

Hantology, or Reading Byung-Chul Han

THEOCRIT 9210

Centre for the Study of Theory and Criticism

Winter 2019

COURSE OUTLINE

Professor: Julian Jason Haladyn
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Course Time: Friday 11:30am-2:30pm
Location: Stevenson Hall Rm. 3165

Course Description

This course is a focused exploration of the writing of contemporary cultural theorist Byung-Chul Han. Known for his concise and accessible books, the translation of his writings into English have had a major impact not only on the core areas of study in which his work often challenged, but also for the style and structure of his thinking. Building upon the critical discussions of capitalism and spectacle, particularly by Guy Debord, the theories of power developed by Michel Foucault, and the theories of simulacra forwarded by Jean Baudrillard, Han looks at the consequences of social and technological changes on the subject of our contemporary condition. Students will engage in a critical overview of Han's key ideas, including his proposal for a neoliberal aesthetics of the smooth based on excess positivity, the lack of an Other and the subsumption of the crowd, one of the core ideas of subjective engagement within modern culture (Kant and the nation state), into a mere swam of disconnected people. The main readings include five translations of Han's books, which cover a range of his major ideas. Additional readings will provide a framework for his thinking, including key texts discussed and used by Han as well as texts by his contemporary Hito Steyerl.

Assignments

1. Seminar Presentation (35%)

- you will give one in-class presentation of no more than 20 minutes that discuss the Han reading for the week in relation to one support reading (relevant to the specific text)
- hand in a maximum one page summary of your topic before you present

2. Research Paper (45%)

- you will write a final research paper of approximately 20 to 30 pages
- *requirement*: discuss your topic with me well in advance of handing in your paper

3. Seminar Participation (20%)

- *note*: for students worried about participation you can hand in up to two maximum one page reading responses that will count towards your mark

Course Texts (available at the bookstore)

Byung-Chul Han, *Shanzhai: Deconstruction in Chinese* [2011]
Byung-Chul Han, *Topology of Violence* [2011]
Byung-Chul Han, *The Transparency Society* [2012]
Byung-Chul Han, *The Agony of Eros* [2012]
Byung-Chul Han, *In the Swarm: Digital Prospects* [2013]
Byung-Chul Han, *Psychopolitics: Neoliberalism and New Technologies of Power* [2014]
Byung-Chul Han, *Saving Beauty* [2015]

Additional Required Readings (as PDFs)

Hito Steyerl, “Too Much World: Is the Internet Dead?”
Hito Steyerl, “A Sea of Data: Apophenia and Pattern (Mis-)Recognition”

Schedule

Week 1—January 11	<i>Course Introduction</i> Byung-Chul Han, <i>Shanzhai</i> (1-31)
Week 2—January 18	Byung-Chul Han, <i>Shanzhai</i> (33-78)
Week 3—January 25	Byung-Chul Han, <i>Topology of Violence</i> (part 1)
Week 4—February 1	Byung-Chul Han, <i>Topology of Violence</i> (part 2)
Week 5—February 8	Byung-Chul Han, <i>The Transparency Society</i>
Week 6—February 15	Byung-Chul Han, <i>The Agony of Eros</i>
Week 7—March 1	Byung-Chul Han, <i>In the Swarm: Digital Prospects</i> (1-35)
Week 8—March 8	Byung-Chul Han, <i>In the Swarm: Digital Prospects</i> (37-80) Hito Steyerl, “Too Much World: Is the Internet Dead?” Hito Steyerl, “A Sea of Data: Apophenia and Pattern (Mis-)Recognition”
Week 9—March 15	Byung-Chul Han, <i>Psychopolitics</i> (1-40)
Week 10—March 22	Byung-Chul Han, <i>Psychopolitics</i> (41-87)
Week 11—March 29	Byung-Chul Han, <i>Saving Beauty</i> (1-39)
Week 12—April 5	Byung-Chul Han, <i>Saving Beauty</i> (40-81) <i>Concluding discussion</i>

Support readings

Byung-Chul Han, *The Expulsion of the Other* [2009]
Byung-Chul Han, *The Burnout Society* [2010]
Byung-Chul Han, *The Scent of Time* [2016]
Martin Heidegger, “Who Is Nietzsche’s Zarathustra?”
Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* (excerpt)
Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (excerpt)
Guy Debord’s *Society of the Spectacle* (excerpt)
Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (excerpt)
Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics* (excerpt)
Jean Baudrillard, *Fatal Strategies* (excerpt)
Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations* (excerpt)

SCHOLASTIC OFFENCES DEFINITION

Members of the University Community accept a commitment to maintain and uphold the purposes of the University and, in particular, its standards of scholarship. It follows, therefore, that acts of a nature that prejudice the academic standards of the University are offences subject to discipline. Any form of academic dishonesty that undermines the evaluation process, also undermines the integrity of the University’s degrees. The University will take all appropriate measures to promote academic integrity and deal appropriately with scholastic offences.

Scholastic Offences include, but are not limited to, the following examples:

- Plagiarism - the “act or an instance of copying or stealing another’s words or ideas and attributing them as one’s own.” (Excerpted from Black’s Law Dictionary, West Group, 1999, 7th ed., p. 1170). This concept applies with equal force to all academic work, including theses, assignments or projects of any kind, comprehensive examinations, laboratory reports, diagrams, and computer projects. Detailed information is available from instructors, Graduate Chairs, or the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. Students also may consult style manuals held in the University’s libraries. See
- <http://www.lib.uwo.ca/services/styleguides.html>
- Cheating on an examination or falsifying material subject to academic evaluation.
- Submitting false or fraudulent research, assignments or credentials; or falsifying records, transcripts or other academic documents.
- Submitting a false medical or other such certificate under false pretences.
- Improperly obtaining, through theft, bribery, collusion or otherwise, an examination paper prior to the date and time for writing such an examination.
- Unauthorized possession of an examination paper, however obtained, prior to the date and time for writing such an examination, unless the student reports the matter to the instructor, the relevant program, or the Registrar as soon as possible after receiving the paper in question.
- Impersonating a candidate at an examination or availing oneself of the results of such an impersonation.
- Intentionally interfering in any way with any person’s scholastic work.
- Submitting for credit in any course or program of study, without the knowledge and *written* approval of the instructor to whom it is submitted, any academic work for which credit previously has been obtained or is being sought in another course or program of study in the University or elsewhere.
- Aiding or abetting any such offence.

Evidence of wrongdoing may result in criminal prosecution in addition to any proceedings within the University.

For more information please consult the Academic Handbook, Appeals, Scholastic Discipline for Graduate Students: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf