

ENG/CULTRST - 755 Neoliberalism and the Limits of the Social

Dr. Henry A. Giroux

Email: girouxh@mcmaster.ca

Class meetings: Tuesday, 2:30-4:30 via Zoom

Office Hours: Wednesdays 2-4 pm (via Skype)

(Please allow 48 hours for response)

Course Description:

Neoliberalism and the Limits of the Social

Over the last decade, the concept of neoliberalism has come to occupy a central place theoretically in a number of disciplines including economics, sociology, philosophy, education, English, anthropology, and cultural studies. At the same time, there are no clear disciplinary boundaries to rely on in either articulating its meaning or its relevance in contemporary theoretical debates. This course draws on a number of post-disciplinary sources in order to provide a foundational and conceptual mapping of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is examined as both a project and a movement that functions not only as mode of economics, but also as a form public pedagogy and cultural politics that produces a particular mapping of the political and the ongoing production of specific market-driven identities, desires, and social relations. The course is organized in two sections. The first section will explore some of the foundational writers associated with the developing archive on neoliberalism in a variety of disciplines. These include, among others, Doreen Massey, and Noam Chomsky. The purpose of this section is to provide students with a grasp and understanding of the foundational literature on neoliberalism and the different and often contradictory tensions that mediate this diverse body of work. The second section will look at how neoliberalism is being critically interrogated in terms of its social costs and impact in a number of areas extending from the health care system and the criminal justice system to the political realm.

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Course Objectives:

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

- Demonstrate an understanding of selected concepts and debates that inform a broad understanding of the notion of neoliberalism and the politics of the social
- Demonstrate an understanding of the historical roots of neoliberalism and the nature of the policies it produces and how it produces in line with market values a form of Apartheid Pedagogy
- Demonstrate an understanding of the different threads of neoliberalism that work through a variety of concepts that include consumerism, market values, pedagogy, agency, racial

cleansing, individual responsibility, social contract, and democracy.

--Demonstrate an ability to write concise short two-page papers that combine a summary of an article with a particular position on your part.

--Demonstrate an ability to conceptualize and apply diverse concepts from a variety of theorists who are exploring how language can be used to rethink the meaning of politics, power, education, and resistance.

--Demonstrate an understanding and application of how to bring different issues together so as to situate them in a broader historical, political, and social framework.

Course Format:

Weekly meetings will be conducted via Zoom video conference. I will send out an invitation in advance of each class, and we will meet for 2 hours on Tuesdays, from 2:30-4:30 pm, with a 10-minute break in the middle. Everyone is encouraged to join the discussion via video. This is a seminar organized around active student participation. Hence, everyone should have their cameras on so as to be able to engage in a dialogue with other students at any one time. If you need to keep your camera off for reasons of bandwidth, other tech limitations or privacy, I understand. My goal is to reproduce as far as possible the conviviality and spontaneity of an in-person meeting, with the recognition that there are many obstacles to achieving this.

Students should be aware that, when they access Zoom and Avenue, private information such as first and last names and usernames for the McMaster e-mail accounts may become apparent to all other students in the same course. 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.

Students will be assigned readings weekly. The course will be conducted largely in seminar fashion, with a strong emphasis on student participation. Usually, the class will be divided into three groups of three to five students each. In any given week, members of one of these three groups will write a two-page paper before class and post it online at least one day prior to the class for all the class to read before we meet. We spend a great deal of the class analyzing the papers. As the class proceeds, we will cycle through the three groups, so individual members will be responsible for producing a two-page assignment, every three weeks (three papers all told). This demands active class participation: members of the class will be responsible for talking about their own papers, contextualizing them with the assigned text, and making sure they are prepared to respond to others in class. Student participation should be critical and focus engagingly on the course readings and the papers written by other members of the group.

Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous, and Spiritual Observances: Students requiring academic accommodation based on religion and spiritual observances should follow the

procedures set out in the Course Calendar or by their respective Faculty. In most cases, the student should contact his or her professor or academic advisor as soon as possible to arrange accommodations for classes, assignments, tests and examinations that might be affected by a religious holiday or spiritual observance.

Extensions, SAS accommodations, and additional academic support: All of us learn in different ways, and so the organization of any course will accommodate each student differently. Students needing accommodations should therefore contact me as soon as possible about your individual learning needs and how our course can best accommodate them. Any request for extensions will ideally be made within the first few weeks of term. The university's office of Student Accessibility Services (SAS) officially approves accommodations for students with disabilities in order to ensure that each student has a fair opportunity to perform in McMaster courses. Students who require academic accommodation should make an appointment with Student Accessibility Services (SAS) -- 905.525.9140 ext. 29652, or sas@mcmaster.ca -- to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator; academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study.

Academic integrity: 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. Plagiarism and submission of work that is not one's own or for which previous credit has been obtained are examples of academic dishonesty. For more information on academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy (<http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicIntegrity.pdf>).

Course changes: Instructors and the university as a whole reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. If such modifications become 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 students to check their McMaster and Avenue email accounts and their Avenue course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

Evaluations: Students will be asked to complete evaluations at the end of the course.

Required Reading:

1. Noam Chomsky and Marv Waterstone, *Consequences of Capitalism* (Haymarket Books, 2012) ISBN-978-1-64259-263-4
2. Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism* (London: Zero Books, 2009). ISBN-13: 978-1846943171
3. Henry A. Giroux, *Race, Politics, and Pandemic Pedagogy: Education in a Time of Crisis* (Bloomsbury, 978—1-3501-8443-5
4. Timothy Snyder, *Our Malady: Lessons in Liberty from a Hospital Diary* (Crown 2020) ISBN-978-0593238899
5. Edgar Cabanas and Eva Illouz, *Manufacturing Happy Citizens* (London: Polity, 2019). ISBN 13-978-1-5095-3789-1
6. Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (Zone Books, 2015). ISBN-13: 978-19354085434

Recommended: David Harvey: *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*

Online Readings: (unless specified otherwise), see pages 7-8. If the link does not work Google the author and title or use online library access to the journal.

Course Evaluation:

Participation 15%

Small writing assignments (3 x 2 pages) 15% each | Total 45%

Essay/Project (15-25 pages) 40%—Final Project Due on December 12, 2021.

Two Page Paper Format:

1. One third of the paper should be a good faith summary of some argument of the text being analyzed.
2. Remainder of the paper should be an analysis of the argument:
 - a critique of the argument
 - an extension of the argument
 - a translation of the argument using own experiences
 - a series of questions about the argument

—**Important**—Each individual with a weekly group two-page assignment should send their papers to everyone in the class via e-mail by 5:00pm on the Monday before the papers are

to be discussed. Everybody in the class will receive a sheet with a complete listing of E-mails.

Topic Proposal and Bibliography (mandatory & non-graded)

Due Date: TBA

The proposal I imagine to be about 250-500 words, consisting of a concise thesis that raises a pertinent *theoretical informed question or challenge* to some aspect of neoliberalism that resonates with our readings and discussions in class. Provide a summary of the project along with a thoughtful and detailed analysis of sources, etc. that makes specific use of quotations or other forms of proof to reinforce your argument. Your bibliography needn't be annotated, but you should have at least a half page or so of sources you plan to draw from to be part of your ongoing scholarly conversations.

Schedule of topics/readings:

Because the needs of students are never a given nor possible to predict, expect that there will be occasions for changes to the reading schedule, including additional readings. In addition, a portion of the class will be devoted to the critical analysis of several films. Should you need to view these films outside of the times I've allotted for screening, see me to make alternative arrangements.

Assignments:

1. September 14, 2021 - Introduction: syllabus, group assignments, course outline, structure, and expectations.

2. September 21, 2021 - Neoliberalism and the Politics of Common Sense (Group 1)

From: Noam Chomsky and Marv Waterstone: Consequences of Capitalism

Read: Chapters 1 & 2, pp. 1-92

Film: TBA

3. September 28, 2021 – Rethinking Resistance and Social Change (Group 2)

From: Noam Chomsky and Marv Waterstone: Consequences of Capitalism

Read: Chapters 5, 6, & 7, pp. 93-202

Film: *Requiem for the American Dream* – Noam Chomsky

4. October 5, 2021– Neoliberalism, Language, and the Crisis of Education, (Group 3)

From: *Online Readings*

1. George Monbiot, “Neoliberalism – the ideology at the root of all our problems,” *The Guardian*, (April 15, 2016). Online: <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/apr/15/neoliberalism-ideology-problem-george-monbiot>
- 2.. Doreen Massey “Vocabularies of the economy,” Online: https://www.lwbooks.co.uk/sites/default/files/01_vocabularieseconomy.pdf
3. David Graeber, “Are You in a BS Job? In Academe, You’re Hardly Alone,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (May 6, 2018). Online: https://www.chronicle.com/article/are-you-in-a-bs-job-in-academe-youre-hardly-alone/?cid2=gen_login_refresh&cid=gen_sign_in
4. Tanner R. Layton, “A Critique of the Instrumentalization of Post-Secondary Education,” Medium.com (July 9, 2021). Online: <https://medium.com/after-the-storm/a-critique-of-the-instrumentalization-of-post-secondary-education-8eba234f2e99>
5. Henry A. Giroux *ArtsEverywhere* “Educated Hope in Dark Times: The Challenge of the Educator/Artist as a Public Intellectual,” (March 20, 2018). Online: <https://www.artseverywhere.ca/education-democracy/>

5. October 12, 2021 – No Classes-Mid-Term Recess

6. October 19, 2021 – Dystopia Without Alternatives (Group 1)

From: *Capitalist Realism by Mark Fisher*
Read: entire book
Film:

7. October 26, 2021- Neoliberal Reason and Political Life, (Group 2)

From: *Undoing the Demos by Wendy Brown*
Read: Preface, Chapter 1, 4, 6, and Epilogue, pp. 9-45, pp. 175-222.

From Online Readings:

1. Henry A. Giroux, “Neoliberal Fascism and the Echoes of History,” Truthout (August 8, 2021). Online: <https://truthout.org/articles/neoliberal-fascism-and-the-echoes-of-history/>

8. November 2, 2021 – Neoliberalism and the War on Health Care (Group 3)

From: *Our Malady: Lesson in Liberty from a Hospital Diary* by Timothy Snyder

Read: entire book

Film: *TBA*

9. November 9, 2021 –Pandemic Pedagogy and Education in a Time of Crisis (Group 1)

Read: Henry A. Giroux, *Race, Politics, and Pandemic Pedagogy*

Read: Preface, and Chapters 1, 3. And 4

Film: TBA

10. November 16, 2021— Thinking Beyond Plagues in a Time of Crisis (Group 2)

Read: Henry A. Giroux, *Race, Politics, and Pandemic Pedagogy*

Read: Chapters 5-8.

11. November 23, 2021—Neoliberalism and the Politics of Happiness (3)

From: *Manufacturing Happy Citizens* by Edgar Cabanas and Eva Illouz

Read: Chapters 2, 3, 4 and Conclusion, pp.51-145, pp.176-183.

Film: *TBA*

12. November 30, 2021: Discuss final project

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Class Readings

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Phone: 905.525.9140 ext. 26551
Email: girouxh@mcmaster.ca

Winter 2021, Tuesday, 2:30–4:30pm
Office Hours: Wednesdays 2-4 pm
Class: Chester New Hall 317

All class readings can be accessed online. See URLs accompanying each reading.

1. George Monbiot, “Neoliberalism – the ideology at the root of all our problems,” *The Guardian*, (April 15, 2016). Online: <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/apr/15/neoliberalism-ideology-problem-george-monbiot>
2. Doreen Massey “Vocabularies of the economy,” Online: https://www.lwbooks.co.uk/sites/default/files/01_vocabularieseconomy.pdf
3. Henry A. Giroux, “Neoliberal Fascism and the Echoes of History,” Truthout (August 8, 2021). Online: <https://truthout.org/articles/neoliberal-fascism-and-the-echoes-of-history/>
4. David Graeber, “Are You in a BS Job? In Academe, You’re Hardly Alone,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (May 6, 2018). Online: https://www.chronicle.com/article/are-you-in-a-bs-job-in-academe-youre-hardly-alone/?cid2=gen_login_refresh&cid=gen_sign_in
5. Tanner R. Layton, “A Critique of the Instrumentalization of Post-Secondary Education,” Medium.com (July 9, 2021). Online: <https://medium.com/after-the-storm/a-critique-of-the-instrumentalization-of-post-secondary-education-8eba234f2e99>
6. Henry A. Giroux *ArtsEverywhere* “Educated Hope in Dark Times: The Challenge of the Educator/Artist as a Public Intellectual,” (March 20, 2018). Online: <https://www.artseverywhere.ca/education-democracy/>

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Office: 229 Chester New Hall
Phone: 905.525.9140 ext. 26551
Email: girouxh@mcmaster.ca
(Please allow 48 hours for response)

Fall 2021, Tuesday, 12:30–3:30pm
Office Hours: Wednesdays 2-4 pm
Class: Chester New Hall 229

Class List

Group 1

Tiana Gammie - gammit2@mcmaster.ca
Michelle Moreira - moreiram@mcmaster.ca
Joseph Palmeri - palmerij@mcmaster.ca
Antonia Stan - stana@mcmaster.ca
Bradley McNeil - mcneib6@mcmaster.ca

Group 2

Victoria Macbeath - macbeatv@mcmaster.ca
Natasha Malik - malikn25@mcmaster.ca
Sianna Bulman - bulmas1@mcmaster.ca
Stephanie Sushko - sushkos@mcmaster.ca
Rebecca Mclean - mclear9@mcmaster.ca

Group 3

James Gagnon - gagnoj7@mcmaster.ca
Harmanjot Uppal - uppalh@mcmaster.ca
Arijit Nandi - nandia2@mcmaster.ca
Shannon Harvey - harves12@mcmaster.ca

Email list: gammit2@mcmaster.ca; moreiram@mcmaster.ca; palmerij@mcmaster.ca;
stana@mcmaster.ca; mcneib6@mcmaster.ca; macbeatv@mcmaster.ca;
malikn25@mcmaster.ca; bulmas1@mcmaster.ca; sushkos@mcmaster.ca;
mclear9@mcmaster.ca; gagnoj7@mcmaster.ca; uppalh@mcmaster.ca; nandia2@mcmaster.ca;
harves12@mcmaster.ca; girouxh@mcmaster.ca; ranifili2002@gmail.com;
sabadom@mcmaster.ca