

Under Elding Towers, Among Dimming Stars: The Spaces and Politics of Modernity

Prof. Allan Pero

This course will investigate our complex and fraught relationship to space. For example, the modern period has witnessed the astonishing development of what quickly became known as the “Metropolis.” This phenomenon, which radically changed our ideas of space and place, body and psyche, subject and other, also affected how concepts like distance and proximity, in Henri Lefebvre’s phrase, were “perceived, conceived, and lived.” In this sense, urbanism, the psyche, and the body are chiasmically intertwined, conceived by artists and thinkers alike as fantasy, medium, and technology. With these ideas in mind, we will explore how ideas of “interiority” and “exteriority,” psychic, intersubjective, and architectural, have shaped our relationship to perception, thought, and experience. For example, if space is not a “given,” then how is it produced? How does space change our relationship to the world as it is perceived, conceived, and lived? What happens to our ideas of the body? Of desire? Of the body politic? Of Culture? We will work to situate these questions in the works of such thinkers as Walter Benjamin, Merleau-Ponty, Henri Lefebvre, Deleuze and Guattari, Edward Casey, Edward Soja, and Homi Bhabha.

Texts:

The Arcades Project - Walter Benjamin (selections)

“On Some Motifs in Baudelaire” - Walter Benjamin

The Production of Space - Henri Lefebvre (Blackwell)

Toward an Architecture of Enjoyment – Henri Lefebvre (Minnesota)

The Phenomenology of Perception - Maurice Merleau-Ponty (Routledge) (selection)

The Visible and the Invisible – Maurice Merleau-Ponty (selection)

A Thousand Plateaus – Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (selections)

The Fate of Place - Edward Casey - (U of California Press) (selection)

Thirdspace - Edward Soja (Blackwell) (selection)

The Location of Culture - Homi K. Bhabha (Routledge) (selection)

Format: Seminar and Discussion.

Method of Evaluation:

Seminar and Discussion.

Seminar Presentation (30 minutes) - (35%)

The seminar presentation will consist of a broader critique, assessment, or analysis of the issues that emerge from the readings that week. You should think of the seminar as a kind of lecture in which you are attempting to teach the rest of us something about the theory, as well as exploring

your own position on it. Further, you should be working toward developing useful or provocative questions that will help lead the subsequent class discussion.

2 Respondents to two seminars (20%)

The seminar presenter is not alone in teasing out useful lines of discussion; the respondent's role is to take up some of the issues or problematics raised by the presenter and work them in turn into fruitful questions that will be addressed not only to the presenter, but to the class as a whole.

The purpose of these exercises is to encourage class discussion; in larger terms, it is also meant to prompt you to start thinking like teachers - to take up issues and make them the basis of exciting and dynamic debate and conversation.

Major Research Paper - (5000 words) (35%)

The research paper is to give you the opportunity to synthesize in more depth one or more aspects of the theory opened up by the course material. The topic is fairly open, but should be determined in consultation with me. That said, I would prefer that your paper engage with the thinkers, material, or concepts explored in the course. Feel free to come and consult me about anything you're puzzling over - let it be a case of "analysis terminable" rather than "interminable."

The purpose of the paper is to help you begin to articulate, in written form, some of your own thoughts on the material. I hope that you'll use the paper to help solidify your grasp of the theory so that you make it your own; that way, the cranky anti-theory people won't be able to trip you up with "common sense" (and - I regret to say - they will sometimes try).

1 Response Paper (10%)

Length: 500 words maximum

The response papers are open: you may write a response to the any of the readings - theoretical, literary, or otherwise. They are meant to give you the chance to be creative with the theory, work out a position on a text or point that haunts you like a "symptom," or work toward a thesis for your major paper. Have fun with it - or, at least, enjoy - your symptom!

Week I: Introduction

Week II: "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," *The Arcades Project* (Convolutés D, J, M, O, P)

Week III: *The Arcades Project* (Convolutés F, I, K, L; "Dialectics at a Standstill," Rolf Tiedemann)

Week IV: *Introduction to Modernity* (11th Prelude); *The Production of Space*.

Week V: *The Production of Space*

Week VI: *Toward an Architecture of Enjoyment*

Week VII: *The Fate of Space* (Part III, 8-9; Part IV)

Week VIII: *The Phenomenology of Perception* (Part ONE: Chapters 1-4)

Week IX: *The Visible and the Invisible* (Chapter 3-4)

Week X: *A Thousand Plateaus* (Chapters 10, 14)

Week XI: *Thirdspace* (Part 1, Chapters 1-6)

Week XII: *The Location of Culture* (Introduction, Chapters 11-12)