



VIU
Graduate
seminar
Translation:
WHY IS IT
a POLITICAL
question?

Translation: Why Is It a Political Question?
Perspectives In Philosophy and Translation Theory

February 26 – March 1, 2024

Venice International University
Isola di San Servolo, Venice

VIU Graduate Seminar

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Venice International
University

Scientific Coordinator:

Luca Illetterati

University of Padova
Research Center for Philosophy of
Translation - PHILTRA

Translation, as a practice or conceptual tool, is indispensable for each human activity. It is not just a technical problem to be solved by transferring a specific content from a linguistic system to a different one. Moreover, translation has an aesthetical, epistemological, religious, and strong political dimension. This Graduate Seminar will focus on the latter.

The Graduate Seminar will be led by:

- University of Padova, Italy
- Tel Aviv University, Israel
- Waseda University, Japan
- KU Leuven, Belgium

Faculty

Andrea Altobrando, University of Padova/PHILTRA
Jan Ceuppens, KU Leuven
Sandro Chignola, University of Padova/PHILTRA
Ran HaCohen, Tel Aviv University
Saša Hrnjez, University of Firenze/PHILTRA
Luca Illetterati, University of Padova/PHILTRA
(Scientific Coordinator)
Maya Klein, Tel Aviv University
Elena Nardelli, University of Padova/PHILTRA
Richard Stone, Waseda University Tokyo

Translation serves as a bridge between languages and cultures. But it is also a vehicle to export or import texts conveying ideological messages, a powerful weapon for political projects, and works as a filter for identity building. Furthermore, translation is a crucial operator for both consolidating or questioning traditions. That is why inquiring about multiculturalism, world literature, or global processes without facing translation processes means avoiding an essential dimension of the subject.

By thematizing what is political in translation, on the one hand, we deal with the essential character of translation itself. On the other hand, we frame translation as a phenomenon where different political dynamics come to the fore. In this sense, translation is the exceptional terrain where assimilation, differentiation, foreignization, de- and re-territorialization processes show their political character.

Purpose

The Graduate Seminar aims to offer a space to discuss and delve into translation's political aspects to students with different backgrounds, such as translation studies, literary studies, cultural

studies, political sciences, and philosophy. Our purpose is to show how translation is at the heart of the different disciplines, to make students aware of its political implications, inviting them to question their assumptions for thinking together about new politics of translation.

This program stimulates a much-needed discussion on the political and social dimensions of translation, understood as a transcultural praxis of transformation of meanings. The current political crises instigated by wars, migrations, and social conflicts in a complex, globalized and linguistically challenged world urges a rethinking of translation as a powerful praxis of mediation and creating of the common. To deal now with the politics of translation (and translation as politics) means for us to deal with its collective power to create egalitarian and inclusive communities, counteract identarian ideologies, and challenge current power relations and hierarchies (national, race, gender, class hierarchies) exhibited in languages. Philosophy, literary studies, (inter)cultural studies, and translation studies can no longer postpone a collective reflection on the political nature of translation.

Topics

The program will consist of talks, reading sessions, round tables with all participants, students' group presentations, and workshops with an invited experienced translator. The Graduate Seminar will address the following topics:

- Political and social aspects of translation in different cultural contexts
- The function of translation in the formation of political communities
- Translation in relation to inter-, multi-, trans-culturality
- Translation (*traduzione*), tradition (*tradizione*), betrayal (*tradimento*)
- The role of translation in the postcolonial globalized world
- Translation and historical memory in different cultures
- Translation and linguistic policies
- Translation, democracy, citizenship in the national and postnational framework
- Translation and violence
- Translation as political subversion and resistance
- Translation, migration, exiles
- Translation and ideology

- Translation in relation to gender, race, class and nation
- Translation and social movements

Learning outcomes for participants

Master, PhD students and junior researchers will learn to work in a transnational context, across different disciplines, languages, and cultures. Thanks to talks and debates at round tables, students will face the main theses of translation theory, developing logical-argumentative and historical competencies. Dealing with the crucial texts of translation theory during the reading sessions, participants will also develop analytical and hermeneutical skills. Workshops with invited experienced translators will foster participants to compare several translation strategies and styles, possibly helping them to find their own. As a result, they will become confident with the different methodologies of the disciplines and traditions involved. Furthermore, students will become aware of the pervasiveness of translation practices in their field of study. The Seminar will change their approach to texts and to their own language. In addition, they will discover the political dimension of translation practices that are never neutral or transparent communication tools. Finally, participants will learn about the political effects of their own possible translation activities.

Who can apply?

This Graduate Seminar is offered to advanced Master, early PhD students and junior researchers in Philosophy, Humanities, and Social Sciences. Open to candidates from all the VIU Member Institutions; applications from excellent candidates from non-member institutions will be also considered and evaluated.

Fees & Grant Support

Students from the VIU member institutions will pay no participation fees. Grant support is also available to support, partially or fully, the costs of international travel and accommodation. The participation fee for students of non-member institutions is Euro 1,150 (incl. VAT). The fee is inclusive of tuition, course materials, accommodation, lunches, social events and taxes. Students from non-member institutions are not eligible for VIU grant support. VIU Alumni are eligible for a reduced fee.

Credits

Participation in the Graduate Seminar is considered equivalent to **2 ECTS**.

The final program will be available on the VIU website

Applications

July 20– October 25, 2023

via the VIU website

Applicants must submit the (1) application form, (2) a letter of motivation – which should include a short bio and a brief description of the candidate's research project (max. 4000 characters), and (3) a curriculum vitae.

VIU Graduate Seminars

These are thematic intensive seminars given in a concentrated period on subjects of universal interest, open to a broad spectrum of disciplines. They are suited to both Master's and PhD students as well as junior researchers and are open to candidates from all the VIU member institutions. The young researchers will receive support in defining their research proposal. Significant cooperation among departments in the member institutions is expected.

Venice International University is a consortium of 20 universities, representing 14 countries throughout the world. The mission of VIU is to foster cooperation among VIU member institutions while facilitating the exchange of knowledge and ideas, by developing, promoting and organizing joint academic, research and training/capacity-building program. Students from non-member institutions may participate in selected academic programs. The academic programs at VIU are distinguished by a markedly interdisciplinary approach to the topics, and by the international perspectives that the participants contribute to the discussions. The VIU campus is on the island of San Servolo in Venice, Italy.

Cover image: *Pioneer plaque* via [NASA](#)

The Pioneer plaques were installed on spacecraft Pioneer 10 (1972) and Pioneer 11 (1973) to send an interstellar message beyond the solar system.

Location



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