

Fall Term 2018



**INSTRUCTOR:** Dr. C.E. Gittings  
**OFFICE:** UC 4414  
**TELEPHONE:** 519 661 2111 X 85781  
**EMAIL:** gittings@uwo.ca

**English 9165A *The Postmodern in Cinema and Literature***  
**Department of English and Writing Studies**  
**Faculty of Arts and Humanities**  
**University of Western Ontario**

‘an incredulity towards metanarratives’  
Jean François Lyotard

“It is safest to grasp the concept of the postmodern as an attempt to think the present historically in an age that has forgotten how to think historically in the first place.”  
Fredric Jameson

**Screenings:** Thursdays 19:00-22:00 UC 11401 (**NB.** Literary texts will not require a screening, but, if required, screening time may be used for discussion of novels)

**Seminars:** Mondays 12:30-15:30 UC 4415  
**Office Hours:** Mondays 15:30-17:30

**Course Objectives**

What is/was the postmodern? Does the term still have critical utility? It is certainly not an unproblematic or precise term and quickly became contested ground for influential scholarship in the humanities and social sciences when it first appeared. This course will provide students with a rigorous interrogation of the postmodern beginning with the concept’s emergence in philosophical thought, and working through critical parsings of its aesthetic and ideological formations in cinema and literature. Our readings of the postmodern will track the various and variant relationships of postmodernism to modernism, poststructuralism, and postcolonialism. The seminar’s inquiries into the postmodern will be informed by questions of identity and representation; how did the postmodern turn inflect representations of nation, class, gender/sexuality and race? Our knowledge of the postmodern in cinema and literature will be informed by readings from Jean Baudrillard, Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, Fredric Jameson, Jean François Lyotard, Laura Mulvey, and Hayden White.

## Required Texts For Purchase at the UWO Bookstore in UCC

### Novels

Timothy Findley, *The Wars* (Canada, 1977)

Thomas King, *Green Grass, Running Water* (Canada, 1993)

Jeanette Winterson *Sexing the Cherry* (UK, 1989)

Daphne Marlatt, *Ana Historic*(Canada, 1988)

Dionne Brand, *Land to Light On* (Canada, 1997)

### Reference

Susan Hayward, *Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts* (London and New York, Routledge 2017) other recent editions are also acceptable

### Owl

As noted below additional required and some recommended readings are available online through the course Owl site. Power point slides from seminar presentations will also be posted to this site.

Readings may be found under Resources

Power Point slides and clips will be posted to Lessons

### ASSIGNMENTS:

- Participation (including peer assessments described below) **10%**
- One Theory Response (described below—1000 words) **10%**
- One seminar presentation  
(submission of abstract, working bibliography and research notes) **30%**
- One research essay of **6000** words. **Date Due: December 6** **50%**

You have the option of working your seminar presentation into a research paper or selecting a new topic for the essay.

### Grades on Assignments in Graduate Courses

The following explanation of criteria commonly used in evaluating graduate work may, along with your instructor's comments, help you to interpret the grades you receive on your written assignments. The emphasis placed on the criteria listed may vary depending on the instructor and the type of assignment.

A grade of **78 or below** indicates that the work produced for this assignment was unacceptable. The reasons may include one or more of the following; poor grammar and/or writing style; ill-organized or disjointed presentation of your ideas; lack of engagement with the texts and/or secondary criticism that are pertinent to your topic; a fundamental misconception about the assignment.

A grade in the **low 80s** indicates that your work for this assignment was acceptable and competent. Although there may be minor weaknesses in one or more area, your grammar and style are correct and fluent, your argument is coherent (good paragraphing, good overall development of your line of thought) and you have completed the requirements of the assignment given.

A grade in the **mid 80s** indicates that your work for this assignment demonstrated a high degree of competence and was cogent. You work closely with the texts you focus on, show a good grasp of secondary criticism, and exhibit your ability to participate in the critical discussion of expressing your own views and backing them up. Your writing is clear, free of syntactical and grammatical errors, and develops a well-structured argument.

A grade in the **high 80s** indicates that your work for this assignment was excellent. Beyond writing well and meeting the demands of the assignment, your argument is especially well constructed, and/or does an especially good job of intervening in the critical discussion (and, as elaborated above).

Grades of **90 or above** reward exceptional performance: some instructors rarely award them. Beyond producing outstanding work, you have exceeded the instructor's expectations: you may for example have written exceptionally well, produced excellent work in a field of study the instructor knows is new to you, expressed an important or original idea, or brought the instructor to rethink his or her assumptions.

Note: Different standards apply to seminars and other oral presentations than to written work, and the kinds of oral presentations expected of you may vary widely from class to class. In general, meeting the demands of the assignment and cogency of argument remain just as crucial. The quality of delivery is usually a factor – and while overall coherence in your presentation is important, engaging with your audience and inviting their questions and insights may be more important to many instructors than sticking rigidly to a script. Individual instructors will let you know what they expect.

### **Absences and Late Assignments**

If you are absent from seminar or screening or an assignment is late due to illness or other legitimate reasons please contact me as soon as possible and forward supporting documentation to your Faculty. If you are in doubt as to the 'legitimacy' of your situation regarding lateness or absence please contact me as soon as possible.

For more information please go to the SPGS site:

[http://grad.uwo.ca/current\\_students/regulations/index.html](http://grad.uwo.ca/current_students/regulations/index.html)

### **Participation**

- Participation marks will be awarded for **active** engagement in seminar discussions, critical responses to required readings and constructive and insightful comments made on the peer assessment proformas.

### **Theory Response (1000 Word max.)**

- Each seminar member will act as a theory discussant for one of the weekly required readings. This will require the parsing of a required theory text that conveys the substantive elements of the assigned writer's argument and offers a few illustrations of said argument with reference to the film(s)/novels viewed/read in a given week, and, if pertinent examples from previous weeks. This **10-15 minute presentation** should be designed to provoke further discussion.

### **In your own words you will:**

- summarize the writer's argument in a paragraph
- list the essay's key points with examples
- select one quotation from the reading which you believe communicates most effectively the essence of the essay

**See the list of readings on OWL and email me your choice via OWL mail as soon as possible**

### **Seminar Presentation**

A **500-word** abstract of your presentation and a working bibliography are due **one week** before the seminar you select or earlier.

Please make an appointment to discuss the abstract and bibliography with the instructor a week before the seminar at the latest.

A copy of your research notes is to be submitted to the instructor on the day of your seminar.

**Please make copies of the abstract available for your colleagues via OWL mail at least 24 hours *before* your presentation. If you use power point for your presentation please submit a copy of the file to the instructor on a USB Drive (after the presentation), or upload it to OWL Dropbox so that it can be made available to your colleagues to consult on OWL.**

Oral presentations are to be **30** minutes in length and not one minute more. (Keep in mind standard conference papers in most Humanities disciplines are limited to 20 minutes)

Students should select an aspect of a given text that intrigues them, and will sustain further investigation. **It is expected that students will integrate some of the theoretical readings of the week and/or previous weeks into their presentations.** As the MA and Ph D are research-based degrees, *it is expected that your research will supplement the sources available on the syllabus.*

You might wish to raise questions at the end of your presentation to further class discussion.

Speak clearly, and slowly; the pace of an oral delivery, and the amount of eye contact a speaker has with an audience often determine the effectiveness of the presentation.

Following their seminar, students should make an appointment with the instructor to discuss peer evaluations of their presentation.

Students who select film topics should integrate clips and/or frame grabs into your presentation to illustrate your points just as if you were quoting from a literary text.

**Please notify me by email me as soon as possible about your choice for a seminar slot. Seminars will be assigned as I hear from students.**

### **Peer Assessment of Seminar Presentations**

All students will participate in the assessment of seminar presentations by making constructive comments on the peer assessment proformas (see attached form). Completed proformas are to be returned to the instructor **on the day following the seminar**. I will remove the names of assessors from the proformas, and share class comments with the seminarist.

### **Essays**

- Essays should refer to **two** or more films or novels and draw judiciously from the required weekly readings.
- As noted above, you may develop your seminar presentation and research into an essay that integrates a second primary text from the course into your analysis or you could elect to work with different primary texts for this assignment.
- A minimum of eight different sources should be included and referred to. These should include reviews and scholarly work on your chosen primary texts, interviews with their creators, as well as relevant work on the postmodern. In the course of your analysis, your essay should demonstrate a fluency with salient concepts of the postmodern as we have read about and discussed them in this class.
- Please use MLA format <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>
- **Please submit only one file through OWL Assignments in MS Word format. Always include the file extension and your surname. For example, if I were submitting, my file name would look like this:  
Gittings\_Essay\_9165A—PDFs will not be accepted**
- **\*\*Word count and bibliography should be included at the end of the**

assignment\*\*

- **Due: 06 December 2018. 6000 words maximum**

**Communications** should be through OWL email exclusively, unless you need to contact me in an emergency, then please use regular UWO email. Please allow 72 hours for responses to most queries.

**Plagiarism** is a serious offense and is prosecuted to the fullest extent that university regulations permit. Electronic note taking together with a copy and paste practice can result in the author being separated from a quotation; please ensure rigor when taking notes by always recording the source and marking quotations clearly.

**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](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf)  
Academic Handbook, Exam, Course Outlines Page 4

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 for such checking 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>)

## Course Schedule

### Week One—06 & 10 September—What is/was postmodernism? An Overview

#### Screening:

*The Group of Seven Inches* (Canada, Gisele Gordon, Kent Monkman, 2005) 7:30 min

*The Complete Monty Python's Flying Circus* (U.K., Ian McNaughton, John Howard Davies 1969-1974) Excerpts

*The Meaning of Life* (U.K., Terry Jones, Terry Gilliam, 1983) Excerpts

#### Seminar: *What is/was postmodernism?*

#### Required Readings for 10 September:

Lawrence Cahoon, "Introduction." In ed., Lawrence Cahoon, *From Modernism to Postmodernism. An Anthology*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003: 1-13.

#### OWL

Michel Foucault, "'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History' From 'Truth and Power.'" In ed., Lawrence Cahoon, *From Modernism to Postmodernism. An Anthology*: 241-253 **OWL**

Fredric Jameson, "Excerpts from 'Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism.'" In Joseph Natoli and Linda Hutcheon, eds., *A Postmodern Reader*. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York, 1993: 312-332. **OWL**

Jean François Lyotard, "'From The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge.'" In Lawrence Cahoon, *From Modernism to Postmodernism. An Anthology*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003:259-277. **OWL**

### **Week Two—13 & 17 September**

**Screening:** *Blue Velvet* (USA, David Lynch, 1986) **13 September**

#### **Required Readings for 17 September:**

Fredric Jameson, "Thinking the Present Historically." In *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991: 279-296.

**OWL**

Mulvey, Laura. "Some Thoughts on Fetishism in the Context of Contemporary Culture." *October* 65 (1993): 3-20. **OWL**

### **Week Three—Thursday 20 September no screening**

**Primary Text:** Timothy Findley, *The Wars* (Canada, 1977)

**Seminar Discussion:** *The Wars* **24 September**

#### **Seminar Readings for 24 September:**

Hayden White, "Historical Pluralism." *Critical Inquiry* 12.3 (Spring, 1986): 480-493

**OWL**

### **Week Four—27 September-01 October Start reading *Green Grass, Running Water***

#### **Screening:**

*Proteus* (Canada/South Africa, John Greyson and Jack Lewis, 2003) **27 September**

*The Making of Monsters* (John Greyson, 1991) Excerpts

*Zero Patience* (Canada, John Greyson, 1993) Excerpts

**Seminar Discussion:** *Proteus* **01 October**

#### **Seminar Readings for 01 October:**

Lee Edelman. "Homographesis." In *Homographesis. Essays in Gay Literary and Cultural Theory*. New York and London: Routledge, 1994: 3-23. **OWL**

B. Ruby Rich, "New Queer Cinema." In ed. Michele Aaron, *New Queer Cinema: A Critical Reader*: 15-21. **OWL**

**Continue reading *Green Grass, Running Water***

### **Week Five—04 October NB. no class on Thanksgiving 08 October**

**Primary Text:** Thomas King, *Green Grass, Running Water* (Canada, 1993)

**Seminar Discussion:** in Thursday's Screening

#### **Seminar Readings for 04 October:**

Thomas King, "Forget Columbus." In *The Inconvenient Indian*. Toronto: Anchor Canada, 2013: 1-20.

---, "The End of the Trail." In *The Inconvenient Indian*: 21-51.

Stephen Slemon, "Modernism's Last Post." In Joseph Natoli and Linda Hutcheon, eds., *A Postmodern Reader* 426-439. **OWL**

**Week 6—Reading Week 09 October—12 October classes cancelled**

**Week 7—15 & 18 October**

**Primary Text:** Jeanette Winterson *Sexing the Cherry* (UK, 1989)

**Seminar Discussion:** *Sexing the Cherry*

**Seminar Readings for 15 October:**

Judith Butler, "Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of 'Postmodernism.'" In ed., Lawrence Cahoon, *From Modernism to Postmodernism. An Anthology*: 390-401. **OWL**

**Screening:** *Orlando* (UK/Russia/Italy/France/Netherlands, Sally Potter, 1992) **18 October**

**Week 8—22 & 25 October**

**Seminar Discussion:** *Orlando*

**Seminar Readings for 22 October:**

Judith Butler, "Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of 'Postmodernism.'" In ed., Lawrence Cahoon, *From Modernism to Postmodernism. An Anthology*: 390-40. **OWL**

Shari Frilot, "Film Interview: Sally Potter." In *Bomb* 44, Summer (1993)

**Screening:** *Stories We Tell* (Canada, Sarah Polley, 2012) **25 October**

**Week 9—29 October & 01 November**

**Seminar Discussion:** *Stories We Tell*

**Seminar Readings for 29 October:**

Bill Nichols "The Reflexive Mode of Representation" *Representing Reality. Issues and Concepts in Documentary*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991: 56-75. **OWL**

**Screening:** *Brazil* (UK, Terry Gilliam, 1985) **01 November**

**Week 10—05 & 08 November**

**Seminar Discussion:** *Brazil* (UK, Terry Gilliam, 1985)

**Seminar Readings for 05 November:**

Jean Baudrillard, "The Precession of Simulacra." In Joseph Natoli and Linda Hutcheon, eds., *A Postmodern Reader*: 342-275. **OWL**

Rick Lyman, "A Zany Guy Has a Serious Rave Movie." In eds., David Sterritt and Lucille Rhodes, *Terry Gilliam: Interviews*. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2004: 26-29. **OWL**

Owen Gleiberman, "The Life of Terry." In eds., David Sterritt and Lucille Rhodes, *Terry Gilliam: Interviews*: 30-35. **OWL**

William Gibson, "The Gernsback Continuum" In *Burning Chrome*. New York: ACE Books, 1986: 23-25. **OWL (short story)**

**Primary Text:** Dionne Brand, *Land to Light On* **08 November Seminar**

**Seminar Readings for 08 November:**



Dionne Brand, "Notes on Writing Thru Race." In *Bread Out of Stone: Recollections. Sex Recognitions, Race, Dreaming. Politics.* Toronto: Coach House Press, 1997  
bell hooks, "The Oppositional Gaze." *Black Looks: Race and Representation.* Toronto: Between the Lines, 1992: 115-131 **OWL**

### **Week 11—12 & 15 November**

**Primary Text:** Daphne Marlatt, *Ana Historic*

**Seminar Discussion:** *Ana Historic*

#### **Seminar Readings for 12 November:**

Luce Irigaray, "The Sex Which is not One." In ed., Lawrence Cahoon, *From Modernism to Postmodernism. An Anthology:* 254-258.

Daphne Marlatt, "Lesbera." *Readings from the Labyrinth.* Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1998: 42-49.

#### **Screening 15 November:**

*Far From Heaven* (USA, Todd Haynes, 2002) DVD 107 min.

*Fear Eats the Soul/Angst essen Seele auf* excerpt (West Germany, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, 1974) 94 min. **Excerpt**

### **Week 12—19 & 22 November**

**Seminar Discussion:** *Far From Heaven* (USA, Todd Haynes, 2002)

#### **Seminar Readings for 19 November:**

Kleinhans, Chuck. "Notes on Melodrama and the Family Under Capitalism." In ed., Marcia Landy *Imitations of Life: A Reader on Film and Television Melodrama.* Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991: 197-204. **OWL**

Neale, Stephen. "Questions of Genre." *Screen* 31.1 Spring 1990: 45-66. **OWL**

Weeks, Jeffrey. "Homophobia." *Feminism and Psychoanalysis: A Critical Dictionary.* London and Cambridge: Blackwell, 1995: 155-156. **OWL**

---. "Homosexuality." *Feminism and Psychoanalysis: A Critical Dictionary.* London and Cambridge: Blackwell, 1995: 157-161. **OWL**

**Screening:** *Westworld* (USA, Lisa Joy and Jonathan Nolan, 2016) Season 1(3 Episodes)  
**22 November**

"The Original" S1E1 (Jonathan Nolan) 1h 8 min.

"Chestnut" S1E2 (Richard J. Lewis) 58 min.

"The Adversary" S1E6 (Frederick E.O. Toye) 57 min.

### **Week 13—26 & 29 November**

**Seminar Discussion:** *Westworld*

#### **Seminar Readings for 26 November:**

Jean Baudrillard, "From 'Symbolic Exchange and Death.'" In ed., Lawrence Cahoon, *From Modernism to Postmodernism. An Anthology:* 321-434

Joshua D. Crabill, "A Place to Be Free: Writing Your Own Story in Westworld." In eds., James B. South and Kimberly S. Engels, *Westworld and Philosophy.* Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2018: 114-124.

**Screening:** *Westworld* (USA, Lisa Joy and Jonathan Nolan, 2016) Season 1 (3 Episodes)  
**29 November**

“Tromp L’Oeil” S1E7 (Frederick E.O. Toye) 56 min.

“The Well-Tempered Clavier” S1E9 (Michelle MacLaren) 58 min.

“The Bicameral Mind” S1E10 (Jonathan Nolan) 1h 30 min.

**Week 14—03 & 06 December**

**Seminar Discussion:** *Westworld* Season 1(3 Episodes)

**Seminar Readings for 03 December:**

Jean Baudrillard, “From ‘Symbolic Exchange and Death.’” In ed., Lawrence Cahoon,  
*From Modernism to Postmodernism. An Anthology:* 321-434

Michael Forest and Thomas Beckley-Forest, “The Dueling Productions of *Westworld*:  
Self-Referential Art or Meta-Kitsch?” In eds., James B. South and Kimberly S.  
Engels, *Westworld and Philosophy*. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2018: 185-195.

English 9165A *The Postmodern in Cinema and Literature*  
PEER ASSESSMENT

Name of presenter:

Evidence of thoughtful engagement with the topic:

Research/Content:

Analysis/Argument (Clarity and Coherence):

Originality of Approach:

Pace of delivery/volume of delivery

General Comments:

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This portion of the form will be removed before it is returned to the presenter.

Name of assessor:

**For Weldon's Research Guide to Film Studies see:**

<https://guides.lib.uwo.ca/filmstudies>

**SOME FILM STUDIES JOURNALS/MAGAZINES**

*Canadian Journal of Film Studies*

*Camera Obscura*

*Cinema Journal*

*Cineaction*

*Cineaste*

*Film Comment*

*Film Quarterly*

*Film Studies*

*Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*

*Jump Cut*

*Playback*

*Postscript*

*Screen*

*Sight and Sound*

*Take-One*

*Quarterly Review of Film and Video*

*Transnational Cinemas*

*Variety*

*Wide Angle*