

Pol 475/2075 POSTMODERN AND CONTEMPORARY THOUGHT

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Office Hour: by appointment or
by Zoom.

Office hours are an opportunity for you to ask questions, discuss interesting course concepts, or to ask for academic advice.

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 an "in-person" class.

What to do if you're feeling unwell

1. Report your sickness to your course instructor.
2. Go home
3. If desired, 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. Readings have been kept short being mainly essays or chapters from a work and will serve as an introduction to the theorists. Please come prepared to discuss the concepts raised in the texts. As this is a seminar, I will request, depending on enrolment, one or two members of the class to help lead discussion each week. A sign-up list will be distributed in our second class.

Course Objectives

The study of social and political ideas 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. A review of 1,500 words on a text from the list Reading List below or one of your choosing if discussed with me. The review is due October 6. You may also be asked to present, briefly in 5 minutes, your review to the class. The presentation will not form part of the mark. The review amounts to 30% of the course mark.
 - 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, November 10 amounting to 50% of your final mark. You will be asked to present your paper to the seminar on either November 24 or December 1. It will form 10% of the mark. The presentation of your essay topic should be a maximum 15 minutes in length including time for questions. The seminar presentations schedule will be set after the fall break.
2. Class participation 10%.

Late penalties are 5% per school day. **Submission of work by e mail only preferably in Word or PDF.**

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 40% for the first paper and 60% for the second. In this case as well, work is to be submitted by e mail.

There is no final exam in this course.

Term Essay Topics

1. The self is no longer that of enlightenment thought. It is now become a cyborg. Comment.
2. Political economy has gone from production to consumption, from the real to the hyper real and the virtual. Comment.

3. Speed has altered our conception of vision. What is its effect on the political?
4. Democracy, in the face of sexism, racism and colonialism, cannot work if all do not have a voice. Comment.
5. No longer a question of being but of becoming. Comment
6. What can art teach us about the political?
7. Or a topic of your choosing. Please discuss it first with me.

Readings

The Readings

The number of writers concerned with postmodernism is large. The readings highlighted here may be replaced or supplemented by others by agreement with the class. The selections may also be found on the internet.

Baudrillard, Jean, “The Precession of Simulacra”, in Simulacra and Simulation, Ann Arbor: U of Michigan Press 2016.

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). and Guattari, The Three Ecologies, Ldn., Athalone Press, 2000.

Derrida, Jacques, “Counterfeit Money” in Given Time, Chicago, 1992.

Fanon, Frantz, “The Negro and Language”, Black Skin, White Masks, N.Y.: Grove Press, 2008.

Michel Foucault, “Las Meninas” in The Order of Things, N. Y. Vintage, 1970

Haraway, D, “Cyborg Manifesto” in Simians, Cyborgs and

Women, Routledge:1996.

Serres, Michel, “Turner translates Carnot” in Hermes, Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1982.

Virilio, Paul, “The Vision Machine” in The Vision Machine, New York: Semiotext(e), 1994.

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

Schedule of the Seminars

SEPTEMBER 8

TOPIC; Introduction and 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 15

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.

SEPTEMBER 22 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.

SEPTEMBER 29 TOPIC Foucault and Painting

We will discuss the opening chapter of Michel Foucault's The Order of Things devoted to Velasquez's the 'Las Meninas' both as an interpretation of the famous painting and of Foucault's epistemology.

OCTOBER 6

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.

REVIEW DUE

OCTOBER 13 Thanksgiving

OCTOBER 20

TOPIC; Science, Reason & Art

Serres looks at the postmodern world through the modern premodern. In the essay we will look at he shows the relation of art, technology and science in the revolution of thermal dynamics and the redefinition of power.

OCTOBER 27 - 31 Reading Break

NOVEMBER 3

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.

NOVEMBER 10

TOPIC: Ecosophy

Guattari's penultimate writing takes on the challenge of ecology in his short essay by that title in The Three Ecologies.

ESSAY DUE

NOVEMBER 17

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. We will look at the first essay on language and race in Black Skins.

TOPIC; NOVEMBER 24

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 we will look at is of an analysis found in Given Time of Baudelaire's 'Counterfeit Money' that he reproduces at the end of Given Time. This view of time as outside of the calculus of reason leads to Derrida's thought around politics and friendship.

NOVEMBER 24 and DECEMBER 1
Presentations of Essays

DECEMBER 1 Last Class

Academic Misconduct (<http://uoft.me/CodeofBehaviour>)

The University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters outlines the behaviours that constitute academic misconduct, the processes for addressing academic offences, and the penalties that may be imposed. You are expected to be familiar with the contents of this document. **x**

Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

In papers and assignments:

- Using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement.
- Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor.
- Making up sources or facts.
- Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment (this includes working in groups on assignments that are supposed to be individual work).

On tests and exams:

- Using or possessing any unauthorized aid, including a cell phone.
- Looking at someone else's answers.

- Letting someone else look at your answers.
- Misrepresenting your identity.
- Submitting an altered test for re-grading.

Misrepresentation:

- Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including (but not limited to) doctor's notes.
- Falsifying institutional documents or grades.

If you have any questions about what is or is not permitted in this course, please do not hesitate to contact me. If you have questions about appropriate research and citation methods, you are expected to seek out additional information from me or other available campus resources like the College Writing Centers www.writing.utoronto.ca/writing-centres/centres/arts-and-science, the Academic Success Centre www.asc.utoronto.ca, or the U of T Writing Website www.writing.utoronto.ca

Religious Accommodations

- Every reasonable effort will be made to avoid religious holy days or other compulsory activities. Please inform me if you will be absent from class or have a problem with a due date.

Generative Artificial Intelligence

If you are wishing to use tools like ChatGPT or other AI assistants, please secure permission from me.

You are advised to keep rough and draft work and hard copies of your essays and assignments before emailing them to me. All essays/assignments should be kept until the marked essays/assignments have been returned to you and the grades are posted on ACORN.

Extended Reading List

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- Adorno, T. and Horkheimer, M., The Dialectic of Enlightenment, Continuum Press, 1986.
- Agamben, Giorgio, The Man Without Content, Stanford: Stanford University Press., 1999.
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