

**RPOS 314 – 0001**

**(7548)**

**Modernity and Culture: Critical Perspectives**

**Spring 2019**

Monday, Wednesday, Friday, 1:40 pm – 2:35 pm

Room: FA 126

Lecturer: Mykolas Gudelis

Department of Political Science, Political Theory

Office Hours: Mondays & Wednesdays 3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

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**Course Description**

Modernity brought major economic, social, political, and intellectual transformations to the Western world. As such, it also impacted and continues to have major implications for our “Western” culture. More so, through the development of monopolized media programming, social media platforms, and globalized financial markets, this culture carries with it worldwide domination. From a critical perspective, modernity and its contemporary forms also bring new forms of oppression and exploitation and various forms of limitations and obstacles of moral, ethical, and political emancipation. In this course, we will engage with thinkers of social, cultural, and media theories, those who critically examine modernity and modern Western culture and theorize their political significance and implications. We will read authors such as Fredric Jameson, Theodor Adorno, Roland Barthes, Guy Debord, Jean Baudrillard, Jodi Dean, among others. We will also explore concepts and ideas such as boredom, spectacle, sameness, time and rhythm, acceleration, mass culture, from the interdisciplinary perspective. Dav

**Learning Objectives**

- ✓ To become familiar with the major theoretical aspects of the concept of modernity and its historical development.
- ✓ Expand the ability to interpret various theoretical texts – their arguments, style, and levels of meaning.
- ✓ Strengthen skills of analytical thinking and argumentative academic writing.
- ✓ To be able to critically engage with the notion of “modernity” from interdisciplinary perspective.

**Course Requirements**

As a student enrolled in this course and receiving institutional academic credit, your responsibilities are:

- ✓ Attend all lectures.
- ✓ Arrive to lectures on time and do not be late.
- ✓ Complete all readings prior or by the assigned date and come to class prepared.
- ✓ Contribute to a respectful academic environment, refraining from unrelated conversations or use of technology (cell phones, laptops and other devices)
- ✓ Bring the assigned readings to a class session with you.
- ✓ Be an active: take notes, ask questions, raise points of critique.
- ✓ Be an active participant of in-class discussions.
- ✓ Be respectful of other diverse points of view by other classmates and engage in an intellectual debate in a civilized manner

## Required Books

Reading and writing are essential methods and “tools” of academic work. By reading, we engage with ideas of different thinkers each of whom interpret different subjects of their studies in their own way, using specific methodologies and constructing particular arguments. Through close reading of assigned texts, you should be able to deconstruct these arguments, critically evaluate and use the knowledge and understanding of them to formulate and develop your own ideas. There is a list of required books for this course. We will not read all of them in their entirety, but selected chapters and sections. The required books have been ordered and are available for you in University’s bookstore. If you decide to acquire books from other sources, make sure you have the same exact editions as a bookstore as we want to make sure we are literally “on the same page” of the text during the lectures. It is important for you to have the exact same editions as stated in this syllabus. If you order books from somewhere else, make sure you time your orders properly to make sure your books arrive on time for the class and not later.

**Note:** Books are a *must* for this course.

## Required books

- Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, (Detroit, MI: Black & Red, 2010)
- Paul Virilio, *Speed and Politics*, (Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2007)
- Frederic Jameson, *A Singular Modernity*, (New York, NY: Verso, 2012)
- Theodor W. Adorno, *The Culture Industry*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2001)
- Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan 2017)
- Jodi Dean, *How Technoculture Capitalizes on Democracy*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002)

Additional readings in a form of PDF files will be placed on Blackboard and available to you for a download. Make sure you print out the sections of required texts and bring them with you to a classroom on a day the reading is assigned for a discussion.

## Office Hours

You should not feel any hesitation to come to talk about the course material during my office hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. in Humanities B16 office. You are also very welcome to approach me for a conversation after or before class or schedule a different time for a meeting if you are not available for a meeting on during office hours.

## Blackboard and SUNY E-mail inboxes

Your homework assignments will be posted on Blackboard in addition to being e-mailed to your “suny.edu” mailboxes. Make sure you check blackboard and your university E-mail regularly for course updates, changes in syllabus and other announcements.

## Plagiarism

Plagiarism means to pass off someone else’s work as your own. Please be warned that if found guilty of plagiarism, you will automatically fail the course and receive an E grade. Further actions will be taken, including sending your case before a university committee. Remember, taking text off internet sites and "reworking them" will also earn you an E along with further disciplinary actions. The whole idea of this course is for you to engage in active, critical thinking of *your own* and to demonstrate that you worked with the texts, understood them and, based on understanding and knowledge acquired, were able to develop your own ideas and arguments. Any attempt to plagiarize in this course will be taken very seriously and may have an extremely negative outcome.

### **Course grade breakdown**

Midterm exam (midterm paper):	15%
Final exam: (final research paper):	25%
Three response papers:	15% each (45% all together)
Participation:	10%
Attendance	5%

### **Exams, homework papers, attendance and participation**

#### ***Exams***

Both, midterm and final exams are in the form of an *argumentative essay* in a format of *academic research paper*. Your midterm paper should be of 6 pages long. Your final exam paper should be 8 pages long. Each paper should be of the following standard: Times Roman 12pt. font, double spaced with consistent citation/foot notes style through the paper and bibliography list. Additional information on the format, structure and principles of argumentative essay is posted on Blackboard.

#### ***Homework. Response Papers***

Besides two written papers for your mid-term and final exams, there will be four written homework assignments in a form of response paper in a format of argumentative essay. You will be responding to a particular question based on course readings. Your first two response papers should be of the same format as exam papers but only 4 pages long. (not less than 4 pages). The third response paper 5 pages long. You will be submitting your homework assignment papers ***hard copy, in class at the end of the class session on the day the homework is due.*** Additional information on the format, structure and principles of argumentative essay is posted on Blackboard.

#### ***Attendance and participation***

Regular attendance and active in-class participation are essential in this course if you want to succeed. The topic of the course is complicated and complex. We will be discussing various aspects of different arguments and ideas associated with revolution and will be clarifying and analyzing the assigned texts. Missing classes will diminish your ability to better understand the topic which subsequently will affect your homework and exam papers. I highly recommend you do not miss classes.

#### ***Grade Appeals***

In order to appeal a grade on a particular assignment, you should contact your TA or the professor during office hours within 2 weeks of receiving the assignment back and submit a written explanation of your reasons for believing that the grade should be changed, not to exceed 2 pages. A grade appeal may result in the grade being raised, or left as is, depending on the results of the review. After two weeks, grade complaints will not be considered unless there are mitigating circumstances like a serious illness.

#### ***Incomplete Grade***

No graduation credit is given for an I (incomplete) grade. A temporary grade requested by the student and assigned by the instructor ONLY when the student has nearly completed the course requirements but because of circumstances beyond the student's control the work is not completed. The incomplete should only be assigned on the basis of an agreement between the instructor and the student specifying the work to be completed and establishing a general timeline in which the work will be completed. Incompletes may NOT be resolved by auditing or registering again for a subsequent offering of the course. The date for the completion of the work may not be longer than one month before the end of the semester following that in which the incomplete is received. Once the work is completed, the instructor assigns the appropriate academic grade. The instructor may extend an incomplete for a maximum of one semester beyond the original deadline providing that the student has made

contact with the instructor to request the extension. Additional extensions are NOT permitted. Form more information on incomplete grades see: <https://www.albany.edu/undergraduateeducation/grading.php>

### **What do I do if I am sick or need alternate arrangements to fulfill course requirements?**

Any mitigating circumstances should be brought to the attention of the professor as soon as possible. Any foreseeable circumstances (athletic event, religious holidays, travel, etc...) must be raised at the beginning of the semester or as early as possible. Remember, extenuating circumstances do not excuse you from requirements of the course but only allow for an accommodation to fulfill these requirements as an exception to general standards of the course.

### **Excused Absences**

If you must miss an exam or more than two normal classes, you must have documentation from the dean of undergraduate studies (Lecture Center 30 Phone: 518-442-3950) or your grade will be adversely affected. For more on University's Medical Excuse Policy see:

[http://www.albany.edu/health\\_center/medicalexexcuse.shtml](http://www.albany.edu/health_center/medicalexexcuse.shtml)

### **Reasonable accommodation**

Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with documented physical, sensory, systemic, cognitive, learning and psychiatric disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring accommodation in this class, please notify the Director of Disabled Student Services (Campus Center 137, 442-5490). That office will provide the course instructor with verification of your disability, and will recommend appropriate accommodations (<http://www.albany.edu/studentlife/dss/Accommodation.html>).

If you wish to discuss academic accommodations, for the above reasons or other cases including religious holidays, inform the instructor at the beginning of the term. Reasonable accommodations are generally established well in advance and rarely granted retroactively.

### **What can I do to succeed academically in this course?**

The Basics: Read, show up, participate, do homework, submit assignments on time. The most important factor for success is studying assigned readings, regular attendance of lectures and participation in the course in a form of paying attention, taking notes, participating in discussions.

### **Attendance**

Regular attendance of class sessions is of crucial importance. It is during the class sessions we will be unpacking and braking down more complicated ideas and arguments and analyze concepts. Missing the class will mean you are left on your own to go through the same process. It is easier and more rewarding to participate in this process together with instructor and your fellow students.

### **Writing Center Services (Humanities 140)**

Tutorials on writing essays and improving language skills (ESL). Visit their website at: <http://www.albany.edu/writing/index.html> or call 442-4061.

### **Academic Support Services (Library Room 94)**

Arrange individual and group tutorial as well as study skills workshops on time management, how to improve your concentration, essay exam skills, listening skills, and overcoming procrastination. Visit their website: [http://www.albany.edu/oass/support\\_services.htm](http://www.albany.edu/oass/support_services.htm) or contact them at 442-5180.

## Course Outline

### **1) Jan. 23, Wednesday**

- Syllabus overview
- First homework assignment

### **2) Jan. 25, Friday**

- Introductory discussion

## What is “Modernity”? A Theoretical Philosophical Perspective

### **3) Jan. 28, Monday**

- Frederic Jameson, *A Singular Modernity*, (p. 17 – 30. Part I. Chapters 1 & 2.)

### **4) Jan. 30, Wednesday**

- Frederic Jameson, *A Singular Modernity*, (p.31 – 42. Part I. Chapter 3)

### **5) Feb. 1, Friday**

- Frederic Jameson, *A Singular Modernity*, (p.42 – 58. Part I. Chapter 4)

### **6) Feb. 4, Monday**

- Frederic Jameson, *A Singular Modernity*, (p.58 – 76. Part I. Chapter 5)

### **7) Feb. 6, Wednesday**

***\*First response paper assignment announced\****

- Frederic Jameson, *A Singular Modernity*, (p.76 – 95. Part I. Chapter 6)

## Modern Culture or Culture Industry?

### **8) Feb.8, Friday**

- Theodor W. Adorno, *The Culture Industry*, (p.61- 76. Part 2. “*The Schema of Mass Culture*”)

### **9) Feb. 11, Monday**

- Theodor W. Adorno, *The Culture Industry*, (p.76 – 96. Part 2. “*The Schema of Mass Culture*”)

### **10) Feb 13, Wednesday**

***\*First response paper due. Hard copy handed to me at the end of class\****

- Theodor W. Adorno, *The Culture Industry*, (p.98 – 106. Part 3. “*Culture Industry Reconsidered*”)

### **11) Feb. 15, Friday**

- Theodor W. Adorno, *The Culture Industry*, (p.108 – 120. Part 4. “*Culture and Administration*”)

### **12) Feb. 18, Monday**

- Theodor W. Adorno, *The Culture Industry*, (p.120 – 131. Part 4. “*Culture and Administration*”)

### **13) Feb. 20, Wednesday**

- Theodor W. Adorno, *The Culture Industry*, (p.158 – 176. Part 6. “*How to Look at Television*”)

## Modernity, Technology, Time, Space, Speed

### **14) Feb.22, Friday**

***\* Second response paper assignment announced\****

- Theodor W. Adorno, *The Culture Industry*, (p.187 – 197. Part 8. “*Free Time*”)

### **15) Feb.25, Monday**

- Zygmund Bauman, “Time and Space Re-united” (On Blackboard)

**16) Feb. 27, Wednesday**

- Paul Virilio, *Speed and Politics* (p.61-73. “From Space Right to State Right”)

**17) Mar. 1, Friday**

**\*Second response paper due. Hard copy handed to me at the end of class\***

- Paul Virilio, *Speed and Politics* (p.83 - 96. “Unable Bodies”)

**18) Mar. 4, Monday**

- Paul Virilio, *Speed and Politics* (p.96 - 114 “The Boarding of Metabolic Vehicles”)

**19) Mar. 6, Wednesday**

**\*Midterm exam assignment announced\***

- Paul Virilio, *Speed and Politics* (p.115 - 129 “The End of the Proletariat”)

**20) Mar. 8, Friday**

- Paul Virilio, *Speed and Politics* (p.136 - 145 “The Consumption of Security”)

**21) Mar. 11, Monday**

- Paul Virilio, *Speed and Politics* (p.149 - 167 “The State of Emergency”)

**Modernity and its Socio-Cultural Discontents**

**22) Mar. 13, Wednesday**

- Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, (Part I. “Separation Perfected” 1-17)

**23) Mar. 15, Friday**

**Midterm exam papers due hard copy handed to me at the end of class**

- Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, (Part I. “Separation Perfected” 18 - 34)

----- SPRING BREAK-----

**The Media and the Culture**

**24) Mar. 25, Monday**

- Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, (Part II. “The Commodity as Spectacle” 35 - 53)

**25) Mar. 27, Wednesday**

- Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, (Part III. “Unity and Division within Appearance” 53-72)

**26) Mar. 29, Friday**

- Pierre Bourdieu, “On Television” (p. 13 – 37) Text available on Blackboard)

**27) Apr. 1, Monday**

- Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, (“The Precession of Simulacra” p. 2 -13)

**28) Apr. 3, Wednesday**

Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, (“The Hyperreal and The Imaginary”; “Political Incantation.”; Mobius – Spiraling Negativity”; p.13 - 22)

**29) Apr.5, Friday**

- Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, (“The Precession of Simulacra” p. 22 - 30)

**30) Apr.8, Monday**

**\*Third response paper assignment announced\***

- Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, (“The Precession of Simulacra” p. 77 - 88)

**30) Apr.10, Wednesday**

- Jodi Dean, *How Technoculture Capitalizes on Democracy*, (“Communicative Capitalism. The Ideological Matrix” p. 1 – 15.)

**31) Apr.12, Friday**

- Jodi Dean, *How Technoculture Capitalizes on Democracy*, (“Publicity’s Secret” p. 15 - 34.)

**32) Apr.15, Monday**

*\*Third response paper assignment due, hard copy handed to me at the end of class*

- Jodi Dean, *How Technoculture Capitalizes on Democracy*, (“Habermasochism” p. 34 - 47.)

**33) Apr.17, Wednesday**

Jodi Dean, *How Technoculture Capitalizes on Democracy*, (“Little Brothers” p. 79 - 95.)

**34) Apr.19, Friday**

- Jodi Dean, *How Technoculture Capitalizes on Democracy*, (“Priests and Play” p. 95 - 113.)

**35) Apr.22, Monday**

- Jodi Dean, *How Technoculture Capitalizes on Democracy*, (“Celebrity’s Drive” p. 114 - 129.)

**36) Apr.24, Wednesday**

- Jodi Dean, *How Technoculture Capitalizes on Democracy*, (“The Decline of Symbolic Efficiency” p.129-138)

**37) Apr.26, Friday**

- Jodi Dean, *How Technoculture Capitalizes on Democracy*, (“Communicative Drive” p.138 - 150)

**Post Modernity?**

**38) Apr.29, Monday**

*\*Final Exam Question Announced\**

- Jurgen Habermas and Seyla Ben-Habib, “Modernity versus Postmodernity” (p. 1 – 7) (Article available on Blackboard)

**39) May. 1, Wednesday**

- Jurgen Habermas and Seyla Ben-Habib, “Modernity versus Postmodernity” (p. 7 - 14) (Article available on Blackboard)

**40) May. 3, Friday**

- Prasad Raj SINGH, “Consumer Culture and Postmodernism” (p.55 – 65) (Article available on Blackboard)

**41) May. 6, Monday**

- Prasad Raj SINGH, “Consumer Culture and Postmodernism” (p.65 – 70 and 73 - 84) (Article available on Blackboard)

**42) May. 8, Wednesday**

- Mark Poster, “Postmodern Virtualities” (Article available on Blackboard)

**43) May.10, Friday**

- Course Wrap up. Course evaluations.

**Final exam papers due hard copy handed to me personally at the same class location  
ON TUESDAY, MAY 14<sup>th</sup> between 10:30am – 12:30pm.**