1: Course Information
Course Name and Number: Theory 9421G, The Benjamin Constellation
Location: StvH 3165
Day and Time: Mondays 10:00-1:00

2: Instructor Information
Name: Dr. John Vanderheide
Email: Jvande29@uwo.ca
Appointments: email for zoom chats, or drop in hours Thursdays 9:30-11:30 HUC A203 (Huron)

3: Course Description:
This course studies the constellated relations between nature and history, aesthetics and politics that Walter Benjamin charted across his philosophical and critical career (1915-1940) and the ways in which contemporary theorists and critics have been reading that constellation for knowledge of their own present.

4: Course Materials:
PDFs provided for all the readings, but students are also encouraged to acquire their own print copies of Origin of the German Trauerspiel and The Arcades Project.

5: Methods of Evaluation:

Attendance and Participation (Ongoing, 2%/wk): 15%

Seminar Presentation (Due weeks 5-13; 30 minutes in length): 30%

Short response (Due: Feb 10, 2023; 750 words+): 15%

Research Project (Due Apr 17, 2023, 20-25 double-spaced pages): 40%

6: 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/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf.

7: List of Weekly Readings (pdfs provided)

Week 1 (Jan 9):
Benjamin readings: “Aphorisms on Imagination and Color” (1914-15)
**Constellated readings:** Peter Fenves, *The Messianic Reduction* (selection) (2010)

**Week 2: (Jan 16)**  
*Benjamin readings:* “On Language as Such and on the Language of Man” (1916)

**Constellated readings:** Peter Fenves, *The Messianic Reduction* (selection) 2010

**Week 3: (Jan 23)**  
*Benjamin readings:* “On the Program of the Coming Philosophy” (1918)

**Constellated readings:** Annika Thiem, “Benjamin’s Messianic Metaphysics of Transience” (2015)

**Week 4: (Jan 30)**  
*Benjamin readings:* “Fate and Character” (1921), “Capitalism as Religion” (1921), “Theological Political Fragment” (1921), “Toward a Critique of Violence” (1921)

**Constellated readings:** Judith Butler, “One Time Traverses Another” (2015)  
Werner Hamacher, “Guilt History” (2002)  
Byung-Chul Han, *Topology of Violence* (selection) (2011)

**Week 5: (Feb 6)**  
*Benjamin readings:* “Epistemo-Critical Foreword,” *Origin of the German Trauerspiel* (1928)

**Constellated readings:** Beatrice Hanssen, “Philosophy at Its Origin: Walter Benjamin’s Prologue to the Ursprung des deutschen Trauerns” (1995)

**Week 6: (Feb 13)**  
*Benjamin readings:* “Trauerspiel and Tragedy,” “Allegory and Trauerspiel,” *Origin of the German Trauerspiel* (1928)

**Constellated readings:** Anna Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World* (selection) (2015)

**Reading week**

**Week 7: (Feb 27)**  
*Benjamin readings:* “This Space for Rent,” “To the Planetarium,” *One Way Street* (1928)

**Constellated readings:** Adrienne Rich, “Planetarium” (1971)

**Week 8: (Mar 6)**  

**Constellated readings:** Michael North, *Machine-Age Comedy* (selection) (2008)
**Week 9: (Mar 13)**


**Week 10: (Mar 20)**

*Benjamin readings:* “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility” (second version) (1936)


**Week 11: (Mar 27)**


**Week 12: (Apr 3)**

*Benjamin readings:* Konvolut M, N, O, *The Arcades Project* (1927-1940)

*Constellated readings:* Robyn Marasco, “It’s All about the Benjamins” (2018)


**Week 13: (Apr 10)**

*Benjamin readings:* “On the Concept of History” (1939)