

The University of Western Ontario
London Ontario

Department of English

English 9128B: British Post-Post Modernism

Winter, 2017
Tuesday, 3:30-6:30
Stevenson Hall 3101

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Office Hours: Monday, 2:30-4:30 or by appointment.

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.

Required texts:

Graham Swift, *Waterland*. Vintage. 1983.
Jeanette Winterson, *Sexing the Cherry*. Vintage. 1981.
Jeanette Winterson, *The Gap of Time*. Vintage. 2015.
Colum McCann, *TransAtlantic*. Harper. 2013.
Ian McEwan, *Saturday*. Vintage. 2005.
Tom McCarthy, *Remainder*. 2015.
A.L. Kennedy, *The Blue Book*. Anansi. 2011.
Ali Smith *How to Be Both*. Penguin. 2014.
John Burnside, *The Glisters*. Anchor. 2008.

January 10: Introduction

January 17:

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 24: Graham Swift, *Waterland*.

January 31: Jeanette Winterson, *Sexing the Cherry*

Thomas Docherty, "Now, Here, This." From *Literature and The Contemporary: Fictions and Theories of the Present*

February 7: Colum McCann, *TransAtlantic*

Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri "Symptoms of Passage" from *Empire*

February 14: A.L. Kennedy, *The Blue Book*

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

February 20-24: Reading Week

February 28: Ian McEwan, *Saturday*

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

March 7: Jeanette Winterson, *The Gap of Time*

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

March 14: Tom McCarthy, *Remainder*. 2015.

Zadie Smith, "Two Directions for the Novel" from *Changing my Mind: Occasional Essays*.

March 21: Ali Smith, *How to Be Both*

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

March 28: John Burnside, *The Glister*

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

April 4: 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 17

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

Graduate Course Health and Wellness

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. For example, 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.