Course description

The founding mission of NYU as a global university is purposeful engagement in the world. In this multilingual world, our goal can only be achieved with the help of translators and interpreters. Reflecting on the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics’ prediction that translation jobs will increase by 29% between 2014 and 2024, this course considers translation as a scholarly, professional and lay activity. As we reflect on the wealth of languages and cultures in the NYU students’ community and the way in which the curriculum is indebted to the work of translation, students will critically discuss what is gained, lost or, perhaps, simply transformed in translation.

This introductory discussion of translation will address questions such as why source texts are often privileged over translations. What is a good or faithful translation and why are translations mistrusted? How does a written translation differ from spoken interpreting? What does the study of translation teach us about power relations and border crossings, or the role of gender, race or class in translational transactions? What are the ethics of translating and interpreting? What do translators say about their art and practice?

For students considering a language major, this course will support language learning and advanced literary and cultural studies. For those pursuing any other major, this course will develop a valuable awareness of the impact of translation across the disciplines, sensitizing students to a global culture that depends, for its life, on translation.

Please note: it is not a requirement for this class that you speak any language other than English. Speakers from all language backgrounds are welcomed here to learn about and discuss translation, which is a language practice that affects all of us, whatever language(s) we may speak.

Instructor biography

Emmanuelle Ertel is an Associate Professor of contemporary French literature and translation at New York University. She is also a professional literary translator. Among her translations of American novels into French are Louis Begley’s *The Man Who Was Late* and *As Max Saw It*, Rick Moody’s *The Black Veil*, and Tom Perrotta’s *Little Children* and *The Leftovers*. Most
recently, she translated Hanya Yanagihara’s *A Little Life*, which was shortlisted for the 2015 National Book Award, Man Booker Prize, and Pulitzer.

**Grading**

Preparation, presence, participation: 5%
Weekly discussion facilitator: 10%
Weekly reading log: 10%
Translation analysis (5 pages): 20%  **Due October 15**
Translation + commentary (5 pages): 20%  **Due November 19**
Research paper (10 pages): 40%  **Due December 10**

**Attendance expectations:**

Students are expected to attend and participate actively in all classes. If you are ill or must miss a class for a valid reason, please email me so that I can mark your absence excused. More than two unexcused absences will start reducing your final grade.

**Accommodations:**

Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. The Moses Center website is [www.nyu.edu/csd](http://www.nyu.edu/csd). Please contact the Moses Center for Student Accessibility (212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu) for further information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.

**Academic integrity:**

Academic Integrity, Plagiarism, and Cheating ([adapted from the website of the College of Arts & Science,](https://cas.nyu.edu/content/nyu-as/cas/academic-integrity.html):

Academic integrity means that the work you submit is original. Obviously, bringing answers into an examination or copying all or part of a paper straight from a book, the Internet, or a fellow student is a violation of this principle. But there are other forms of cheating or plagiarizing which are just as serious — for example, presenting an oral report drawn without attribution from other sources (oral or written); writing a sentence or paragraph which, despite being in different words, expresses someone else’s idea(s) without a reference to the source of the idea(s); or submitting essentially the same paper in two different courses (unless both instructors have given their permission in advance). Receiving or giving help on a take-home paper, examination, or quiz is also cheating, unless expressly permitted by the instructor (as in collaborative projects).

**Learning objectives**

- Identify the translations that surround us, often without our even noticing; name the assumptions we bring to these translations; then interrogate the origin and implications of these assumptions.
- Recognize the ways that reading a translation differs from an “original” and demonstrate how a given translation produces specific effects through the interplay of translation strategies and context.

- Compare multiple translations, including those that are machine generated, to identify the strategies used and analyze the translation effects they produce.

- Summarize core ideas in translation studies scholarship and then contribute to productive discussion as together we discover the relatively new and evolving discipline of translation theory.

- Experiment with translating a text, then articulate the decisions you made and your justifications by writing a translator’s preface.

- Acknowledge, relish and champion the translational culture of NYU and New York City through mastery in languages, valorizing multilingualism, and the development of translation skills.

- Encourage students to pursue a foreign language to the advanced level and to consider study abroad as integral to their liberal arts education.

Class meets once a week and attendance is mandatory. This class is designed to be a cooperative effort – please do the assigned reading, viewing, and/or listening before coming to class each week.

Work is assigned on a regular basis and is outlined in the syllabus distributed at the start of the semester. All class submissions must be typed, double-spaced and meet the page/word count assigned for each project.

**Week 1**

**Topic:** Introduction to the course, instructor and peers. Discuss objectives.

**Language & Translation Autobiography (1/2 pages – 300-600 words): in-class activity**

Write a reflection that addresses the questions below, and any others that you find relevant to this topic. Divide your autobiography into two parts: the first on language, the second on translation:

Some language topics:
- What languages do you speak and/or read?
- From what age?
- Where did you learn these languages?
In which contexts and with whom do you use these languages?
How do you feel about the different languages as skills you have or are developing?
How do you feel about the languages as modes of identity and expression?

Some translation topics:
Do you translate or interpret? If so, in which contexts and for whom?
Have you ever translated in order to develop your language skills?
What notable translations have you encountered? Name at least one.

We will share these autobiographies in class. After reading your partner’s autobiography, you will interview them to learn more about their background in language and translation, as well as to share the resources we each bring to this class.

**Week 2**


**Readings:**


**Week 3**

Topic: Multiple translations.

**Readings:**


Week 4

Topic: Re-translating the classics.

Readings:


Week 5


Visit of and discussion with publishers.

Week 6

Topic: Meaning, sound, dialects and the question of foreignization.

Readings:


Week 7

Topic: Interpretation and Human Rights.

Readings:


**Week 8**

Topic: Simultaneous Translation, from the Nuremberg Trials to Today’s United Nations.

**Readings:**


**Week 9**

**Visit to the United Nations.**

**Week 10**

Topic: Machine Translation.

**Readings:**


**Week 11**

**Topic:** Translation and gender.

**Readings:**


**Week 12**

**Topic:** Audiovisual Translation.

**Readings:**


**Week 13**

**Presentations of Translation Projects.**

**Week 14**

**Presentations of Research Papers.**