

Modernism after Dark – 9115A

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Office: New AHB 3G04

Office hours: Tues 2-4:00, or by appointment

Room: UC377

Course hours: W 3:30-6:30

Description: In and out of the high modernist canon and the populist culture industries dwell some odd, unlikely, and untimely figures, which prefer the dark side of things. Some of these figures that come out after hours are: ghost dogs (Jack London), raging dinosaurs (Arthur Conan Doyle), and hybrid human-unhuman zombies (Zora Neale Hurston). The task of this class is to understand why so many of these untimely, uncanny, oddly agential, and queer figures emerged in modernism and what their appearance tells us about the legacy of modernist studies today. We will be focusing on three different themes of study: primitivism, prehistoricism, and future primitives. In primitivism, we will look at discourses of the primal and literature that explores supposedly earlier cultural and biological phases, looking at authors from Jack London to Joseph Conrad (*Heart of Darkness*), Djuna Barnes (*Nightwood*), and the poetry of Aimé Césaire. We will also read works of Freud that deal with the atavistic mind, including *The Wolf Man*. On the theme of prehistoricism, we will look at the rise of notions of deep time and worlds prior to the human in Doyle and H.G. Wells (*The Time Machine*). We will also look at literature on the newly discovered character of the Neanderthal (William Golding's *The Inheritors*). Our theoretical material for this unit will cover notions of deep time, ur-historicism, shamanism, and the emergence of the human (theorists will include Bataille and Kristeva). For the section on future primitives, we will be looking at the rise of new machines and technologies that can go beyond the human but also seem to cast the fate of the human world into a more primitive state (we'll read probably Karl Capek's *R.U.R.*, and the film *Metropolis*). The aim of this class overall is to study a set of emerging discourses regarding otherness, scale, and time in modernism and theory. We will also look at some essays on the "new modernist studies" to help us periodize the field of modernism in and out of tune with these other discourses of modernism's time out of joint.

Grading

60% final essay

15% oral presentation

25% class participation

Essay: The essay is a research paper of 20 pages on a topic pertaining to the course. A one-paragraph abstract will be due on Nov. 12.

Oral presentation: The presentation is a 20 minute overview of the key issues of a chosen text. You should frame the material with a variety of contexts including: how this text fits overall into our course (is in dialogue with previous readings), how the text fits overall in the author's oeuvre, and how the text fits in its field. In your presentation, you can choose to focus on close reading of passages, definition of select key terms, or analysis of the important elements of the

argument. Throughout the presentation, you should be raising questions for the class and outlining how you think we can get the most out of this reading.

Statement on Academic 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:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf

Books:

H.G. Wells *The Time Machine* (Penguin)

Arthur Conan Doyle *The Lost World* (Modern Library)

Jack London *The Call of the Wild* (Modern Library)

Sigmund Freud *Three Case Histories* (Touchstone)

Djuna Barnes *Nightwood* (Faber)

Colson Whitehead *Zone One* (Anchor)

Joseph Conrad *Heart of Darkness and Other Tales* (Oxford)

Aimé Césaire *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land* (Wesleyan or Bloodaxe)

Theodora Kroeber *Ishi in Two Worlds: The Last Wild Indian in North America* (U of California)

William Golding *The Inheritors* (Faber)

Karl Capek *R.U.R.* (Penguin)

J. G. Ballard *The Drowned World* (UK General Books)

Stanislaw Lem *Solaris* (Faber)

Week 1 – Sept. 10

Pamela Caughie “Introduction” from *Disciplining Modernism*; Susan Stanford Friedman “Definitional Excursions: The Meanings of *Modern/Modernity/Modernism*”; Wai Chee Dimock “Planet as Duration and Extension”; Susan Stanford Friedman “Planetarity”

Week 2 – Sept. 17

H.G. Wells *The Time Machine*; Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer “The ‘Anthropocene’”; Will Steffen, et. al. “The Anthropocene: Historical Perspectives”; Dipesh Chakrabarty “The Climate of History: Four Theses”

Recommended: Eileen Crist “On the Poverty of Our Nomenclature”

Week 3 – Sept. 24

Arthur Conan Doyle *The Lost World*; Martin Heidegger “Letter on Humanism”

Week 4 – Oct. 1

Jack London *The Call of the Wild*; Georges Bataille “Animality”; Alexandre Kojève “Introduction to Reading Hegel”

Week 5 – Oct. 8

Sigmund Freud *The Wolf Man*; Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, excerpts; Dana Seitler “Freud’s Menagerie: Our Atavistic Sense of Self”

Week 6 – Oct. 15

Djuna Barnes *Nightwood*; Julia Kristeva “Approaching Abjection”; Carrie Rohman “Revising the Human: Silence, Being, and the Question of the Animal in *Nightwood*”

Week 7 – Oct. 22

Zora Neale Hurston “Zombies”; Colson Whitehead *Zone One*

Week 8 – Oct. 29

Joseph Conrad *Heart of Darkness*; Aimé Césaire *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*

Week 9 – Nov. 5

Theodora Kroeber *Ishi in Two Worlds: The Last Wild Indian in North America*

Week 10 – Nov. 12

William Golding *The Inheritors*; Georges Bataille “The Passage from Animal to Man and the Birth of Art,” “The Cradle of Humanity: The Vézère Valley”; Karen Yusoff “Geologic Life: Prehistory, Climate, Futures in the Anthropocene”

Due: Essay Abstract

Week 11 – Nov. 19

Karl Capek *R.U.R.*; film: *Metropolis*

Week 12 – Nov. 26

J. G. Ballard *The Drowned World*; Joshua Schuster “How to Write the Disaster”

Week 13 – Dec. 3

Stanislaw Lem *Solaris*

Due: Final Paper, Dec. 17