

Pol 475/2075 POSTMODERN AND CONTEMPORARY THOUGHT

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Office Hour: Wednesday 2:30-4:00. As my office is small consultation either virtually or in a larger space by appointment

Office hours for this course will be offered primarily by appointment online via Bb Collaborate. Office hours are an opportunity for you to ask questions, discuss interesting course concepts, or to ask for academic advice. Especially if you are participating online and might have fewer opportunities for informal conversations with me before and after class, I encourage you to schedule at least one meeting during my office hours.

Accessibility Needs (www.accessibility.utoronto.ca)

If you require accommodations for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please contact [Accessibility Services](#) as soon as possible.

It is not uncommon for university students to experience a range of health and mental health issues that may result in barriers to achieving their academic goals. The University of Toronto offers a wide range of services that may be of assistance. You are encouraged to seek out these resources early and often.

On Campus: Your college Registrar's Office, and / or Dean of Students' Office

Student Life - <http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca>

Health and Wellness Centre - <http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/hwc>

Off-Campus: Good2Talk - a post-secondary (24/7) helpline (1-866-925-5454).

Course Modality

This is a Dual Delivery course, which means that the "in-person" section of the course will be broadcast to remote learners via Bb Collaborate . All course content (including synchronous or recorded video) will be limited to students registered in this course. Participation in class discussions therefore means consenting to have your image and voice transmitted to other students enrolled in this course.

Online Learning Expectations

- Remote participation in this course requires a computer with a working microphone. The suggested "default" for online students is to keep cameras on and microphones off.
- Microphones pick up background noise, which can be distracting. Therefore, microphones must be kept off, except when students wish to speak.
- Cameras are to be left on. Keeping your camera turned on will allow us to build a stronger sense of classroom community and help replicate the feel of in-person educational settings, in which students' faces are always visible. While not all students will be able to keep their cameras on at all times, online students are asked to keep their cameras turned on whenever possible.

What to do if you're feeling unwell

1. Report your sickness to your course instructor.
2. Go home
3. Email U of T's Occupational Health Nurse (ehs.occhealth@utoronto.ca) who will conduct assessment and contact tracing, and will provide further direction

Course Description

This course concerns the development of postmodern thought and its passage into the posthuman.

The course will take the format of a weekly seminar discussion. Please come prepared to discuss the concepts raised in the texts.

Course Objectives

The study of social and political ideas express is the academic goal of the course. The course is also intended to satisfy partially the following competencies: in Critical and Creative Thinking by reflective examination of ideas and judgments, Communication skills in presenting written and oral arguments, Information Literacy by effective use of the library and other sources of information and Social and Ethical Responsibility by engaging in a critical reflection on your views and the views of others.

Evaluation

The evaluation will consist of:

1. An essay of 2,500 words on a topic from the list below or one of your choosing if discussed with me. The essay is due October 5. You may also be asked to present, briefly in 10 minutes, your essay to the class on October 19. The presentation will not form part of the mark. The review amounts to 30% of the course mark.
2. A term research paper of approximately 3,500 words if you are a graduate student or 2,500 words if you are an undergraduate student. The paper is due Monday, February 22 amounting to 60% of your final mark. You will be asked to present your paper to the seminar on either February 24 or March 2 though it will not form part of the mark. The presentation of your essay topic should be a maximum 30 minutes in length including a question and answer period that you will be responsible for conducting. The seminar presentations schedule will be set after the winter break.
3. Class participation 10%.

If allowed, individuals who are auditing the course, if there is space, or on line will be asked to present a review of one of the readings and participate in class discussion.

Late penalties are 5% per school day. Submission of work by e mail only.

Note: In the event of a disruption to the class or to any member of the class owing to a health or other disruption where we cannot meet the marking scheme will be adjusted to 30% for the first paper and 70% for the second. In this case as well, work is to be submitted by e mail.

First Term Essay Topics

1. The social contract is in need of revision. What would it look like today?
2. Political economy has gone from production to consumption, from the real to the hyper real and the virtual. Comment.
3. Space/time has altered our conception of speed. What is its effect on the political?
4. Democracy is now found a home in fantasy land. Comment.

Readings

The Primary Texts

The number of writers concerned with postmodernism is large. The texts highlighted here may be replaced or supplemented by others by agreement with the class.

Agamben, Giorgio, Homo Sacer, Stanford: Stanford University Press., 1998.

Baidou, Alain, Second Manifesto for Philosophy, Polity: 2011

Baudrillard, Jean, In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities, N. Y: Semiotext(e), 1983.

Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Félix, "Introduction : Rhizome" or "The Treatise on Nomadology" in A Thousand Plateaus, Minneapolis: Minnesota, 1987. The selections are also found in the out of print Nomadology and On the Line, New York: Semiotext(e).

Derrida, Jacques, Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money, Chicago, 1992.

Fanon, Frantz, The Wretched of the Earth, N.Y.: Grove Press, 2005.

Hayles, N. Katherine, How We Become Posthuman, Chicago, 1999.

Haraway, Donna, The Companion Species Manifesto, Prickely Paradigm Press, 2003.
 Serres, Michel, The Natural Contract, Ann Arbor: University Michigan Press, 1998.
 Virilio, Paul, Speed and Politics, New York: Semiotext(e), 1986.

Dockerty, Thomas, A Postmodern Reader, Columbia University Press :N.Y., 1993 is a useful work for those who would like a selection of postmodern authors in a one volume format. Dockerty's bibliography is also useful. Similarly, Nicholson, L. ed., Feminism/Postmodernism, Ldn., Routledge, 1990 provides an interesting selection of articles.

Schedule of the Seminars

SEPTEMBER 9

TOPIC; Introduction

SEPTEMBER 16

TOPIC; Sources

The standard view of the 'origins' of postmodernism is located in the enlightenment and the re-reading of the logo-centric basis of the Western philosophical tradition. This involves the transformation of a number of paradigms: the political economy of the Smithian model, the Kantian critical philosophy, the Sade/Rousseau 'social contract', Hegel's master/slave relation, the primacy of science to knowledge and myth, the significance of the text and author.

SEPTEMBER 23 & 30

TOPIC; Simulated and Virtual Systems: The Transparency of the Social in Baudrillard

The social has existed as a concept usually constructed in representational terms connected with other concepts such as class, people, group or mass. Baudrillard attacked the social as an object in particular through the reworking of the basis of exchange from its understanding in political economy of the object to its reformulation in the symbolic simulated redefining of what we mean by the social and political, especially in a democracy. Baudrillard's later work traced the 'fatal strategies' underlying the transparency of the political and the moral critique of the transparency of 'evil' in virtual systems.

OCTOBER 14 Thanksgiving

OCTOBER 7 & OCTOBER 21

TOPIC; Speed and Politics

Virilio analyzes the relations amongst technology, ethics and the social and shows how conceptions of time and space are altered in the postmodern world. Beginning with a classic study of the fortifications of the Atlantic during the Second World War Virilio argues the transformation of the control of space from the view of the velocity of the image. Virilio shows how the surveillance of modern technology affects behavior altering the political and the locus of power in a society captured in the speed of light and the nostalgia for the lost dimensions. The vision machine creates the increasing blindness of the social.

OCTOBER 28 & NOVEMBER 11

TOPIC; Science, Reason & Myth

Serres looks at the postmodern world through the premodern. He shows how the 'five senses' of the individual change with the philosophical 'technology' establishing culture captured through the myth of Hermes. The social becomes communication via the 'parasite' founding the 'natural contract' on the 'third' of triangular relations. Thus a 'new' contract theory based on the environment and social relations.

NOVEMBER 4

Reading Break

NOVEMBER 18

Topic: Presentations of Essays

NOVEMBER 25 & DECEMBER 2

TOPIC; Virtual Machines

Deleuze with Guattari conceptualize a different way of viewing social relations not in the traditional hierarchy of power but in 'rhizomes' drawn by a genealogy of desire. This concept will be applied to politics and the field of relations produced by various 'machines'. At the center of a non-transcendental philosophy is the real as a virtual and as a possible mode of the actual -- thus a philosophy of the network of machinic relations.

JANUARY 6 & JANUARY 13

TOPIC; The Thought of Alan Baidou

Baidou, whose important works Being and Event and Logic of Worlds have recently been published in translation, are an attempt a 'return' to Platonic ontology. A pure theory of truth is found in the matheme that Baidou develops out of a reconsideration of set theory. Baidou's 'subtractive' theory of being, set against Hegel and his read of Deleuze, allows a reestablishment of politics in the action that 'names' the event of a new 'subject'.

JANUARY 20 & JANUARY 27

TOPIC: Hayles from Possessive Individualism to the Posthuman

The liberal tradition, according to the Canadian theorist C.B. Macpherson, rests on a concept of the individual as possessive. This implies an autonomy that mutates though with cybernetics epitomized by the Turing Test. Enter then the world of the relation of digital and analogue media that reverse the liberal individual in a growing world of emergent life.

FEBRUARY 3 & FEBRUARY 10

TOPIC; Derrida on Time and Exchange

We will examine one aspect of Derrida's thought where he takes a notion of Bataille's general and restricted economy to a new reading on 'exchange', 'value' and life and death. The example of a reworking of the social as evidenced in the exchange of 'counterfeit money' that he ends Given Time. This view of time as outside of the calculus of reason leads to Derrida's thought around politics and friendship.

READING WEEK FEBRUARY 17

FEBRUARY 24 and MARCH 2

Class Presentations

MARCH 9

Topic: Colonialism and Racism

Fanon explores the colonial relation which led him to support liberation movements aimed at independence. Trained as a psychiatrist, he set out in his analysis of Black skins and White masks both the political and psychological aspects of racism and of colonialism in The Wretched of the Earth.

MARCH 16

TOPIC: Bio Politics, "The Coming Community"

Agamben, taking in part from the Michel Foucault the concept of bio politics, (though in a rather different way) sets out in his celebrated work Homo Sacer how the sovereign creates spaces where the law is not applied leading to tragic consequences to individuals reduced to 'bare life'. This opens up the interval between human and animal life with its consequences for the 'coming community'.

MARCH 23 & MARCH 30

TOPIC: Haraway from Cyborgs to the Dogs!

Haraway in a famous essay introduces the world of the cyborg tied as it is to an analysis of the gender relations of world that turns women into creatures. From this Haraway extends her analysis to include how in the posthuman world we enter into relations with fellow creatures as our 'humanity' becomes a species humanity.

Last Class: Review and Conclusion

READING LIST

Other Primary Texts

I list a number of other selections that you might interest you. A more extensive list is available on request.

- Agamben, Giorgio, State of Exception, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.
 Agamben, Giorgio, The Open: Man and Animal, Stanford, 2004.
 ----, Potentialities, Stanford, 1999.
 Badiou, Alan, Being and Event, Continuum, 2005.
 ----, The Century, Polity, 2007.
 ----, Conditions, Continuum, 2008.
 Bataille, Georges, The Accursed Share, Vol. 1, Zone Books, 1988.
 ----, The Theory of Religion, Zone Books.
 Baudrillard, Jean, Impossible Exchange, N.Y.: Verso, 2001.
 ----, Seduction, New World Perspectives, 1990.
 ----, The Illusion of the End, Stanford: Stanford U. Press, 1994.
 ----, Symbolic Exchange and Death, Ldn: Sage, 1995.
 Deleuze, Gilles, Difference and Repetition, Columbia, 1994.
 Deleuze, Giles and Guattari, Félix, Anti-Oedipus, Viking, 1982.
 Deleuze, Giles and Guattari, Félix, What is Philosophy, N.Y.: Columbia, 1994.
 Derrida, Jacques, Politics of Friendship, Ldn.: Verso, 1997.
 ----, Specters of Marx,
 ----, Roques, Stanford, 2005
 Fanon, Frantz, Black Skin, White Masks, N.Y.: Grove Press, 2008.
 ----, A Dying Colonialism,
 Serres, Michel, The Parasite, John Hopkins, 1982.
 ---- Hermes: Literature, Science and Philosophy, part one, John Hopkins, 1982.
 Virilio, Paul., The Vision Machine, New York: Semiotext(e), 1994.
 ----, The University of Disaster, Polity Press, 2010.
 Haraway, Donna, When Species Meet, U of Minnesota Press: 2007.
 ----, Simians, Cyborgs and Women, Routledge:1996.
 Hayles, N. K., How We Became Posthuman, Chicago, 1999.
 ----, Writing Machines, MIT Press: 2002.
 ----, My Mother Was a Computer, Chicago: U of Chicago, 2005.

Extended Reading List

- Adorno, Theodore, Aesthetic Theory, Ldn: Routledge, 1984.
- , Negative Dialectics, Seabury Press, 1973.
- Adorno, T. and Horkheimer, M., The Dialectic of Enlightenment, Continuum Press, 1986.
- Agamben, Giorgio, The Man Without Content, Stanford: Stanford University Press., 1999.
- , The End of the Poem, Stanford: Stanford University Press., 1999.
- , Homo Sacer, Stanford: Stanford University Press., 1998.
- , State of Exception, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.
- , The Open, Stanford: Stanford University Press., 2004.
- , Potentialities, Stanford: Stanford University Press., 1999.
- , The Kingdom and the Glory, Stanford University Press, 2011.
- , The Highest Poverty, Stanford University Press, 2013.
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- Barthes, Roland, The Pleasure of the Text, Hill and Wang, 1975.
- , New Critical Essays, Hill and Wang, 1980.
- , Elements of Semiology, Hill and Wang, 1967.
- , Empire of Signs, Hill and Wang, 1982.
- , The Responsibility of Forms, Hill and Wang, 1985.
- , The Fashion System, Hill and Wang, 1983.
- , A Lover's Discourse, Hill and Wang, 1978.
- , Camera Lucida, Hill and Wang, 1981.
- , Image, Music, Text, Hill and Wang, 1977.
- , The Eiffel Tower, Hill and Wang, 1979.
- , Sade, Fourier, Loyola, Hill and Wang, 1976.
- , Mythologies, Paladin, 1973.
- , Writing Degree Zero, Cape Editions, 1967.
- , Critical Essays, Northwestern, 1972.
- Baudou, Alain, Deleuze, Paris: Hachette, 1997. (This work is now in English).
- , L'être et l'événement, Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1988. Translated by Oliver Feltham as Being and Event, N.Y.: Continuum, 2005.
- , Peut-on penser la politique?, Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1985.
- , Theoretical Writings, N.Y.: Continuum, 2004.
- , Ethics, N.Y.: Verso, 2001.
- , Infinite Thought, N.Y.: Continuum, 2004.
- , Manifesto for Philosophy, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999.
- , Logiques des mondes, Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2006. Logics of Worlds, Continuum, 2009.
- , Plato's Republic, N.Y.: Columbia, 2012.
- , Saint Paul, Stanford University Press, 2003.
- Bataille, Georges, The Accursed Share, (3 vol.), Zone Books, 1991.
- , Story of the Eye, Penguin, 1979.
- , Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, Minnesota: University Press, 1985.
- , Eroticism, City Lights, 1986.
- , The Theory of Religion, Zone Books, 1989.
- , On Nietzsche, Paragon, 1992.
- , The Trial of Giles de Rais, Amok, 1991.
- , My Mother, Madame Edwarda, The Dead Man, Marion Boyars, 1989.
- , Literature and Evil, Marion Boyars, 1985.
- , Blue of Noon, Marion Boyars, 1979.
- , L'Abbé C, Marion Boyars, 1988.
- , Inner Experience, Suny, 1988.
- , Guilty, Lapis, 1988.
- , The Impossible, City Lights, 1991.
- , Lascaux ou la naissance de l'art, Oeuvres complètes, IX, Gallimard, 1979.

- , Manet, Oeuvres complètes, IX, Gallimard, 1979.
- , The Tears of Eros, City Lights, 1989.
- Baudrillard, Jean, Seduction, New World Perspectives, 1990
- , In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities, Semiotext(e)
- , The Mirror of Production, Telos Press, 1973.
- , For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign, Telos: St. Louis, 1981.
- , Fatal Strategies, Semiotext(e), 1990.
- , Simulations, Semiotext(e), 1983.
- , La Guerre du Golfe n'a pas eu lieu, Paris: Galilee, 1991.
- , La Transparence du mal, Paris: Galilee, 1990.
- , Symbolic Exchange and Death, London: Sage. 199?.)
- , The Ecstasy of Communication, Semiotext(e), 1987.
- , The Illusion of the End, Stanford: Stanford U. Press, 1994.
- , The Perfect Crime, New York: Verso, 1996.
- , Le paroxysite indifférent, Paris: Grasset, 1997.
- , Impossible Exchange, N.Y.: Verso, 2001.
- , L'esprit du terrorisme, Paris: Galilee, 2002.
- , Screened Out, N.Y.: Verso, 2002.
- , Passwords, N.Y.: Verso, 2003.
- , Power Inferno, Paris, Galilé, 2002.
- , The Conspiracy of Art, Semiotext(e): N.Y., 2005.
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- , The Step Not Beyond, Suny, 1992.
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- Butler, Judith, Gender Trouble, N.Y.: Routledge, 1990.
- Caillois, Roger, The Necessity of the Mind, Venice, Ca.: Lapis, 1990.
- Callinicos, A., Against Postmodernism: A Marxist Critique, Polity, 1989.
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- , Caligula and Three Other Plays, Vintage Paperback
- , The Fall, Vintage, N.Y.
- Canguilhem Georges, The Normal and the Pathological, Zone, 1989.
- Cixous, Hélène & Clément, C., The Newly Born Woman, Minnesota, 1986.
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- , Nietzsche and Philosophy, University of Minnesota Press, 1983.
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- , Bergsonism, Zone, 1988.
- , Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza, Zone, 1990.
- , Cinema 1 & 2, Minnesota, 1991.
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- , Recodings, Washington: Bay Press, 1985.
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