Seminar 15
Sydney Seminar for the Arts and Philosophy
Lecture by Peggy Kamuf
“Competent Fictions: On Belief in the Humanities”
Professor Kamuf is the 2006 winner of the René C. Wellek Prize for Literary and Cultural Theory from the American Comparative Literature Association for Book of Addresses (Stanford, 2005). Her other publications include The Division of Literature: Or the University in Deconstruction (University of Chicago Press, 1997), Signature Pieces: On the Institution of Authorship (Cornell, 1988), and Fictions of Feminine Desire: Disclosures of Heloise (Nebraska, 1982).

Professor Kamuf’s lecture reconsiders the term “fiction” not as something demonstrably, avowedly false or counter-factual, but rather, as an operation of “reference without referent” – that is, without a producible, verifiable, provable, or knowable referent. This revised understanding of fiction displaces the conventional opposition between the humanities and
the discourses of science and practical knowledge, thus putting in question beliefs about competence, and perhaps even about the condition of belief in general. Kamuf then juxtaposes analyses of an essay by Derrida on total nuclear war, “No Apocalypse, Not Now,” and Henry James’s short story, “Owen Wingrave,” in order to demonstrate how the demand for a referential proof that would put an end to fiction leads to nihilistic consequences – the catastrophic replacement of living uncertainty with dead proof.

Coordinator: Anthony Uhlmann
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Seminar 15:
Friday, 19 March at 6 pm
Edmund Barton Room
Sydney Grammar School
College St, Darlinghurst

RSVP essential to writing@uws.edu.au for catering purposes.

The School of Humanities and Languages and The Writing and Society Group at the University of Western Sydney in association with Sydney Grammar School present:

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On Belief in the Humanities”

Convenor: Christopher Peterson
(University of Western Sydney)

For further information on this event please see our website: www.sydneyseminar.org

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