

The University of Western Ontario
London Ontario

Department of English

English 9128B: British Post-Post Modernism

Winter, 2016.

Tuesday, 3:30-6:30

LwH 2210

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Office Hours: Wednesdays, 10:30-1:30.

Charles Jencks once characterized postmodernism as “the continuation of modernity and its transcendence” (*What is Postmodernism?* 15). This is an interesting comment through which to contemplate post-postmodernism because, while postmodernism as an epoch may be dead, its spectre remains and an afterimage persists. It is perhaps too soon to know whether “transcendence” is a term we can apply to contemporary fiction, but when Patrick O’Donnell makes the point that contemporary writers “regard postmodern experimentation as something of a toolbox; their writing is hybrid, by turns engaging in renovated forms of realism and linguistic playfulness, at once honoring generic traditions and mangling them in the mash-up or the parodic overture” (*MFS* 58), he seems to suggest lines of both difference and continuity. Certainly, contemporary writing has taken new directions, especially with regard to the archeological and didactic aspects of “historiographic metafiction. Postmodernism’s self-conscious focus on the “graphic” part of historiographic metafiction seems to have been replaced, in a number of texts, by an overt concern with politics, specifically with cultures of violence and crisis, brought about not just by armed conflict, but by post-industrialism, unemployment and austerity. As Lauren Berlant has argued, neoliberal economic policies mobilize instability (*Cruel Optimism*, 192), and that instability is evident in contemporary fiction’s representations of history, genre and identity.

January 6: Introduction

January 12:

Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* Chapter 1.

http://flawedart.net/courses/articles/Jameson_Postmodernism_cultural_logic_late_capitalism.pdf

Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*.

Introduction and Chapter 1:

<http://www.stibamalang.com/uploadbank/pustaka/MKSASTRA/A%20POETIC%20OF%20POSTMODERNISM.pdf>

January 19: Graham Swift, *Waterland*.

January 26: Jeanette Winterson, *Sexing the Cherry*

Terry Eagleton, “Truth, Virtue and Objectivity” from *After Theory*

February 2: Colum McCann, *TransAtlantic*

Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri “Symptoms of Passage” from *Empire*

February 9: A.L. Kennedy, *The Blue Book*

David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 1-39.

February 15-19: Reading Week

February 23: Zadie Smith, *White Teeth*.

Irtraud Huber, *Literature After Postmodernism*, Introduction and Part 1 (available online through <http://www.lib.uwo.ca/>)

March 1: Zadie Smith, *White Teeth*

Peter Boxall, "The Limits of the Human" from *Twenty-First-Century-Fiction*

March 8: David Mitchell, *The Bone Clocks*

Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, Introduction and Part 1

March 15: David Mitchell, *The Bone Clocks*

Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, Introduction and Chapter 1

March 22: Ali Smith, *How to Be Both*

Wolfgang Funk, *The Literature of Reconstruction*, Chapters 1 and 2

March 29: John Burnside, *The Glisters*

Jeffrey T. Nealon, *Post-Postmodernism*, Chapters 6 and 7

April 5: Wrap-up.

Assignments:

1. Seminar on primary text: 20%

Lead one class for 45-60 minutes. You should aim to make an interactive presentation rather than a speech. These presentations work best if you think of them as teaching exercises in which you engage the class in discussing a problem, issue or question in the text, directed by your insights.

2. 8-10 page write-up of seminar: 20%

Essentially, this will be a write-up of your seminar, due two weeks after you present it. The length is about that of a conference presentation. The seminar does not have to be all-inclusive, but should be an argument about a particular aspect of the text. Feel free to engage critical and/or theoretical works from the syllabus or from elsewhere.

3. Seminar on a supplementary text: 15%

A 20-30 minute presentation on one of the supplementary readings for that week.

4. Short write-up of the presentation. 3-5 pages. You may be selective. 10%

5. 15-20-page major paper: 25%. Due: April 15

The topic is open, but please see me before you embark. You may choose to include the text upon which you presented your seminar, but you should also broaden the discussion to include other literary and/or supplementary texts.

6. Participation 10%

NB: Late papers will be penalised 2% per day unless you have made prior arrangements with me. If there are medical reasons, please let me know. If you miss your seminar for reasons other than documented medical or other tragedy you will not be able to make it up.

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

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