A note on the Spring 2007 version of this class (as of 11/4/06). I haven’t thought a lot about it yet, but there will be many changes, since this time the class will require reading knowledge of Chinese (220 or above level). Keep in mind though that attendance is strictly required….a workshop won’t work without everyone’s shared commitment (see below).

Native speakers/readers are also encouraged to take the class. Our goals: for those learning Chinese as a second language, this course will help develop your reading skills. For those of you writing a thesis for a Chinese major (either during Spring 07 or even next year), the project you do for this class can become part of your thesis, and I will work with you with that in mind. For everyone, regardless of your Chinese knowledge and abilities, the goal of thinking, reading, and writing better still applies, as well as the goal of understanding better the ways texts operate both within and especially across cultures. We’ll focus on literary texts and translation, but may also look at other kinds of writing, depending upon your interests. I encourage you to get in touch with me and let me know about your interests, and I will work to address them in this class. Should we read/address some political, historical, or scientific writing? Should we, for instance, examine the translation issues and problems involved in U.S. plane and Hainan Dao, China’s insistence upon an apology and the U.S. persistent refusal, and all the cross-cultural confusion over the meanings of various expression of apology? As we work between Chinese and English, we will encounter and explore the cultural ramifications of linguistic differences.

The format of the class will remain a combination of different kinds of intellectual and creative work: we will read, study, and discuss writing about translation and translation theory; intercultural communication, etc., but only to inform the focus of our hands-on, practical work of learning through the experience of various translation exercises. The class will still be a “workshop”—read about that below, and you’ll each work on a main translation project. We’ll take turns “workshopping” your translations.

Many, perhaps most, of the assignments and exercises below will change, but they will give you an idea of the kinds of questions and issues we’ll be entertaining.

Feel free to contact me with questions, and, especially, to let me know your interests. csilber@, 4538
Learning objectives and course description
Through translation exercises, reading, and discussion, you will learn in this class to read better, think better, and write better—not to mention translate better. Our focus on literary translation will help us consider answers to big questions about literature and life, about language and culture, and about cross-cultural communication (and miscommunication).

We’ll meet twice a week, once for 50 minutes, and once for 100. We’ll do several different types of work in the class. In our short sessions, we’ll usually discuss readings, which we’ll use as the basis for writing and translation exercises (in the first half of the course) or which will address aspects of translation studies useful for thinking about translation practice (in the second half of the course). We’ll devote our long sessions to “workshopping” your own translations.

What is a workshop? You’ll post your work on Blackboard 24 hours before class and print out a copy of each post to bring to class. (Be sure to bring a copy of your own work too). Before class, read each work carefully, marking questions, comments, and suggestions on it, noting particularly successful or more problematic spots. Once we start discussing your main projects, you should prepare to give each translator a copy of his/her work marked with your comments. Our constructive discussion of each other’s work is the heart of the workshop. So faithful attendance is crucial to the success of our group effort. Your active presence in class helps everyone, including you; your absence (in that unlikely event!) hurts everyone, not just you.

Evaluation will be based on your weekly homework (written answers to questions for discussion, translation exercises, short essays): 30%; class participation (attendance, preparation, contributions): 40%; main translation project (including each of your presentations of your work-in-progress): 30%.

You’ll need to choose (then discuss/clear with me) and begin working on your main translation project by the third week of class (2/2). Translate a series of poems, a very short story or essay, or a short extract from a longer literary work, for which at least one published, English translation is available. You could also choose to re-subtitle a section of a film whose subtitling you find inadequate. (We can use the existing translation as a basis for class discussion, comparing your choices with the other translator’s, though of course we will also address source language issues.) Length? It will depend on the work you choose. Aim for 10-20 pages of prose or drama translation, around 80 lines of verse (this really depends!). Aim for a coherent sample; a complete work is preferable to an extract. Your project also needs to include some sort of appendage—preface, introduction, postface—that equips your English readers with what they need to know to properly receive your translation. This essay should address the original work—its context/s, reception, suggestions for further reading, and also your translation—your own guiding principles, particular problems and your solutions, a critical review of other translations. This should be as long or short as it really needs to be, but aim for around 10 pages not counting the bibliography. We will discuss this more as the course proceeds.
Language mentors are native speakers of your source language who are willing to consult with you over your work-in-progress to ensure that you are understanding your source texts correctly. Everyone needs to find at least one language mentor by 2/2 (our first interlingual translation exercise is due 2/6); if you need help please let me know.

Course Texts
- Eliot Weinberger and Octavio Paz, *Nineteen Ways of Looking at Wang Wei* (bookstore)
- items on electronic reserve

Guidelines
All posts to Blackboard are due 24 hours before class. Double-space everything, even poetry (though for poetry you may also include a single-spaced version). Print for yourself all posts, retaining double-spacing, so you can read and comment upon them carefully. When we workshop your main translation projects, be prepared to give the presenter your copy with your comments. When it is your turn to present, prepare to distribute in class copies for everyone of a published English translation of the selection you’re presenting.

Cite all your sources completely and consistently. If you don’t know how, consult the library web page, which has helpful links, with examples, or a reference librarian. Keep the honor code in mind. Translation raises many interesting questions about originality and intellectual property; for practical purposes, if you have questions about how the honor code applies to your work in this class, please ask me.

Course schedule (through spring break)

first week

1/19 (short session)  introductions

1/23 (long session)  What does translation require?
- Mark Twain, “Fenimore Cooper’s Literary Offences” and “Fenimore Cooper’s Further Literary Offences” (electronic reserve)
- James Fenimore Cooper, excerpt from *The Deerslayer* (electronic reserve)

exercise:
1. Read the whole Cooper chapter (pp. 13-29) and then the Mark Twain essays. Does what you read of Cooper make you want to dive in and read the whole novel? Why or why not? If not, who do you think would like this novel? Why do you think Twain wrote these essays? How seriously do you take him? What are Twain’s standards? Who makes them? Do you share them? Why or why not? Do you find Twain’s comments useful for your work on the rest of the assignment? Jot down your ideas and be prepared to discuss all this in class.
2. Translate these sections of the Cooper chapter your own English: the first two paragraphs (after the poem) and p. 18 (“Come, Deerslayer, fall to,…) through p. 19 (…) the cost of the suit?”). Bring to class to discuss and turn in.

3. What do you find yourself needing to know as you do this? As you work on your translation, you will encounter questions. Decide for yourself what to do. Make a list of your questions, problems, and decisions. Note what resources you used, if any, and/or what sorts of resources you would find useful. Bring to class to discuss and turn in.

**second week Context, Context, Context**

1/26 (short session) Meeting with Kristin Strohmeyer, Reference Librarian, who will introduce us to the crucial resources we need for translation in general and this project in particular.

Start choosing your translation project for the course.

1/30 (long session)

exercise:
1. Use the library resources to answer the questions we decided upon last week (#3 and 4 above); I will compile our list and post it on Blackboard. Incorporate these answers or solutions into #3 below, and be prepared to discuss them in class.
2. Revise your translation, and post it on Blackboard 24 hours before class. (Print out, read, and be prepared to discuss all posted translations. DOUBLE SPACE.)
3. Write a 1-2 pp. response to Twain’s essays. Address it to him, imagining he will read it. Offer him your revised translation in support of what you say to him. (In addition to your essay, quoted within it, or appended to it, will be your translation.) Bring to class to discuss and turn in.
4. How did research change your translation? Drawing upon your experiences so far, make a list of the kinds of research a translator needs to do to make a translation meaningful. Bring to class to discuss.

**third week Reading/Interpretation as Translation**

2/2 (short session) excerpt from George Steiner, “The Hermeneutic Motion”
Test out these ideas on a rereading of the Cooper chapter.

2/6 (long session)

George Saunders, “Jon” (short story)

exercise:
1. Think about the ways reading the story above is an act of translation, paying attention to your own mental processes. Write a paragraph (to turn in) that describes your own process of reading and interpretation. Does the idea of translation help you do this? Why
or why not? Is it possible for you to interpret without using some sort of mental translation? Be prepared to discuss this, in the context of this story, in class.

2. Now choose a paragraph of prose written in your source language (and which you haven’t read before) and read it, paying attention to your own mental processes of reading and understanding. Write another paragraph (to turn in), describing this mental process. Do you use mental translation? Intralingual, interlingual, both? Can you understand this paragraph without mental translation? Be prepared to discuss this too.

**fourth week  Interlingual Translation: Translation as Reading/Interpretation**

**2/9 (short session)**
Weinberger and Paz, *Nineteen Ways of Looking at Wang Wei*

Questions for discussion (Jot down your ideas and bring them to class):
1. Which translations do you think are best, and why?
2. Consider more and less successful aspects of these translations as a matter of problems with interpretation of the original poem versus problems with expression in the target language. Find examples of both kinds of successes and failures. Is one kind of problem more serious than the other? That is, is it worse to understand the original poorly but write a beautiful translation? Or is it worse, in your view, to understand the original very well, but convey this very poorly or inelegantly in translation?
3. What specific problems does the poem pose for the translator? How would you prioritize them? That is, in the event you must sacrifice solving some in favor of solving others, which must be given top priority? Why?

**2/13 (long session)**

exercise:
Make your own PROSE translation of this poem, doing your best to capture and convey the experience within the poem. If you’d like, feel free to try a verse translation as well. Post your work on Blackboard 24 hours before class, print out everyone’s translation and bring these to class, and be prepared to discuss everyone’s translation in class.

**fifth week  Translation as Writing**

**2/16 (short session)**

Read and compare the translations. Do you find that the problems you encounter are less a matter of interpretation and more a matter of expression in English? Give examples to support your view. Focusing on matters of writing now, mark examples of what you consider to be good or not-so-good translation decisions. What priorities do these
decisions reflect? What would you do with the preface? The diary? Pros and cons of these decisions?

2/20 (long session)
exercise:
Working from the two English translations (and the Chinese, if you’d like), make your own translation of the preface and the first two diary entries. Post on Blackboard and prepare to discuss. No need to print everyone’s out; just bring your own, with your toughest problems and questions marked.

sixth week Source or Target? To foreignize or domesticate? To modernize or archaicize?

2/23 (short session)
Venuti on translator’s invisibility and resistance
Douglas Hofstadter, excerpts from Le Ton beau de Marot, 147-151, 159-164
Umberto Eco, “Source vs Target” 81-103
“Translation Strategies,” from Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation studies

2/27 (long session)
Choose a poem or short passage in your source language, for which an English translation is available, and translate two versions: one at the source/foreign extreme, one at the target/domestic extreme. Post your translations along with the published translation (don’t forget to credit the translator and cite your source).

week seven Audience

3/1 (short session)
Hans Vermeer, “Skopos and Commission in Translational Action” (or gist thereof)
Questions of audience and its consequences

popular/trade versus academic

Prefaces, Introductions, Explanatory Apparatus—decisions about modes and genres of explanation (glossary, footnotes, endnotes, preface, postface?)
What sorts of information will you need to include with your translation? About the work and its contemporary reception (if old, a brief history of its reception). Previous translation. Principles guiding your translation decisions. Audience to whom you address your translation. A discussion of translation problems encountered and how you solved them. Bibliography and suggested reading.

3/5 (long session)
Today we’ll start workshopping your translation projects. Presenters TBA
week 8  

How and Where Does Meaning Happen?  
What is the relationship between Word and World?

3/8 (short session)  
Daniel Chandler, “The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis” (from his The Act of Writing)  
http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/short/whorf.html

Chandler, “Texts and the Construction of Meaning” (from his The Act of Writing)  
http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/short/texts.html

Read the pieces above. Jot down your thoughts about the following questions, and bring them to class for discussion and to turn in.  

Thought—Language—Culture  
World—Writer—Text—Reader/Translator—Text—Reader—World  

What different positions on the relationships between these are possible? Which do you find more convincing, cloak theories, or mold theories, and why? Can we have both?  

What do you think about the relationship between thought, language, and experience?  

What can translation (the notion, the practice) help us understand about these things?  

Can thought happen without language? If not, how is translation possible? If so, is thought “translated” into language? What can our two-extreme-versions translation exercise from last week teach us about these issues? Is there a clear line between the universal and particular in human experience? How might we know?

3/12 (long session)  
your projects; presenters TBA.

SPRING BREAK