

COURSE PROPOSAL FOR THE CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF THEORY AND CRITICISM

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“THE ARTS AND POLITICS OF THE SITUATIONIST INTERNATIONAL (1957-1972)”

In 1967 a few western European avant-garde groups came together to form the *Situationist International* (or SI). Continuing where the Dadaists and surrealists had left off, the situationists challenged passive social conditioning with carefully-calculated artistic scandals and the playful tactics of *dérive*, psychogeography and *détournement*. Seeking a more extreme social revolution of ‘everyday life’ than was ever dreamed of before, the situationists developed a penetrating socio-political critique of the global spectacle-commodity system and of its incomplete, ‘leftist’ pseudo-opposition. Their diverse methods of agitation, including a sustained critique of work, came together and helped trigger the May 1968 student/labour revolt in France. Despite officially dissolving in 1972, cultural historians believe that situationist theories and tactics continue to inspire radical currents around the world (the Arab Spring of 2010, the Occupy movement of 2011, the Hong Kong protests of 2019, anti-Trump rallies, and so on).

This course, then, will examine the following aspects of the *Situationist International*.

1. the various social, political, cultural, artistic and intellectual currents that converge in the work of the SI,
2. in particular, a critical/dialectical trajectory that begins with Baudelaire’s desire to escape the ugliness of mid-nineteenth century modernity, through the transition of symbolist into surrealist poetry in France in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century, and ending up in a sustained Hegelian-Marxist critique of the ideologies of capitalism and urbanism, and
3. the continuing influence of the SI as an unnamed (or unconscious) practice that might help to bring about a new vision of society that is not antithetical to personal happiness.

Modules 1-2 Introduction and Overview of the Situationist International

Selected readings for research:

Baechler, Jean. (1976). *Qu’est-ce que l’idéologie*. Paris: Éditions Gallimard

Bourdieu, Pierre. (1998). *Les règles de l’art: Genèse et structure du champ littéraire*. Paris, FR: Éditions du Seuil

Dewey, John (1980). *Art as Experience*. New York, NY: Perigee Books.

Duvignaud, Jean. (1972). *The Sociology of Art*. Translated by Timothy Wilson. London, UK: Granada Publishing.

Knabb, Ken (ed.) (2006). *Situationist International Anthology*. Berkeley, CA: Bureau of Public Secrets.

McDonough, Tom (ed.). (2004). *Guy Debord and the Situationist International: Texts and Documents*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

- Meschonnic, Henri. (1988). *Modernité, Modernité*. Paris, FR: Éditions Verdier.
 Walker, John A. (1996). *Art in the Age of Mass Media*. London, UK: Pluto Press.
 Wilson, Scott. 1995). *Cultural Materialism: Theory and Practice*. Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell.

Modules 3-4 Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867) and the French Revolts (1844-1866)

Selected readings for research:

- Baudelaire, Charles. (1970). *Paris Spleen*. New York, NY: New Directions. Original French, *Le Spleen de Paris (Petits poèmes en prose), La Fanfarlo*. (1987). Paris, FR: Éditions Flammarion.
 Baudelaire, Charles. (2006). *Selected Writings on Art and Literature*. London, England: Penguin Books. Original French, *Écrits sur l'art*. (1999). Edited and annotated by Francis Moulinat. Paris, FR: Livres de poche.
 Benjamin, Walter. (2002). *The Arcades Project*. Translated by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press.
 Buck-Morss, Susan. (1997). *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
 Calasso, Roberto. (2012). *La Folie Baudelaire*. London, England: Allen Lane.
 Fourier, Charles. (2008). *The Theory of the Four Movements*. Edited by Gareth Stedman Jones and Ian Patterson. Translated by Ian Patterson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
 Raymond, Marcel. (1966). *De Baudelaire au Surréalisme*. Paris, FR: Librairie José Corti.

Modules 5-6 The Influence of the French Symbolist Writers on the Situationists

Selected readings for research:

- Lautréamont, le Comte de. (2011). *Maldoror & the Complete Works of the Comte de Lautréamont*. Cambridge, MA: Exact Change. *Œuvres complètes: Les Chants de Maldoror, Lettres, Poésies I et II*. (1973). Preface by J. M. G. LeClézio. Paris, FR: Éditions Gallimard
 Mallarmé, Stéphane. (2008). *Collected Poems and Other Verse*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
 Rimbaud, Arthur. (2008). *Complete Works*. New York, NY: Harper.
 Rimbaud, Arthur, et. al. (2010). *Rimbaud, Cros, Corbière, Lautréamont: Œuvres poétiques complètes*. Preface by Hubert Juin. Paris, FR: Éditions Robert Laffont.

Modules 7-9 Surrealism and Critical Theory in the Political Theories of the Situationists

Selected readings for research:

- Apollinaire, Guillaume. (1971). *Selected Writings*. Translated by Roger Shattuck. New York: New Directions. *Alcools: choix de poèmes*. (1971). Edited by Roger Lefèvre. Paris, FR: Larousse.
- Aragon, Louis. (2011). *Paris Peasant*. Translated with an Introduction by Simon Watson Taylor. Cambridge, MA: Exact Change.
- Benjamin, Walter. (1978). *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*. New York: Schocken Books.
- Breton, Andre. (1972). *Manifestos of Surrealism*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Burger, Peter. (1984). *Theory of the Avant-Garde*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Freud, Sigmund. (1985). "Civilization and its Discontents" in *The Pelican Freud Library Volume 12. Civilization, Society and Religion*. Edited by Albert Dickson. Translated by James Strachey. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books.
- Freud, Sigmund. (1987). "Creative Writers and Daydreaming" and "The Uncanny" in *The Pelican Freud Library Volume 14. Art and Literature*. Edited by Albert Dickson. Translated by James Strachey. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books.
- Horkheimer, Max. (1972). *Critical Theory: Selected Essays*. New York, NY: Continuum.
- Horkheimer, Max and Adorno, Theodor. (1989). *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. New York, NY: Continuum.
- Lenk, Elisabeth. (2015). *The Challenge of Surrealism: The Correspondences of Theodor W. Adorno and Elisabeth Lenk*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Oster, Daniel. (1975). *Guillaume Apollinaire: Poètes D'aujourd'hui*. Paris, FR: Éditions Seghers.

Modules 10-11 Marx and Weber on the Social & Economic Theories of the Situationists

Selected readings for research:

- Bakunin, Mikhail. (2002). *Statism and Anarchy*. Translated, edited and with an Introduction by Marshall S. Shatz. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Bunyard, Tom. (2019). *Debord, Time and Spectacle: Hegelian Marxism and Situationist Theory*. Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books.
- Castoriadis, Cornelius. (1987). *The Imaginary Institution of Society*. Translated by Kathleen Blamey. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Hegel, G. W. F. (1977). "Self-Alienated Spirit: Culture" (Sec. 1a) in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. Translated by A. V. Miller. Foreword by J. N. Findley. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Hemmels, Alastair. (2019). *The Critique of Work in Modern French Thought from Charles Fourier to Guy Debord*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Lefebvre, Henri. (1991). *The Production of Space*. Translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Lefebvre, Henri. (2003). *The Urban Revolution*. Translated by Robert Bononno. Foreword by Neil Smith. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Lefebvre, Henri. (2008a). *Critique of Everyday Life, Volume 1*. Translated by John Moore. Preface by Michel Trebitsch. London, UK: Verso.

- Lefebvre, Henri. (2008b). *Critique of Everyday Life: Foundations for a Sociology of the Everyday, Volume 2*. Translated by John Moore. Preface by Michel Trebitsch. London, UK: Verso.
- Lefebvre, Henri. (2008b). *Critique of Everyday Life: From Modernity to Modernism (Towards a Metaphilosophy of Everyday Life, Volume 3)*. Translated by Gregory Elliot. Preface by Michel Trebitsch. London, UK: Verso.
- Lukacs, Georg. (1983). *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*. Translated by Rodney Livingstone. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press
- Marx, Karl. (1998). *The German Ideology*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books.
- Simmel, Georg. (1971). *On Individuality and Social Forms*. Edited with an Introduction by Donald N. Levine.
- Smith, Tony. (1993). *Dialectical Social Theory and Its Critics: From Hegel to Analytical Marxism and Postmodernism*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Weber, Max. (1978). *Economy and Society, Volume 1*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Wilson, H.T. (2004). *The Vocation of Reason: Studies in Critical Theory and Social Science in the Age of Weber*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill.

Modules 12-13 Guy Debord, Raoul Vaneigem and Situationist Literature Today

Selected readings for research:

- Le Bras, Laurence and Guy, Emmanuel. (2016). *Lire Debord: Avec des notes inédites de Guy Debord*. Paris: L'Échappée
- Debord, Guy. (1998). *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle*. London, England: Verso.
- Debord, Guy. (2006). *Œuvres*. Edited by Jean-Louis Rançon. Paris: Éditions Gallimard
- Debord, Guy. (2009). *Panegyric*. London, England: Verso.
- Debord, Guy (2014). *The Society of the Spectacle*. Berkeley, CA: Bureau of Public Secrets.
- Jappe, Anselm. (2018). *Guy Debord*. Translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith. Foreword by T. J. Clark. Oakland, CA: PM Press.
- Marie, Jean-Claude. (2009). *Guy Debord: de son cinema en son art et en son temps*. Paris, FR: Vrin.
- Vaneigem, Raoul. (2012). *The Revolution of Everyday Life*. Oakland, CA: PM Press.