

Department of Anthropology and The Institute for Globalization and the Human
Condition

Global Futures (786)
Professor Petra Rethmann

Time: Tuesdays 11:30-14:20/Fall 2019

Room: CNH 307

Office: CNH 535

Office Hours: Mondays, 14:30 – 15:30

Contact: rethman@mcmaster.ca

Course Description

This course seeks to address and open up the question of “the future” through a series of political, theoretical, and anthropological excursions. Starting from the hypothesis that many of us today experience the present as extremely cynical and politically unpromising and closed, we will examine conceptual, ethical, and affective openings to the problem of futurity and political possibility – openings that might help us to understand and address this present in different ways. To this effect, the materials assigned for this course address the question of futures by way of thinking through “modes:” a set of inter-related ways of looking at, imagining, and thinking about futures – including temporality, gender, secularism, political form, and climate. We also looking at how political and social thinkers set up the values of critique and speculation. The goal of this course is not to arrive at a determined idea of what a socially and politically just future might look like, but rather to ask about alternative cultural and political formations.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Presentation and Participation (35 %)

Classes will be structured as discussions based on assigned readings. Each student will be responsible for initiating and guiding discussion based on the readings that have been assigned to her or his presentation. The goal is not so much to present your response to the class as to use it as a framework for discussion, allowing for the following: for each text, presenters will summarize their sense of the text’s general meaning/ significance, identify and define key concepts (including difficult or troubling parts of the text), and then invite others to respond. Once most members of the class have had a chance to identify other themes or concepts and share impressions, presenters will identify one or two key questions or problems arising from the text for the class’s consideration, and then monitor discussion.

Class participants are responsible for having read the material and coming to class ready to contribute to the discussion.

Participation Grades will be calculated (roughly) as follows:

Presentation 15%
Participation in discussions 20%

Speculative Writing/Essay Proposals (should not exceed 500 words; 20%)

There are a number of genres in which you can write in this class. For those of you who want to pursue traditional styles of academic writing, your essay proposal should consist of a concise statement of the specific thesis or question your paper will explore. It should include a bibliography, in proper Chicago Style format, of at least five articles or books related to your topic. The proposal should be no more than 500 words, excluding the bibliography. For those of you who want to try their hands at more creative styles of writing, you could submit a piece of speculative fiction (see for example the sections on October 22 or November 5) or another piece of creative writing.

We will hold a workshop in class on November 23 so that you can solicit feedback on your proposal from me and from the other students in the class. The final proposal is due November 30 in class.

Essays (should not exceed 3000 words; 45%)

Drawing on one or more of the ideas and readings we have explored in class, your essay should do one of two things. First, you may want to focus directly on a particular concept or theory, exploring the ways in which it has developed and what its productivity is today. Second, you could make use of the ideas and criticisms that we have engaged to guide a critical analysis of an image, an object, a technology, a movement, an institution, a social development, a text, an event.... in other words, you can formulate a paper that investigates contemporary sites of futurity and political possibility. **The final essay is due on December 5 at 16:00 in Chester New Hall 535.**

Please remember to keep copies of all your work in case anything goes astray.

Required Readings

I will make all required readings available. Some literature will also be put on reserve in Mills Library. All other readings are electronically accessible through the McMaster Library Catalogue.

SCHEDULE

Week 1: SEPTEMBER 10

Introduction to the Course

Suggested Readings

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

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

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

- David Harvey. 2005. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Karen Ho. 2009. *Liquidated: An Ethnography of Wall Street*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Naomi Klein. *The Shock Doctrine: the Rise of Disaster Capitalism*. New York: Picador.
- 2017 *The Economization of Life*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Week 2: SEPTEMBER 17

The Value of Critique/Beyond Critique

Required Readings

- Fassin, Didier
2017 The Endurance of Critique. *Anthropological Theory* 17 (1): 4 – 29.
- Felski, Rita
2016 Introduction. *New Literary History: Recomposing the Humanities* 47 (2-3): 215 – 229.
- Latour, Bruno
2004 Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern. *Critical Inquiry* 30 (2): 225 – 48.
- Muecke, Stephen
2016 An Ecology of Institutions: Recomposing the Humanities. *New Literary History* 47 (2-3): 231 – 248.

Suggested Readings

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

Week 3: SEPTEMBER 24

Care/Speculative Thinking/Relating I

Required Readings

- Bloch, Ernst
1988 *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature: Selected Essays*. Translated by Jack Zipes and Frank Mecklenburg. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press. Excerpts.
- Haran, Joan
2010 Redefining Hope as Praxis. *Journal for Cultural Research* 14 (3): 393 – 408.
- Mouffe, Chantal and Ernesto Laclau, in conversation with Mary Zournazi
2002 Hope, Passion, Politics. In *Hope: New Philosophies for Change*. Edited by Mary Zournazi. New York: Routledge. Pp. 122 – 148.
- Solnit, Rebecca
2016 *Hope in the Dark: Untold Histories, Wild Possibilities*. Chicago: Haymarket Books. Excerpts.
- Tsiolkas, Christos, in conversation with Mary Zournazi
2002 On Believing. In *Hope: New Philosophies for Change*. Edited by Mary Zournazi. New York: Routledge. Pp. 98 – 121.

Suggested Readings

- Castiglia, Christopher

2017 *The Practices of Hope: Literary Criticism in Disenchanted Times*. New York: New York University Press.

Haraway, Donna J.

2016 *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Week 4: OCTOBER 1

Care/Speculative Thinking/Relating II

Required Readings

Puig de la Bellacasa, Maria

2017 *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More than Human Worlds*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. Excerpts.

Stevenson, Lisa

2014 *Life Beside Itself: Imagining Care in the Arctic*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Excerpts.

Suggested Readings

Shotwell, Alexis

2016 *Against Purity: Living Ethically in Compromised Times*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Week 5: OCTOBER 8

Guest Lecture: Nandita Sharma

Required Readings

2015 Borders-Transborders-No Borders: Problematizing the “Figure of the Migrant.” *Transnational Social Review* 5 (1): 2 - 6.

Week 6: OCTOBER 15

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MODES OF FUTURITY

Week 7 : OCTOBER 22

Otherwise: Thinking with Futurity I: Work

Required Readings

Gershon, Ilana

2017 *Down and Out in the New Economy: How People Find (Or Don't Find) Work Today*. Chicago; University of Chicago Press. Excerpts.

2015 *A World of Work: Imagined Manuals for Real Jobs*. Ithaca: ILR Press.

Excerpts: Gerson, Introduction; Lane, How to be a Professional Organizer in the United States; Graber, Making Do in Perpetual Crisis: How to be a Journalist in Buryatia.

Week 8: OCTOBER 29

Otherwise: Thinking with Futurity II: Epistemology/Multi-Species Being/Epistemology

Required Readings

De La Cadena, Marisol

2015 *Earth Beings: Ecologies of Practice Across Andean Worlds*. Durham: Duke University Press. Excerpts.

Week 8: NOVEMBER 5

Thinking with Futurity III: Multi-Species Being/Life

Povinelli, Elizabeth

2011 *Economies of Abandonment*. Durham: Duke University Press. Excerpts.

Suggested Further Readings

David Graeber. 2009. *Direct Action: An Ethnography*. Oakland: AK Press.

_____. 2007. *Possibilities: Essays on Hierarchy, Rebellion, and Desire*. Oakland, CA.: AK Press.

James C. Scott. 2009. *The Art of Not Being Governed: an Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Jacques Rancière. 2007. *On the Shores of Politics*. London: Verso.

Povinelli, Elizabeth

2002 *The Cunning of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Week 9: November 5

Thinking with Futurity IV: Temporality

Required Readings

Wilder, Gary

2015 *Freedom Time: Negritude, Decolonization, and the Future of the World*. Durham: Duke University Press. Excerpts.

Suggested Further Readings

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.

Rosalind C. Morris. 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.

Kathleen Stewart. 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.

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

Wendy Brown. Politics out of History.

2003. Resisting Left Melancholia. In *Loss*. Edited by David L. Eng and David Kazanjian. California: University of California Press. Pp. 458-465.

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

-----, 1983. Redeeming Mass Culture for the Revolution. *New German Critique* 29: 211-240.

David Scott. 2004. *Conscripts of Modernity: the Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment*.

- Durham: Duke University Press.
- , 1999. *Refashioning Futures: Criticism after Postcoloniality*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Douglas Crimp. 2003. Melancholia and Mourning. In *Loss*. Edited by David L. Eng and David Kazanjian. California: University of California Press. Pp. 188-202.
- Charles Piot. 2010. *Nostalgia for the Future: West Africa after the Cold War*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Derrida, Jacques. 2006. *Specters of Marx: the State of Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*. New York: Routledge.
- Hemmings, Clare
2017 *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Wenzel, Jennifer
2006 Remembering the Past's Future: Anti-Imperialist Nostalgia and Some Versions of the Third World. *Cultural Critique* 62: 1-32.
- Yoneyama, Lisa
2016 Cold War Ruins: Transpacific Critique of American Justice and Japanese War Crimes. Durham: Duke University Press. .

Week 10: November 12

Thinking with Futurity V: Secularism and Religion

Required Readings

- Mahmood, Saba
2009 Religious Reason and Secular Affect: an Incommensurable Divide? *Critical Inquiry* 35 (4): 836 – 862.
- 2005 *The Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Excerpts.

Suggested Further Readings

- Asad, Talal, Wendy Brown, Judith Butler, and Saba Mahmood. 2009. *Is Critique Secular?: Blasphemy, Injury, and Free Speech*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Brown, Wendy
2006 *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Butler, Judith
2003 *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. London: Verso.
- Mouffe, Chantal
2005 *On the Political*. London: Verso.
- Judith Butler. 2009. *Frames of War*. London: Verso.
- Jodi Dean. 2009. *Democracy and other Neoliberal Fantasies: Communicative Capitalism and Left Politics*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Guy DeBord. 1995. *Society of the Spectacle*. New York: Zone Books.
- Brown, Wendy. 1995. Wounded Attachments. In *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Pp. 52-76.
- Mahmood, Saba. 2005. *The Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist*

Subject. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Amélie Oksenberg Rorty. 2007. The Vanishing Subject. In *Subjectivity: Ethnographic Investigations*. Edited by João Biehl, Byron Good, and Arthur Kleinman. Berkeley: University of California Press. Pp. 34-51.
Giorgio Agamben. 1998. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
Giorgio Agamben. 2005. *State of Exception*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Week 11: November 19
Film: TBA

Week 12: November 26
Proposal Workshop

Week 13: December 3
IT'S UP TO YOU!

IMPORTANT NOTES

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 students to check her or his McMaster e-mail and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Academic dishonesty consists of misrepresentation by deception or by other fraudulent means and 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 kinds of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, Appendix 3, www.mcmaster.ca/senate/academic/ac_integrity.htm

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

- a) Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own for which other credit has been obtained. (Insert specific course information, e.g., style guide).
- b) Improper collaboration in group work.
- c) Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations

2) 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.

Email Forwarding in MUGSI:

<http://www.mcmaster.ca/uts/support/email/emailforward.html>