomes the similar feature all phenomena have in common? What, then, does it mean to discover (or construct) similarities? Why do we construct or perceive resemblances? And what does it tell us when we find them meaningful (or not meaningful)?

I propose to look at considerations of what constitutes resemblance and what resemblance *means* drawn from a wide variety of disciplines and orientations: philosophical writings, literary works, clinical psychology, art history, literary theory, artificial intelligence, etc. Is the ability to construct analogies – which means to perceive similarities – at the very base of what we call human knowledge, as recent studies by clinical psychologists suggest? How do we decide which similarities matter to us, or whether an analogy has “meaning” or not? And what of metaphor which, since Aristotle, has been seen as special kind of analogy? Do any/all/some metaphors actually produce knowledge (Hartman's “cognitive metaphor”; Ricoeur's “semantic collision”)? By contrast, what makes some metaphors “dead”? Is all perception of reality fundamentally “metaphorical,” as Nietzsche maintained? Finally, is what we call “analysis” ever anything more than analogical or allegorical discourse, as Northrup Frye suggested?

Core Readings (provisionary list):

Anttila, Raimo Aulis. *Analogy* . The Hague: Mouton, 1977. (Selections)

Davis, Steven, ed. *Pragmatics: A Reader* . (Selections)

- De Man, "Metaphor", in *Allegories of Reading* , 134-59.
- Dineen, Francis O. "Analogy, langue and parole." *Lingua* 21 (1968): 98-103.
- Gelley, Alexander. "The Pragmatics of Exemplary Narrative."
- Gentner, Dedre. "Are Scientific Analogies Metaphors." In Miall, David S., ed. *Metaphor: Problems and Perspectives* . Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1982. 106-32.
- Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1974) (1 st ten pages)
- Hartman, Charles O. "Cognitive Metaphor." *Poétique* 49 (1982): 327-39.
- Hesse, Mary. "Models, Metaphors and Truth." *From a Metaphorical Point of View: A Multidisciplinary Approach to the Cognitive Content of Metaphor* . Ed. Sdravko Radman. 351-72.
- Höfdding, Harald. "On Analogy and its philosophical importance." *Mind* 14 (1905): 199-209.
- Hofstadter, D. R. "Analogies and Roles in Human and Machine Thinking." *Metamagical Themas* . New York: Basic Books, 547-603.
- . *Gödel, Escher, Bach* . (Selections)
- Holyoak, Keith J. "An Analogical Framework for Literary Interpretation." *Poetics* 11 (1982): 105-26.
- Keane, Mark T. *Analogical Problem Solving*. Chichester: Ellis Horwood, 1988. (Selections)
- Kofman, Sarah. *Nietzsche and Metaphor* . Tr. Duncan Large. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1993. (Selections)
- Lakoff, George. *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind* . Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1987. (Selections)
- and Mark Johnson. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1980.
- MacCormac, E.R. *A Cognitive Theory of Metaphor* . Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985. (Selections)
- Mervis, Carolyn, and Eleanor Rosch. "Categorization of Natural Objects." *Annual Review of Psychology* (1981) 32: 89-115.

Montaigne, Michel de. *Essays* (selections – especially the first ones of Book I, “De l’Institution des Enfants” and “De l’Experience”)

Nietzsche, Frederick. “On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense.” In *Philosophy and Truth* . 79-97.

Ortony, Andrew. “Beyond Literal Similarity.” *Psychological Review* 86 (1979): 161-80.

---, ed. *Metaphor and Thought* . Cambridge UP, 1979. (Selections)

Putnam, Hilary. *Mind, Language, and Reality: Philosophical Papers* . Vol. 2. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1957. (Selections)

Ricoeur, Paul. *La Métaphore vive* . Paris: Seuil, 1975.

Rorty, A.O. *Explaining Emotions* . Berkeley: U of California P, 1980. (Selections)

Soskice, Janet Martin, and Rom Harré. “Metaphor in Science” *From a Metaphorical Point of View: A Multidisciplinary Approach to the Cognitive Content of Metaphor* . Ed. Sdravko Radman. 289-308.

Karl-Heinz Stierle, “Story as Exemplum–Exemplum as Story: On the Pragmatics and Poetics of Narrative Texts.” *New Perspectives in German Literary Criticism: A Collection of Essays* . Ed. Richard E. Amacher and Victor Lange. Princeton UP. Trad. David Henry Wilson (?) and others. 389-417.

Tversky, Amos. “Features of Similarity” *Psychological Review* 84 (1977), 327-51.

Way, Eileen Cornell. *Knowledge Representation and Metaphor* Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991. *Studies in Cognitive Systems* 7. (Selections)

Additional readings (recommended readings that will form the basis for seminar reports and a short position paper; these also comprise suggestions for works in which one might wish to study resemblance/similarity):

Aristotle. *Poetics* . (Selections)

Bible: The New Testament (Selections)

Borges, Jorge Luis. (Selected Fictions)

Dalí, Salvador. (Selected Visual Works)

Diderot, Denis, and Jean Le Rond d’Alembert. *Encyclopédie* (Selections)

Gibson, James J. *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979. (Selections)

Juan Manuel. *El Conde Lucanor* (Part I)

La Fontaine, Jean de *Fables* (Selections)

Neruda, Pablo. (Selected Poems)