



The University of Western Ontario

HISTORY 9819

History & Theory: How to (Pretend You Can) Explain Everything that Ever Happened

Winter 2019

Thursdays, 9:30-12:30pm, Location TBA

Instructor: Laurel Clark Shire, Associate Professor

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 1-3pm

Department of History, Office: 2226 Lawson Hall

Email: lshire@uwo.ca

Course Description

This course is designed to introduce graduate students to some of the philosophical and theoretical ideas that have shaped social theory and cultural studies. As scholars seek to explain and interpret society and culture (including history, literature, media) they take for granted that some things matter more than others, but they often disagree about what those things are: social hierarchy, cultural symbols, language, emotions, money, military power, violence, individuals or groups, identity, desire, difference, politics, governments, everyday people, spiritual and scientific claims to Truth. They also often diverge in how they even define these concepts. Understanding these debates, the advantages and disadvantages of these decisions and assumptions, will serve you both as an analytical reader (what assumptions does an author make? What will be invisible because of that?) and as a researcher (what assumptions am I making? Why? Should I adjust my approach? If I do, what new interpretations will become available?)

In general, theory is useful for two reasons:

1 – Thinking “outside the box” of existing scholarship -- it allows you to approach any cultural object, historical moment, event or era with many different sets of tools, opening up new approaches and avenues for research and interpretation. Since the goal of graduate scholarship is to make an original contribution to knowledge, a working knowledge of social and cultural theories offers you multiple potential ways in which you might do that.

The Hsy Bitsy Spider: An Analysis.



2 – Imagine that the world was/is/could be different (and better?) in the future. Theorists of cultural and society are often fundamentally motivated to make the world a better place. If we understand the past, and therefore the present, more accurately, perhaps we can shape the future into something closer to our ideal. Again, of course, what counts as “better” depends on who you ask and when you ask them.

Finally, this course (while it will require a lot of reading and some writing) is designed to be fun. We have the luxury of thinking, deeply and

together, about how and why societies, cultures, and people have become what they are today and how they are becoming and will become something different in the future. Your brain will get a workout; endorphins will be released.

Prerequisite(s): none

Antirequisite(s): none

Learning Outcomes:

Students will learn some of the history of social and cultural theory, read widely in the field, and learn how to apply these ideas in their own scholarship.

Required Text(s) are likely to include (subject to change):

Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*

Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*

Lauren Berlant, *The Female Complaint*

Pierre Bourdieu, *Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*

Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender*

Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*

Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*

Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*

Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*

Frederic Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*

William Sewell, *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation*

Method of Evaluation

You are required to write a 2-4 page précis of the readings for that class every other week (groups 1 and 2). This essay should summarize major arguments and implications of the assigned readings from the previous and current weeks. Where appropriate, you are encouraged to use these reaction papers to think about how each theoretical approach might be useful to your own MA or PhD project.

Once during the semester, you will bring in a cultural object for discussion (contemporary or historical) that illustrates something from the reading. You are each assigned a week below in which to do this. Bring your object (or a link to it) and be prepared to explain its connection to the reading(s). Together, we will all work through the analysis.

At the end of the semester, you will write a 20-25 page essay. Using two of the theoretical approaches we have studied, you will write a comparative analysis of an historical topic or cultural object of your choice. If, for example, your topic is “slavery” or the novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, then you would write an analysis of slavery or of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* from two different theoretical perspectives (choosing those that make the most sense to apply). How would Marx and Foucault frame and interpret slavery differently? How would Jameson and Bourdieu analyze and

interpret *Uncle Tom's Cabin*? What would each of those analyses yield, and what would each tend to obscure? This essay is due on the final day of April exam period by 5pm to lshire@uwo.ca.

Evaluation Breakdown:

Participation in class discussion (expected and required):	25%
6 Biweekly Reaction Papers:	30%
Cultural Object for Discussion:	10%
Final Paper	35%

How to Contact Me:

lshire@uwo.ca

How to get important information:

History.uwo.ca

Important Policies

Policies for Assignment Deadlines:

Deadlines are real, and extensions can only be approved by the graduate chair. Late précis will not be accepted after seminar.

Academic Offences:

Scholastic Offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitute a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

A Note on Plagiarism:

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offense (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

The following rules pertain to the acknowledgements necessary in academic papers.

A. In using another writer's words, you must both place the words in quotation marks and acknowledge that the words are those of another writer.

You are plagiarizing if you use a sequence of words, a sentence or a paragraph taken from other writers without acknowledging them to be theirs. Acknowledgement is indicated either by (1) mentioning the author and work from which the words are borrowed in the text of your paper; or by (2) placing a footnote number at the end of the quotation in your text, and including a correspondingly numbered footnote at the bottom of the page (or in a separate reference section at the end of your essay). This footnote should indicate author, title of the work, place and date of Publication and page number. Method (2) given above is usually preferable for academic essays because it provides the reader with more information about your sources and leaves your text uncluttered with parenthetical and tangential references. In either case words taken from another author must be enclosed in quotation marks or set off from your text by single spacing and indentation in such a way that they cannot be mistaken for your own words. Note that you cannot avoid indicating quotation simply by changing a word or phrase in a sentence or paragraph which is not your own.

B. In adopting other writer's ideas, you must acknowledge that they are theirs.

You are plagiarizing if you adopt, summarize, or paraphrase other writers' trains of argument, ideas or sequences of ideas without acknowledging their authorship according to the method of acknowledgement given in 'A' above. Since the words are your own, they need not be enclosed in quotation marks. Be certain, however, that the words you use are entirely your own; where you must use words or phrases from your source; these should be enclosed in quotation marks, as in 'A' above.

Clearly, it is possible for you to formulate arguments or ideas independently of another writer who has expounded the same ideas, and whom you have not read. Where you got your ideas is the important consideration here. Do not be afraid to present an argument or idea without acknowledgement to another writer, if you have arrived at it entirely independently. Acknowledge it if you have derived it from a source outside your own thinking on the subject.

In short, use of acknowledgements and, when necessary, quotation marks is necessary to distinguish clearly between what is yours and what is not. Since the rules have been explained to you, if you fail to make this distinction, your instructor very likely will do so for you, and they will be forced to regard your omission as intentional literary theft. Plagiarism is a serious offence which may result in a student's receiving an 'F' in a course or, in extreme cases, in their suspension from the University.

Policy on Laptops and other Electronics/Phones in Class

Laptops are permitted in class but if it is observed that students are on social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter, they will be told to close the lid and they will not be permitted to use it for the remainder of the class. Be sure that all cell phones are turned off at the beginning of class.

Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness

The University recognizes that a student's ability to meet his/her academic responsibilities may, on occasion, be impaired by medical illness. Please go to:

https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/medical_accommodations_link_for_OOR.pdf

to read about the University's policy on medical accommodation. This site provides links the necessary forms. In the event of illness, you should contact Academic Counselling as soon as possible. The Academic Counsellors will determine, in consultation with the student, whether or not accommodation should be requested. They will

subsequently contact the instructors in the relevant courses about the accommodation. Once the instructor has made a decision about whether to grant an accommodation, the student should contact his/her instructors to determine a new due date for tests, assignments, and exams.

Students must see the Academic Counsellor and submit all required documentation in order to be approved for certain accommodation: http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/medical_accommodation.html

Accessibility Options:

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 519 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation. Information regarding accommodation of exams is available on the Registrar's website: www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated_exams.html

Scholastic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following web site: www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Support Services

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western, http://uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/ for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation.

If you have any further questions or concerns please contact, Heidi Van Galen, Administrative Officer, Department of History, 519-661-2111 x84963 or e-mail vangalen@uwo.ca.

TENTATIVE Course Schedule and Readings (subject to change)

Week 1. Introductions, Purpose, Ideas

These books/articles will be the basis of our discussion in the first seminar – come prepared to discuss these readings:

- William Sewell, *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation* (2005)
- Richard Johnson, "What is Cultural Studies Anyway?" *Social Text* 16 (1986/87): 38-80

Week 2. Philosophical Roots

Reactions due from Group 1 (before class to lshire@uwo.ca).

Cultural object(s):

- G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), "The Master-Slave Dialectic"
- Freud *The Freud Reader*, ed. Peter Gay (Norton, 1989) - "fetishism"
- Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits: A Selection* (Norton, 1977) "The Mirror Stage..."

Week 3. Marxism and Structuralism

Reactions due from Group 2 (before class to lshire@uwo.ca).

Cultural object(s):

- Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (1867), selections
- Raymond Williams, "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory" (1973) and "Culture" from *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (1976)
- Louis Althusser "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" (1970)

Week 4. Women and Gender

Group 1

Cultural object(s):

- Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (1949), Introductions to Volumes I and II; Part I - Chapters 2-3; Part II - Ch. 4, Part IV - Conclusion
- Joan Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category..." from *Gender and the Politics of History* (1988)
- Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (2004)

Week 5. Race and Imperialism

Group 2

Cultural object(s):

- Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952)
- Paul Gilroy, "Race and the Right to be Human"
- Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, Introduction, Chs. 1-2, 6, 12
- Gayatri Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (1987): "Can the Subaltern Speak?"

Week 6. The "Frankfurt School"

Group 1

Cultural object:

- Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944/1982); Introduction, "The Concept of Enlightenment," "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception" (pp. xi-42, 120-167)
- Theodor Adorno, "The Culture Industry Reconsidered" (1975)
- Walter Benjamin "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"
- Kumars Salehi, "What would the Frankfurt School think of social media?," July 19, 2017, <http://diginativ.com/frankfurt-school-social-media/>

Week 7. Frankfurt School II

Group 2

- Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*

- Christian Fuchs, *Critical Theory of Communication: New Readings of Lukács, Adorno, Marcuse, Honneth and Habermas in the Age of the Internet* (Open access, 2016) 9781911534044

Week 8. Structures of Social Power

Group 1

Cultural object(s):

- Pierre Bourdieu, *Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, Stanford University Press, 1996.

Week 9. Marxism and Literature

Group 2

Frederic Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, 1981.

Week 10: French Post-Structuralism

Group 1. Cultural object(s):

- Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (1957)
- Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (1975)
- Hall, Stuart (2001), "Foucault: Power, knowledge and discourse", in Wetherell, Margaret; Taylor, Stephanie; Yates, Simeon J., *Discourse Theory and Practice: a Reader*, pp. 72–80

Week 11. The "Birmingham School" / British Cultural Studies

Group 2.

- Hall, Stuart (January 1980). "Cultural Studies: two paradigms". *Media, Culture and Society*. 2 (1): 57–72. doi:10.1177/016344378000200106.
- Hall, Stuart (1981). "Notes on Deconstructing the Popular". In *People's History and Socialist Theory*.
- Hall, Stuart (1997). *Representation: cultural representations and signifying practices*, pp. 13-74 and 223-290
- Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*

Week 12. Birmingham School II

Group 1

- SCHULMAN, Norma. "Conditions of their Own Making: An Intellectual History of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham." *Canadian Journal of Communication*, v. 18, n. 1, Jan. 1993. Available at: <<https://www.cjc-online.ca/index.php/journal/article/view/717/623>>. doi:<https://doi.org/10.22230/cjc.1993v18n1a717>.
- Parker, David and Miri Song. 2009. "New Ethnicities and the Internet." *Cultural Studies* 23 (4): 583-604. doi:10.1080/09502380902951003 http://resolver.scholarsportal.info/resolve/09502386/v23i0004/583_neati

- Angela McRobbie (2007) "Post-feminism and popular culture," *Feminist Media Studies*, 4:3, 255-264, DOI: [10.1080/1468077042000309937](https://doi.org/10.1080/1468077042000309937)

Week 13. Queer Theory

Group 2. Cultural object:

- Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*
- Gayle Rubin, "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality" (1984)
- Angela McRobbie (2011) INTRODUCTION, *Cultural Studies*, 25:2, 139-146, DOI: [10.1080/09502386.2011.535982](https://doi.org/10.1080/09502386.2011.535982) "Queer Adventures in Cultural Studies," a special issue of the journal *Cultural Studies*
- Volker Woltersdorff (2011) PARADOXES OF PRECARIOUS SEXUALITIES, *Cultural Studies*, 25:2, 164-182, DOI: [10.1080/09502386.2011.535984](https://doi.org/10.1080/09502386.2011.535984)