

Institute for Globalization and the Human Condition/ Department of Anthropology
Global Futures (786)
Professor Petra Rethmann

Time: Tuesdays 13:30-16:30/Fall 2018
Room: LRW 1013

Office: CNH 535
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 12:00 – 13:00
Contact: rethman@mcmaster.ca

Course Description

This course seeks to address and open up the question of global political futures through a series of political, philosophical, and anthropological excursions. Starting from the hypothesis that many of us today experience the present as extremely cynical (Sloterdijk), as well as politically unpromising and closed, we will examine a number of theoretical and practical approaches designed to move beyond cynicism and a general disenchantment with the politics of our times. In building on a rich and interdisciplinary set of examinations, we look at some of the concrete arenas in which present-day agents seek to mobilize possibilities for just futures, including citizenship, political and organizational forms, digitality and technology, art, and activism against right-wing populism, and affects such as enchantment. While at first glance these appear to be registers disjointed from each other, there exists a considerable amount of connectivity between them – which we will also explore.

There exist three objectives in relation to this course. First, I hope that this course will provide you with a critical awareness of the manifold approaches that exist in relation to the crafting of promising and progressive futures. The goal of this course is not to arrive at a pre-determined idea of what a socially and politically just future might look like, but rather to ask about alternative cultural and political formations. Second, I would like to consider how practical practices and approaches engage possibilities in some detail. And third, I hope that we will be able to develop a greater awareness of ourselves as agentive beings.

Assignments

Notes on Readings (5 two-page responses to weekly readings, worth 3% each) 15 %
Participation 30% (15% leading seminar, 20% general participation) 35%
Essay Proposal, **due November 6** (returned November 13, with comments) 10%
10-minute Presentation of Essay Topic to Class 10% **Nov. 13**
Final Essay (3500 – 4000 words) 40% **due December 11**

Notes on Readings 15% (5 x 3% - i.e. following the Intro class and excluding the week where there are no assigned readings, you should be handing in notes covering five weeks – the weeks in which you hand in your notes are your choice).

Reading notes are due in or before class. Please submit hard copies. They should be **two pages** long, and consist of the following for each text:

- 1) List of key terms
- 2) Summary statement (four sentences maximum) of the author's main argument. This statement should be written in your own words.
- 3) Two or three issues or questions raised by the reading in connection with the themes of (and/or other readings from) the course. You can also draw connections between texts.

Participation 35 % (15 % leading seminar, 20% general participation)

Students will be chosen randomly to lead the discussion on one of the readings (articles/excerpts) for the week. The goal is not to present the text, but to facilitate discussion. This means you don't need to be an expert; only to have thought carefully about the reading and come prepared to help the class extract important points, find connections, and think about the ideas contained in the reading in relation to the course as a whole.

Seminar format

The discussion leader should be soliciting suggestions from the class of key terms or concepts in the text. Once these have been clarified, the leader should ask whether anyone would like brief discussion/clarification of any of the terms. The discussion leader is not responsible for providing definitions, but should solicit ideas and information from the class. This part of the discussion should take no longer than 10 minutes (you're your discretion here: if the conversations strays too far from key ideas in the text, you can suggest that these points be revisited later).

The discussion should then proceed from the main argument(s) of the piece. Rather than starting off with her/his own ideas, the leader should invite class members to share their sense of what the reading is about. The leader can add points or make connections between comments.

Once there exists general agreement on what the main points of a given reading are, the discussion can move to the stage of identifying implications and questions. The leader can start with suggesting an issue for discussion, then inviting others to raise significant points. During the discussion, the leader should try to draw in as many participants as possible. Discussion of a given reading should entail reflection on strengths as well as weaknesses of the readings.

Essay Proposals 10 %

Your essay proposal should consist of a concise statement of the specific thesis or question your paper or project will explore. It should include a bibliography, in proper Chicago Manual of Style format, of at least five article or books related to your topic. The proposal should be no more than 500 words, excluding the bibliography. Proposals are due **November 20**.

Essays 40%

Your essay should engage with at least one issue we have explored in class. You are also free to make use of the ideas we have studied to guide a critical analysis of an image, an object, a technology, a movement, or an institution. Alternative projects (e.g., a creative project such as video, art piece, or work of creative non-fiction, with accompanying rationale) are also possible, subject to prior approval. Essays are **due December 11** by 4:30 p.m.

SCHEDULE of READINGS

Week 1: September 4

Introduction to the Course

There are no required readings for this session, but here are a few suggestions

Brown, Wendy. 2010. *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty*. New York: Zone Books.

Comaroff, Jean and John. 2000. Millennial Capitalism: First Thoughts on a Second Coming. *Public Culture* 12 (2): 291-343.

Dean, Jodi. 2009. *Democracy and other Neoliberal Fantasies: Communicative Capitalism and Left Politics*. Durham: Duke University Press. Excerpts.

Ferguson, James. 2006. *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Harvey, David. 2005. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ho, Karen. 2009. *Liquidated: An Ethnography of Wall Street*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Klein, Naomi. *The Shock Doctrine: the Rise of Disaster Capitalism*. New York: Picador.

Saad-Fiho, Alfredo, and Deborah Johnston, eds. 2005. *Neoliberalism: A Critical Reader*. London: Pluto.

Scott, David. 2004. *Conscripts of Modernity: the Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Tadiar, Neferti M. 2009. *Things Fall Away: Philippine Historical Experience and the Makings of Globalization*. Durham: Duke University Press

Week 2: September 11

The Demise of the Future?

Required Readings:

Brown, Wendy. 2010. *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*. New York: Zone Books. Excerpts.

Wenzel, Jennifer. 2006. Remembering the Past's Future: Anti-Imperialist Nostalgia and Some Versions of the Third World. *Cultural Critique* 62: 1-32.

Suggested Further Readings

Buck-Morss, Susan. 2002. *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Crimp, Douglas. 2003. Melancholia and Mourning. In *Loss*. Edited by David L. Eng and David Kazanjian. California: University of California Press. Pp. 188-202.

Derrida, Jacques. 2006. *Specters of Marx: the State of Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*. New York: Routledge.

- Foucault, Michel. 1991. Governmentality. In *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*. Edited by Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Pp. 87-104.
- Hochschild, Arlie. 2016. *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right*. New York: The New Press.
- Miller-Idriss, Cynthia. 2017. *The Extreme Gone Mainstream: Commercialization and Far Right Youth Culture in Germany*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Mishra, Pankaj. 2017. *Age of Anger: A History of the Present*. New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux.
- Morris, Rosalind C.. 2003. Returning the Body without Haunting: Mourning “Nai Phi” and the End of Revolution in Thailand. In *Loss*. Edited by David L. Eng and David Kazanjian. California: University of California Press. Pp. 29-58.
- Piot, Charles. 2010. *Nostalgia for the Future: West Africa after the Cold War*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Scott, David. 1999. *Refashioning Futures: Criticism after Postcoloniality*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Shoshan, Nitzan. 2016. *The Management of Hate: Nation, Affect, and the Governance of Right-Wing Extremism in Germany*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Stewart, Kathleen. 2005. Trauma Time: A Still Life. In *Histories of the Future*. Edited by Daniel Rosenberg and Susan Harding. Durham: Duke University Press. Pp. 321-338.

Week 3: September 18

Beyond Cynicism and Despair

Film: *Fire at Sea* (2016, dir. Gianfranco Rosi)

Suggested Further Readings

- Ahmed, Sara. 2010. *The Promise of Happiness*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Benjamin, Walter. 1968. Theses on the Philosophy of History. In *Illuminations*. Edited and with an Introduction by Hannah Arendt. Translated by Harry Zohn. New York: Schocken. Pp. 253-264.
- Boyer, Dominic, and Alexei Yurchak. 2010. AMERICAN STIOB: or, what Late-Socialist Aesthetics of Parody reveal about Contemporary Political Culture in the West. *Cultural Anthropology* 25 (2): 179-221.
- Brown, Wendy. 2003. Resisting Left Melancholia. In *Loss*. Edited by David L. Eng and David Kazanjian. California: University of California Press. Pp. 458-465.
- Buck-Morss, Susan. 1983. Redeeming Mass Culture for the Revolution. *New German Critique* 29: 211-240.
- Castiglia, Christopher. 2017. *The Practices of Hope: Literary Criticism in Disenchanted Times*. New York: New York University Press.
- Rutten, Ellen. 2017. *Sincerity after Communism: A Cultural History*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Week 4: September 25

The Future of Political Life: Public Things

Required Readings

Honig, Bonnie. 2017. *Public Things: Democracy in Disrepair*. New York: Fordham University Press.

Week 5: October 2

The Future of Political Life: The Commons and Assemblies

Required Readings

- Hardt, Michael, and Antonio Negri. 2009. *Commonwealth*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. Excerpts.
- Razsa, Maple. 2015. *Bastards of Utopia: Living Radical Politics after Socialism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. Excerpts.

Suggested Further Readings

- Appadurai, Arjun. 2000. Grassroots Globalization and the Research Imagination. *Public Culture* 12 (1): 1 – 19.
- Crehan, Kate. 2016. *Gramsci's Common Sense: Inequality and its Narratives*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Graeber, David. 2009. *Direct Action: An Ethnography*. Oakland: AK Press.
- . 2007. *Possibilities: Essays on Hierarchy, Rebellion, and Desire*. Oakland, CA.: AK Press.
- Hardt, Michael, and Antonio Negri. 2004. *Multitude*. London: Penguin Books.
- . 2017. *Assembly*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Holloway, John. 2000. *Change the World without Taking Power: the Meaning of Revolution Today*. London: Pluto Press.
- Killjoy, Margaret. 2009. *Mythmakers and Lawbreakers*. Oakland: AK Press.
- Marsili, Lorenzo, and Niccolo Milanese, 2017. *Citizens of Nowhere*. London: ZED Books.
- Scott, James C. 2009. *The Art of Not Being Governed: an Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- The Invisible Community. 2009. *The Coming Insurrection*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Virno, Paolo. 2004. *A Grammar of the Multitude*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

October 9

Mid-Term Recess

Week 6: October 16

The Future of Political Life: Activism and Art

Required Readings

- McKee, Yates. 2016. *Strike Art: Contemporary Art and the Post-Occupy Condition*. London: Verso. Excerpts.
- Povinelli, Elizabeth A. 2011. *Economies of Abandonment: Social Belonging and Endurance in Late Liberalism*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Suggested Further Readings

- Davis, Heather, and Etienne Turpin, eds. 2015. *Art in the Anthropocene: Encounters Among Aesthetics, Politics, Environments, and Epistemologies*. Berlin: Anexact.

- DeBord, Guy. 1995. *Society of the Spectacle*. New York: Zone Books.
- Levine, Caroline. 2007. *Provoking Democracy: Why We Need the Arts*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing.
- Rancière, Jacques. 2007. *On the Shores of Politics*. London: Verso.
- Sommer, Doris. 2014. *The Work of Art in the World: Civic Agency and Public Humanities*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Thompson, Nato. 2017. *Culture as Weapon: The Art of Influence in Everyday Life*. Brooklyn: Melville House.

Week 7: October 23

The Future of Political Life: Digitality and Networks

Required Readings

- Bernard Harcourt. 2015. *Exposed: Desire and Disobedience in the Digital Age*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press. Excerpts.
- Tufekci, Zeynep. 2017. *Twitter and Tear Gas: The Power and Fragility of Networked Protests*. New Haven: Yale University Press. Excerpts.

Suggested Further Readings

- Tsing, Anna. 2004. *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection*. Princeton: Princeton University Press

Week 8: October 30

The Future of Political Life: Secularity, Spirituality, Religion

Required Readings

- Asad, Talal, Wendy Brown, Judith Butler, and Saba Mahmood. 2009. *Is Critique Secular?: Blasphemy, Injury, and Free Speech*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Excerpts.
- Mahmood, Saba. 2015. *Religious Difference in a Secular Age: A Minority Report*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Excerpts.

Suggested Further Readings

- Brown, Wendy. 2006. *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire*. Princeton: Princeton University Press
- Mahmood, Saba. 2005. *The Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Povinelli, Elizabeth. 2002. *The Cunning of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Week 9: November 6

Essay Proposals are due

The Future of Political Life: The Value(s) of Speculation

Required Readings

- Baker-Cristales, Beth. 2012. Poiesis of Possibility: The Ethnographic Sensibilities of Ursula K. Le Guin. *Anthropology and Humanism* 37 (1): 15 – 26.
- Le Guin, Ursula K. 2012. *The Unreal and the Real*. New York: Simon & Schuster. Excerpts.

- Le Guin, Ursula K. 2016. *Words are My Matter: Writings About Life and Books, 2000 – 2016*. Easthampton, MA.: Small Beer Press. Excerpts.
- McLean, Stuart J. 2017. *Fictionalizing Anthropology: Encounters and Fabulations at the Edges of the Human*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. Excerpts.

Suggested Further Readings

- Haraway, Donna. 2015. *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chtulucene*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Le Guin, Ursula K. 2017. *No Time to Spare: Thinking About What Matters*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. Excerpts.
- Lepselter, Susan. 2016. *The Resonance of Unseen Things: Poetics, Power, Captivity, and UFOs in the American Uncanny*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Messeri, Lisa. 2016. *Placing Outer Space: An Earthly Ethnography of Other Worlds*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Week 10: November 13

Presentation of Essay Topic to Class

Week 11: November 20

The Future of Political Life: The Politics of Enchantment

Required Readings

- Bennett, Jane. 2001. *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, and Ethics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Excerpts.
- , 2010. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham: Duke University Press. Excerpts.

Suggested Further Readings

- Anker, Elizabeth, and Rita Felski, eds. 2017. *Critique and Postcritique*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- De La Cadena, Marisol. 2015. *Earth Beings: Ecologies of Practice Across Andean Worlds*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Latour, Bruno. 2013. *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence: An Anthropology of the Modern*. Translated by Catherine Porter. Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press.

Week 12: November 27

Film: TBA

Week 13: December 4

It's Up to You!

University Policies

Academic Integrity Statement

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behavior in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behavior can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or e-mail sas@mcmaster.ca. For further information, consult McMaster University’s Policy for [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#).

Religious, Indigenous and Spiritual Observances (RISO)

The University recognizes that, on occasion, the timing of a student’s religious, Indigenous, or spiritual observances and that of their academic obligations may conflict. In such cases, the University will provide reasonable academic accommodation for students that is consistent with the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Please review the [RISO information for students in the Faculty of Social Sciences](#) about how to request accommodation.

Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student’s own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

Course Modification

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable

notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.