

Alienation and Self-Identity  
LSHV 367 01  
Professor Ruf  
Fall 2017

## Syllabus

### Description

In the last two hundred years, Europeans and Americans have frequently used the notion of alienation in conceiving of themselves. In fact, we might characterize these two centuries as a time in which, paradoxically enough, humans' identity has been integrally linked with being, in some sense, 'strange.' The course will attempt to make sense of the many links and tensions between alienation and self-identity -- or strangeness and the self -- by examining strong voices in the development of the contemporary identity. While we will discuss all of the works in class, primary responsibility for composing a theory of the complex relationship between alienation and identity will rest upon the participants in the course. All written assignments will offer opportunities to articulate and develop those theories, as will class discussion and class presentations. The course will culminate in an examination of the artist Lucas Samaras for his modeling of the strange self.

### Readings

Ralph Waldo Emerson, Divinity School Address and "Circles" (available on Blackboard)  
Friedrich Nietzsche, The Gay Science (Random, 1974) ISBN 0394719859 (selections, book to be purchased)

J.B. Pontalis, Love of Beginnings (Free Association Books, 1993) ISBN: 185343129X  
(selections, book to be purchased)

Virginia Woolf, To the Lighthouse (Harvest, 1989) ISBN: 0156907399 (book to be purchased)

### Schedule

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| Class 1 | Introduction and Theory: Selves Pluralistic and Strange<br>The Common Sense Self of Mechanics, Medicine, and Technology<br>PowerPoint presentation: Selves in Art (Vermeer, Casper David Friedrich, Picasso, Cindy Sherman, Lucas Samaras, Edward Hopper, Chuck Close) |
| Class 2 | Emerson, The Divinity School Address   |
| Class 3 | Emerson, "Circles"   |
| Class 4 | Nietzsche, <u>The Gay Science</u><br><b>(paper #1 due)</b><br>Reading: sections 1-4, 11-14, 19, 21, 23, 38, 43, 46, 48, 54-56, 57-58   |
| Class 5 | Nietzsche, <u>The Gay Science</u><br>Reading: sections 76, 107, 108-143, 276-285, 301, 340-41, 343-47, 370-71, 381-83  |
| Class 6 | Nietzsche  |

	Readings: Any sections not completed in previous classes
Class 7	Woolf, <u>To the Lighthouse</u> (paper #2 due) Reading: pp. 3 – 124
Class 8	Woolf, <u>To the Lighthouse</u> Reading: pp. 125 – end
Class 9	Woolf, <u>To the Lighthouse</u>
Class 10	Pontalis (paper #3 due) Reading: Chapters 1 – 5
Class 11	Pontalis Reading: Chapters 6, 7
Class 12	Pontalis Reading: Chapters 10 - 12
Class 13	Lucas Samaras and conclusions (images available on Blackboard)

### **Course Requirements**

1. Class attendance (Attendance at the first class meeting is mandatory. Absences are not expected and more than one excused absence may result in the withdrawal of the student from the course. More than two absences would usually result in withdrawal from the course as sufficient contact hours would not be met to warrant the award of credit or grade.)
2. All readings
3. Three papers (5 pages long), taking a position on the most definitive element in the nature of the self, due after reading and discussing Emerson, Nietzsche, and Woolf
4. Final exam of 10 pages analyzing the photographs of Lucas Samaras for the “self” that is evident in them and tracing connections to the selves discussed in class during the semester. The paper is due one week after the final class.

### **Grading**

Short papers: 1/6 of final grade each  
 Class participation: 1/6 of final grade  
 Final Exam: 2/6 of final grade

### **Honor Code:**

MALS and DLS students are responsible for upholding the Georgetown University Honor System and adhering to the academic standards included in the Honor Code Pledge stated below:  
*In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown University Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor; and to conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.*

**Disabilities Statement:**

If you believe you have a disability, then you should contact the Academic Resource Center ([arc@georgetown.edu](mailto:arc@georgetown.edu)) for further information. The Center is located in the Leavey Center, Suite 335. The Academic Resource Center is the campus office responsible for reviewing documentation provided by students with disabilities and for determining reasonable accommodations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and University policies.

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