



**University of Cyprus
Department of English Studies
Course Syllabus
ENG 511 – POSTMODERNISM AND THE AESTHETIC
(7.5 ECTS)**

Instructor: Tziovanis Georgakis (PhD)
Email: georgakis.tziovanis@ucy.ac.cy
Course Days: Tuesdays and Fridays
Course Time: 13:30 – 15:00
Course Venue: XΩΔ01 / 003
Office Hours: Mondays and Thursdays: 12:30 – 14:30
Office Hours Venue: M105A

Course Description

The aim of the course is to offer students the chance to examine issues related to the overarching field of Western aesthetics and its entanglement with postmodern theory and literature. Themes such as the nature of art and artwork, the feeling of pleasure and displeasure in appearance, the appreciation and cultivation of the judgment of taste, and the aesthetic condition of the subject and subjectivity will be investigated in terms of the way they are re-examined and appropriated by postmodern thinkers and artists. In-class discussions will focus on theoretical texts by seminal thinkers—in particular, by Immanuel Kant, Jean-François Lyotard, Ihab Hassan, Jacques Derrida, Paul Virilio, Jacques Lacan, and Julia Kristeva—that will be juxtaposed with works of fiction by Italo Calvino, drama by Jean Genet, and cinema by Andrei Tarkovsky. The course is interdisciplinary, so students will develop critical thinking skills for navigating distinct but necessarily pertinent mediums.

Core Objectives

By the end of the semester, students will:

- understand and challenge the multiple and difficult issues that arise with the engagement of postmodern thought and literature with the greater field of aesthetics.
- gain new insights into the related issues and surveyed questions.
- participate in different debates that take place within various philosophical fields.
- interpret and analyze works of fiction and drama.
- be in a position to distinguish, evaluate, and construct arguments.
- produce critical research essays of the kind that is assigned in upper level courses within the English major.
- develop an attentive eye to the marginal and the unconsidered.
- foster the necessary critical and analytical skills that each university student needs to utilize in every academic setting.

Bibliography

(Included in the *Course Pack*)



- Calvino, Italo. 'The Adventure of a Photographer.' Trans. Weaver, William. *Difficult Loves*. London: Vintage Books, 1999. 40-52. Print.
- Derrida, Jacques. 'The Parergon.' Trans. Bennington, Geoff and Ian McLeod. *The Truth in Painting*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1987. 37-82. Print.
- Hassan, Ihab. 'Toward a Concept of Postmodernism.' *Postmodern American Fiction: A Norton Anthology*. Eds. Geyh, Paula, Fred G. Leebron and Andrew Levy. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1988. 586-95. Print.
- Kant, Immanuel. 'First Section. Analytic of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment. First Book. Analytic of the Beautiful. First Moment - Second Moment.' Trans. Guyer, Paul and Eric Matthews. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Ed. Guyer, Paul. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. 89-104. Print.
- Kristeva, Julia. 'Approaching Abjection.' Trans. Roudiez, Leon S. *The Continental Aesthetics Reader*. Ed. Cazeaux, Clive. London and New York: Routledge, 2001. 542-62. Print.
- Lacan, Jacques. 'Of the Gaze as Objet Petit A.' Trans. Sheridan, Alan. *The Continental Aesthetics Reader*. Ed. Cazeaux, Clive. London and New York: Routledge, 2001. 519-41. Print.
- Lyotard, Jean-François. 'Answering the Question: What Is Postmodernism?' Trans. Durand, Régis. *Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984. 71-82. Print.
- Virilio, Paul. 'Part 1.' Trans. Beitchman, Philip. *The Aesthetics of Disappearance*. Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2009. 19-50. Print.

(To be purchased by students)

Genet, Jean. *The Balcony*. Trans. Frechtman, Bernard. New York, NY: Grove Press, 1966. Print.

(The film below is to be shown in class)

Tarkovsky, Andrei. *Solaris*. 1972. Film.

Class Preparation and Participation

The class will be run seminar-style, by which the class instructor will do some lecturing. At the same time, students are expected to participate actively in class discussions. This format will not work unless all students are well-prepared for the class. It is very important that students engage discussions and readings so that the whole classroom participates in a dialectic exchange of thoughts and ideas. If students are having difficulty understanding parts of the class material, they should inform the instructor. In general, the instructor will not summarize the readings for the students' sake. The readings are for the students to discuss during the discussion portion of the class. The instructor will merely supplement the assigned readings. Part of class preparation also includes taking detailed notes, noting down pressing questions, understanding and evaluating arguments, responding to complex arguments, forming new arguments, and thinking critically about one's own positions. This class will thrive only if all students take responsibility to participate. In addition, the instructor expects that all seminar members will treat each other with the respect necessary for a philosophical discussion. Students should be courteous to the other students in the classroom and avoid disrupting their right to a positive learning environment. To this end, students should not arrive late to class or leave early, engage in side conversations, or pack their belongings before class has concluded. Students should not leave their mobile phones on, use text messaging on their phones, or surf the Internet during class. If students are using a laptop in class, they must sit near the front so as not to distract other students. If students anticipate arriving late to class or need to leave



early from class, or are expecting a call (if they need to be reachable for an emergency), they should let the instructor know before class begins.

Attendance Policy

Attending class is extremely important. Missing any class, coming in late, or leaving early will detract from the final grade. If students miss a class, they are still responsible for finding out what was delivered in class that day and if there were any assignments given by the course instructor. Class success is determined by the students' active presence and by how much work they are willing to put in. Students are urged to make a commitment to the coursework for themselves and for their colleagues.

Course Assignments and Assessment

In-class Presentation: 10%

Student will form groups of 2-3 persons and present on the assigned readings. Each presentation will be 20 minutes long.

Midterm examination: 35%

Each student will respond to specific questions given by the instructor relevant to the assigned readings. The length of this assignment is 1,000-1,500 words.

Final examination: 50%

Each student will write one research essay relevant to the assigned readings and in-class discussions. The length of this assignment is 2,000-2,500 words.

Class attendance and participation: 5%

Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to the following: cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, self-plagiarism, bribes, examination by proxy, grade tampering, and submission of non-original works. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and will result in an automatic grade of 0. Information about plagiarism and citation rules will be provided during the semester. If students have any questions or are unsure of what constitutes academic dishonesty, they should ask the course instructor.

Office Hours and Availability

If students have any questions or wish to discuss course progression, course material, general philosophy or literature questions, or just to talk, the course instructor is available to them on Mondays and Thursdays from 12:30 – 14:30. If deemed necessary, they can schedule an appointment. The instructor strongly encourages all students to stop by and introduce themselves. Before students send an email with a query, they can come to office hours first. If they are unable to attend the designated office hours, they can email the instructor at georgakis.tziovanis@ucy.ac.cy. The instructor will do everything possible to respond to any questions, comments, or issues within 24 hours on weekdays and 48 hours on the weekends.

Course Schedule



A. INTRODUCING THE DISCOURSE CALLED AESTHETICS

Week 1: From Immanuel Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment*

Weekly reading:

Kant, Immanuel. 'First Section. Analytic of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment. First Book. Analytic of the Beautiful. First Moment - Second Moment.' Trans. Guyer, Paul and Eric Matthews. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Ed. Guyer, Paul. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. 89-104. Print.

B. POSTMODERNISM AS AN AESTHETIC REACTION

Week 2: From Jean-François Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition*

Weekly reading:

Lyotard, Jean-François. 'Answering the Question: What Is Postmodernism?' Trans. Durand, Regis. *Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984. 71-82. Print.

Week 3: From Ihab Hassan's *The Postmodern Turn*

Weekly reading:

Hassan, Ihab. 'Toward a Concept of Postmodernism.' *Postmodern American Fiction: A Norton Anthology*. Eds. Geyh, Paula, Fred G. Leebron and Andrew Levy. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1988. 586-95. Print.

C. THE AESTHETIC FRAME AND ITS DISAPPEARANCE

Week 4 – Week 5: From Jacques Derrida's *The Truth in Painting*

Weekly reading:

Derrida, Jacques. 'The Parergon.' Trans. Bennington, Geoff and Ian McLeod. *The Truth in Painting*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1987. 37-82. Print.

Week 6 – Week 7: From Paul Virilio's *The Aesthetics of Disappearance*

Weekly reading:

Virilio, Paul. 'Part 1.' Trans. Beitchman, Philip. *The Aesthetics of Disappearance*. Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2009. 19-50. Print.

Week 8: From Italo Calvino's *Difficult Loves*

Weekly reading:

Calvino, Italo. 'The Adventure of a Photographer.' Trans. Weaver, William. *Difficult Loves*. London: Vintage Books, 1999. 40-52. Print.

MIDTERM EXAMINATION ASSIGNMENT DUE: 35%

D. THE AESTHETIC DISRUPTION OF SUBJECT AND OBJECT

Week 9 – Week 10: From Jacques Lacan's *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*

Weekly reading:

Lacan, Jacques. 'Of the Gaze as *Objet Petit A*.' Trans. Sheridan, Alan. *The Continental Aesthetics Reader*. Ed. Cazeaux, Clive. London and New York: Routledge, 2001. 519-41. Print.

Week 11 – Week 12: From Julia Kristeva's *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*

Weekly reading:

Kristeva, Julia. 'Approaching Abjection.' Trans. Roudiez, Leon S. *The Continental Aesthetics*



Reader. Ed. Cazeaux, Clive. London and New York: Routledge, 2001. 542-62. Print.

Week 13: Jean Genet's *The Balcony* and Andrei Tarkovsky's *Solaris*

Weekly reading:

Genet, Jean. *The Balcony*. Trans. Frechtman, Bernard. New York, NY: Grove Press, 1966.
Print.

Film viewing:

Tarkovsky, Andrei. *Solaris*. 1972. Film.

FINAL EXAMINATION ASSIGNMENT DUE: 50%