



## The University of Western Ontario

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

HISTORY 9819B – Winter 2023

Mon 11:30-2:30pm

Lawson Hall 2270C

Laurel Clark Shire, Associate Professor

Office Hours: Mondays 10-11 am,

Tuesdays 2-3pm or by appointment -

Lawson Hall 2226

[lshire@uwo.ca](mailto: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:

- 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.
- Imagining how 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. This course has a heavy reading load, as it is demanding to teach you how to explain everything that ever happened in 12 weeks. Do your best to read and understand, come prepared to ask questions.

### **Methods of Evaluation**

Participation in class discussion:	25%
6 Précis Papers:	30%
Cultural Object discussion:	10%
Final Paper	35%

You are required to write a 2-4 page précis (summary) 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 papers to think about how each theoretical approach might be useful to your own research 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. Please do not repeat an object from a previous week, and please attempt to use something that all members of the course can easily comprehend (ie, if you choose a novel, pick one that everyone has read). 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 a date TBA by 5pm to [lshire@uwo.ca](mailto:lshire@uwo.ca).

**Required Texts** (subject to change – do not purchase books until final syllabus is released in January 2023)

Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*

Chris Barker and Emma Jane, *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice*, 5th Edition, e-book

Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*

Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*

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: Modernity and Double Consciousness*

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

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

Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics*

Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The 'Objectivity Question' and the American Historical Profession*

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

**Additional Statements**

**Accessibility Options:**

You may also wish to contact Accessible Education (formerly known as Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD)) at 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation. See: [Accessible Education - Academic Support & Engagement - Western University \(uwo.ca\)](https://www.uwo.ca/accessible-education/)

**Request for Accommodations/Medical Issues**

Students are entitled to their privacy and consequently they do not need to disclose personal information to their course professors. In the event that students feel the need to discuss personal information, they should see the graduate chair. Unlike undergraduate students, graduate students cannot be referred to Social Science Academic Counselling to have their medical or non-medical circumstances evaluated and to receive a recommendation for accommodation. Those facilities are for undergraduates only, and there is no process beyond the department to secure recommendations for accommodation. Our process is that faculty should deal with routine requests for extensions. However, a student's request for accommodation (on medical, non-medical, compassionate grounds) should go to the graduate chair, Prof. Eli Nathans ([enathans@uwo.ca](mailto:enathans@uwo.ca)) who will consult and communicate with faculty. Additionally, faculty and students should communicate with the grad chair about any case in which work is not submitted before grades are due. In the event that the graduate chair is also the course professor, then a request for accommodation can be taken to the department chair.

## **Copyright**

Lectures and course materials, including power point presentations, outlines, and similar materials, are protected by copyright. You may take notes and make copies of course materials for your own educational use. You may not record lectures, reproduce (or allow others to reproduce), post or distribute lecture notes, wiki material, and other course materials publicly and/or for commercial purposes without my written consent.

## **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.

For more information on plagiarism and other scholastic offenses at the graduate level see: [https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_grad.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf)

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 are 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 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.

If a History graduate course professor suspects course work of possible plagiarism, or if a graduate supervisor suspects a cognate or thesis of possible plagiarism, the faculty member will meet with the student. If the issue is not resolved, the student then meets with the graduate chair to discuss this situation, and so that the student can present or respond to evidence. Afterwards the graduate chair will make a decision about whether misconduct has occurred and any penalties; this will be communicated in writing to the student within 3 weeks. The student may appeal this decision to the Vice-Provost (Graduate) within 3 weeks of the issuance of the chair's decision. If the student does not appeal, the Vice-Provost will review the case. The Vice-Provost may confirm affirm, vary, or overturn the graduate chair's decision or penalty.

Information on the appeals procedures for graduate students can be found here:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/appealsgrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/appealsgrad.pdf)

### **Support Services**

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

As part of a successful graduate student experience at Western, we encourage students to make their **health and wellness** a priority.

- Western provides several on campus health-related services to help you achieve optimum health and engage in healthy living while pursuing your graduate degree. For example, to support physical activity, all students, as part of their registration, receive membership in Western's Campus Recreation Centre. Numerous cultural events are offered throughout the year. Please check out the Faculty of Music web page <http://www.music.uwo.ca/> and our own McIntosh Gallery <http://www.mcintoshgallery.ca/>
- Information regarding health- and wellness-related services available to students may be found at <http://www.health.uwo.ca/>
- Students seeking help regarding mental health concerns are advised to speak to someone they feel comfortable confiding in, such as their faculty supervisor, their program director (graduate chair), or other relevant administrators in their unit. Campus mental health resources may be found at [http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental\\_health/resources.html](http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental_health/resources.html)

UWO has many services and programs that support the personal, physical, social, and academic needs of students, in a confidential environment. The Student Development Centre (SDC) has trained staff and an array of services to help students achieve their personal, academic and professional goals. See: [Academic Support & Engagement - Western University \(uwo.ca\)](http://www.uwo.ca/academic-support-engagement/)

If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact, Heidi Van Galen, Department Manager, Department of History, 519-661-2111 x84963 or e-mail [vangalen@uwo.ca](mailto:vangalen@uwo.ca).