

Department of Anthropology and The Institute for Globalization and the Human  
Condition  
**Global Futures (786)**  
Professor Petra Rethmann  
Fall 2020

**Instructor:** Dr. Petra Rethmann

**Email:** [rethman@mcmaster.ca](mailto:rethman@mcmaster.ca)

**Seminar:** synchronous; discussion-based

**Time:** Mondays, 10:30 – 13:20

**Room:** Zoom and Avenue

**Office Hours:** Please email [rethman@mcmaster.ca](mailto:rethman@mcmaster.ca) to request a meeting

### **Land Acknowledgement**

While meeting for this course, we recognize and acknowledge our presence on the traditional territories of the Mississauga and Haudenosaunee nations, and within the lands protected by the “Dish With One Spoon” Wampum agreement. This acknowledgement gives rise to a commitment to honour treaties and work toward decolonization and establishment of just relationships.

### **Course Description**

This course seeks to address and open up the question of “the future” through a series of political, theoretical, and cultural 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 can be of a cultural and speculative nature. Overall, the course invites experiments in thinking, rather than following down well-trodden paths.

To trim, so to speak, a very complex subject and matter, in this course we will be largely focusing on two highly relevant registers: the current rise in political and populist authoritarianism and climate change. We will also be discussing questions of the new materialism, decolonization, and the future of the research imagination.

### **Course Objectives**

By the end of the course students should be able to:

- Articulate theoretical and conceptual perspectives issues of temporality, histories, and futures
- Have a conceptual and an empirical understanding of some particularly significant political and cultural challenges related to addressing the future
- Be able to understand how analysts and others build up arguments across scales of space and lines of time
- Enter with confidence debates related to the future of our planet
- Produce a final research paper that evinces an element of originality in its theorization, empirical content, or analytical finesse.

### **Required Materials and Texts**

There are no required textbooks for this class. All required readings are listed below. Most are accessible through the library catalogue; simply search for the journal, year, and name of the author. Those that are not accessible through the library catalogue will be posted on Avenue to Learn or distributed via email.

### **Course Format**

The course will consist of a mix of synchronous presentations, and discussions. We will use Zoom to run weekly two hour seminars. The third hour I will be available for individual consultation

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### **Course Evaluation**

#### **Presentation (15 %)**

Classes will be structured as discussions based on assigned readings. In the beginning of the course, students will be assigned to lead the discussion for particular weeks. 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.

#### **Seminar Participation (30%), ongoing**

The participation grade covers Class participants are responsible for having read the material and coming to class ready to contribute to the discussion. Prior to each seminar students will post on Avenue a one page summary document on the texts they have read. This document will contain:

#### **Research Proposal, (15%), due November 3**

The purpose of the research proposal is to develop a plan for your final research paper. It aims to make sure that you have a research plan that is a good one. It can be up to 3 single-spaced pages with regular margins and a 12-point font, not including the bibliography.

#### **Research paper, (40 %), should not 4000 words. Due December 15.**

Your research paper should build on your proposal. In grading the paper, the following criteria will be used: (a) is there a thesis or an argument clearly stated at the beginning of the paper, and is the paper organized around that? (b) Does your paper address course themes? (c) Are the knowledge gaps or counter-arguments that your paper addresses identified and articulated at some point in your paper? (e) have you brought your research up to date? (f) Is your writing clear, engaging, and adequately proofread? You do not need to include all the sources you cited in your proposal, but you should be sure to use those that are most relevant.

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

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## **SCHEDULE**

### **Week 1: SEPTEMBER 8**

#### ***Introduction to the Course***

No readings

#### Suggested Readings

Appadurai, Arjun

2007 The Capacity to Aspire: Culture and the Terms of Recognition. In *Cultural Politics in a Global Age: Uncertainty, Solidarity, and Innovation*. Edited by David Held and Henrietta L. Moore. Oxford: Oneworld Publications. Pp. 29 – 35. Available, <https://mapn-ulm.ac.id/wp-content/uploads>

Tsing, Anna, and Elizabeth Pollman

2005 Global Futures: The Game. In *Histories of the Future*. Edited by Daniel Rosenberg and Susan Harding, eds. Durham: Duke University Press. Pp. 107 – 122.

#### Further Readings

Bloch, Ernst

1988 *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature: Selected Essays*. Translated by Jack Zipes and Frank Mecklenburg. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Castiglia, Christopher

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

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.

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.

### **Week 2: SEPTEMBER 15**

#### ***The Great Regression: Authoritarianism I***

#### Required Readings

Appadurai, Arjun

2017 Democracy Fatigue. In *The Great Transgression*. Edited by Heinrich Geiselberger. Cambridge: Polity Press. Pp. 1 – 12.

Mishra, Pankaj

2017 Politics in the Age of Resentment: The Dark Legacy of the Enlightenment. In *The Great Transgression*. Edited by Heinrich Geiselberger. Cambridge: Polity Press. Pp. 104 – 116.

Misik, Robert

2017 The Courage to be Audacious. In *The Great Transgression*. Edited by Heinrich Geiselberger. Cambridge: Polity Press. Pp. 117 - 129.

Rendueles, César

2017 From Global Regression to Post-capitalist Counter-movements. In *The Great Transgression*. Edited by Heinrich Geiselberger. Cambridge: Polity Press. Pp. 143 - 156.

### Suggested Readings

Brown, Wendy

2017 *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*. Cambridge, Mass.: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution.

2006 American Nightmare: Neoliberalism, Neoconservatism, and De-Democratization. *Political Theory* 34 (6): 690 – 714.

### **Week 3: SEPTEMBER 22**

#### ***The Great Regression: Authoritarianism II***

### Required Readings

Brown, Wendy

1995 Wounded Attachments. In *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Pp. 52 – 76.

Connolly, William

2017 Trump, the Working Class, and Fascist Rhetoric. *Theory & Event* 20 (1): 23 – 37.

Mouk, Yasha

2017 Responsibility Redefined. *Democracy: A Journal of Ideas*. Accessed, at <https://democracyjournal.org/magazine/43/responsibility-redefined>

### Suggested Readings

Cramer, Katherine J.

2016 *The Politics of Resentment: Rural Consciousness in Wisconsin and the Rise of Scott Walker*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Mouk, Yascha

2016 *The People vs. Democracy: Why Our Freedom is in Danger and How to Save It*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Müller, Jan-Werner

2016 *What is Populism*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

### **Week 4: SEPTEMBER 29**

#### ***The Great Regression: Authoritarianism III***

### Required Readings

Applebaum, Anne

2020 *Twilight of Democracy: The Seductive Lure of Authoritarianism*. New York/Penguin Random House.

Krastev, Ivan

2019 The Future was Next to You: An Interview with Ivan Krastev on '89 and the end of Liberal Hegemony. <https://www.eurozine.com/the-future-was-next-to-you>

### **Week 5: OCTOBER 6**

*Self-Directed Work*

### **Week 6: OCTOBER 13**

*Mid-term Recess; No Class*

### **Week 7 : OCTOBER 20**

*Challenges to Authoritarianism*

#### Required Readings

Marsili, Lorenzo, and Niccolo Milanese

2018 *Citizens of Nowhere: How Europe Can Be Saved from Itself*. London: Zed Books.  
Excerpts.

### **Week 8: OCTOBER 27**

*Environmentalism and Climate Change I*

#### Required Readings

Gosh, Amitav

2016 *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Excerpts.

Klein, Naomi

2014 *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate*. New York: Knopf.  
Excerpts.

#### Suggested Readings

Brown, Kate

2019 Learning to Read the Great Chernobyl Acceleration. *Current Anthropology* 60 (20): 198 – 208.

Latour, Bruno

2018 *Down to Earth: Politics in the New Climatic Regime*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

2017 *Facing Gaia: Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

McDermott, Hughes

2017 *Energy Without Conscience: Oil, Climate Change, and Complicity*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Nixon, Rob

2011 *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

### **Week 9: NOVEMBER 3**

## ***Environmentalism and Climate Change II***

### Required Readings

Tsing, Anna

2005 Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Excerpts.

Brown, Kate

2019 Learning to Read the Great Chernobyl Acceleration. *Current Anthropology* 60 (20): 198 – 208.

### **Week 10: NOVEMBER 10**

#### ***Decolonization, Nature, and Indigenous Ontologies (and New Materialism)***

### Required Readings

De la Cadena, Marisol

2010 Indigenous Cosmopolitics in the Andes: Conceptual Reflections Beyond “Politics.” *Cultural Anthropology* 25 (2): 334 – 370.

Povinelli, Elizabeth A.

1995 Do Rocks Listen?: The Cultural Politics of Apprehending Australian Aboriginal Labor. *American Anthropologist* 97 (3): 505 – 518.

### Suggested Readings

Haraway, Donna J.

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

Kohn, Eduardo

2013 *How Forests Think: Toward an Anthropology Beyond the Human*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

### **Week 11: NOVEMBER 17**

#### ***Self-Directed Work***

### **Week 12: NOVEMBER 24**

#### ***The Future of the Research Imagination***

Appadurai, Arjun

2000 Grassroots, Globalization, and the Research Imagination. *Public Culture* 12 (1): 1 – 19.

2002 Deep Democracy: Urban Governmentality and the Horizon Politics. *Public Culture* 14: 21 – 47.

2006 The Right to Research. *Globalisation, Societies, and Education* 4 (2): 167 – 177.

2007 Hope and Democracy. *Public Culture* 19 (1): 29 – 34.

### **Week 13: December 2**

#### ***IT'S UP TO YOU!***

## **COURSE POLICIES**

### **Submission of Assignments**

Unless otherwise noted below, all assignments will be submitted through folders that will be available on the Avenue to Learn site for this course.

### **Grades**

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale as illustrated below.

<u>Mark</u>	<u>Grade</u>
90-100	A+
85-90	A
80-84	A-
77-79	B+
73-76	B
70-72	B-
67-69	C+
63-66	C
60-62	C-
57-59	D+
53-56	D
50-52	D-
0-49	F

### **Late Assignments**

For the research proposal and research paper all students have the option of an extension of up to one week of the deadline specified in the course outline above. All requests for deadline extensions longer than one week must be made in advance of the assignment's original deadline, and must be accompanied by a documented justification for why a deadline extension of longer than a week is needed. Challenges such as assignments or final presentations in other courses that were announced earlier in the term should be anticipated and planned for. It is your responsibility to make contingency plans for unforeseen problems such as computer failures. Assignments that are completed after the extended deadline, if accepted, will be penalized by one grade point per day including Saturday and Sunday (a grade point is the interval between A+ and A, A and A-, etc.).

### **Absences, Missed Work, Illness**

Please inform me of any absences or problems with the course,

### **Courses with an On-Line Element**

This course will be using online technologies, including Avenue to Learn, e-mail, and Zoom. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a course using these elements, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster email accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in a course that uses on-line elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

### **Online Proctoring**

Some courses may use online proctoring software for tests and exams. This software may require students to turn on their video camera, present identification, monitor and record their computer activities, and/or lock/restrict their browser or other applications/software during tests or exams. This software may be required before the text/exam begins.

### **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. **It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty.**

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. 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.html](http://www.mcmaster.ca/senate/academic/ac_integrity.html)

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

### **Conduct Expectations**

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning, and working communities. These expectations are described in the Code of Students Rights & Responsibilities (the “Code”; <https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/Code-of-Student-Rights-and-Responsibilities>). All students share responsibilities of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of the McMaster community members, whether in person or online.

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning rooms. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviors that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue2Learn, WebEx, or Zoom for delivery) will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restrictions or removal of the involved students’ access to these platforms.

### **Faculty of Social Sciences Email 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 Etiquette**

In this course we value integrity, inclusiveness, and teamwork. As all of us make the transition to on-line course delivery and teaching, I would like for us all to emphasize the values of mutual respect, dignity, and responsibility. Sometimes issues, glitches in electronic systems, and other concerns can feel overwhelming. Please be kind to each other, and patient. I am always happy to assist you in, and to make this the experience as I can.

### **Course Communication**

If you wish to communicate with me, please try to be as clear and concise as possible. If you are unsure about your message, read it out aloud. I do this often before I send a message, since it helps me to better understand how the message might "land" on the other end. And/or review your written message. Not only will this let you review your questions, concerns, and/or ideas, but also make sure that the tone is appropriate. I will answer e-mails on weekdays between 9:00 am and 4:30 pm. Given the volume of messages I receive, you may have to wait up to 48 hrs for a reply.

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

### **Extreme Circumstances**

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labor disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L, and/or McMaster email.