Prof. Charles Altieri
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“How to Create the New Rhetoric that Contemporary American Poets Seem to Be Seeking”

Tuesday • 6 July 2010 • 6:00-8:00 pm
Lecture Hall 11, Hauptgebäude

Critics of modernism have convinced almost all poets, conservative and experimental, that poems are first of all aesthetic objects, Charles Altieri suggests in this talk. He argues that some younger poets are attempting to break from this dictum by emphasizing poems as rhetorical objects and capable of adapting the resources of traditional rhetoric. After all, treating poems as aesthetic objects will always emphasize their non-discursive sensual aspects. Altieri will try to explain this shift to rhetoric by defining poems as participating in a distinctive speech act, the demonstrative, which can serve as the pendant to John Austin's sense of the performative and let "performative" mean only what Austin wanted it to mean. Other poststructuralist uses of the term will have to compete with the demonstrative, which has a more social cast.