**30.478 Postmodernism and Beyond**

Fall 2023

**Instructor:** Dr. Reinhold Kramer

109 Clark Hall, 204-727-7344 [kramer@brandonu.ca](mailto:kramer@brandonu.ca)

Office: 2:40-3:30 Mon, Wed

1:40-2:30 most Thurs

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**Course Description:** We will examine

late 20th-century and early 21st-century literature and film, focusing on how artistic works and human emotions respond to new media environments, to scientific Rune Guneriussen, “A multiverse explanation” (2010)

advances, and to a culture of simulation.

Films could include Joel & Ethan Coen, *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* and Kaufman & Jonze, *Adaptation*. Fiction could include Stoppard, *The Real Inspector Hound*; Lem, *A Perfect Vacuum*; Wallace, “The Suffering Channel;” Shteyngart, *Super Sad True Love Story*; Powers, *Generosity*; and Egan, *A Visit from the Goon Squad*. Titles may change with little notice.

**Assignments:** 1. Class Participation 10%

2. Reading Tests **25 Sept., 16 Oct., 30 Oct., 27 Nov.** 10%

3. Test **13 Oct.**  20%

4. Seminar presentation & responses (various dates) 10%

5. Essay (10-12 pages)  **20 Nov. (later for Anderson or Powers)** 20%

6. Final Exam **15 December, 2-4 p.m.**  30%

There may be penalties for lateness, depending upon circumstances. Reading tests cannot be postponed, and missed tests cannot be rewritten without a doctor’s note or other documentation. Cite all sources for ideas and quotations. Assignments containing plagiarism will be graded “0” and will result in disciplinary action. Please read BU UndergraduateCalendar 3.14 “Academic Integrity.”

No cell phones in class. No laptops, unless required through Student Accessibility Services.

Students who require disability accommodations should register with the Accessibility Services Coordinator, 204-727-9759, [magnussonm@brandonu.ca](mailto:magnussonm@brandonu.ca). Student Services also offers personal counselling (contact 204-727-9737). If students find controversial readings and/or discussions troubling, please contact the instructor immediately about alternatives.

**Grading: Letter/Number/Grade Point**

Outstanding Good Satisfactory Weak Inadequate

A+ 90 & up 4.3 B+ 77-79 3.3 C+ 67-69 2.3 D 50-59 1.0 F 0-49 0

A 85-89 4.0 B 73-76 3.0 C 63-66 2.0

A- 80-84 3.7 B- 70-72 2.7 C- 60-62 1.7

**Texts:** Egan, Jennifer. *A Visit from the Goon Squad.*

Powers, Richard. *Generosity*

Shteyngart, Gary. *Super Sad True Love Story*

Stoppard, Tom. *The Real Inspector Hound.*

Theis, Leona. *If Sylvie Had Nine Lives*

**Tentative Schedule:**

Sept. 6 - 8 approaches to postmodernity

Sept. 11 - 13 Tom Stoppard, *The Real Inspector Hound* (1968)

Sept. 15 choose seminar topics & response

**Self-reflexive irony or post-irony?**

Sept. 15 - 20 Charlie Kaufman, *Adaptation* (2002) (1:50) (sexual & violent content)

*Note:* ***15 Sept.*** *class will run from 1:40 - 3:30 in order to watch the whole film*

**Postmodernity and the Social Order**

Sept. 25 - Oct. 11 Gary Shteyngart, *Super Sad True Love Story* (2010) (sexual content)

Sept 29 National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (no class)

Oct. 9 Thanksgiving (no class)

**Oct. 13**  **Test**

**Media Simulacra**

Oct. 16 - 27 Jennifer Egan, *A Visit from the Goon Squad* (2010)

critiques of postmodernity

**Chance vs. Order, The Nature of the Self**

Oct. 30 - Nov. 10 Leona Theis, *If Sylvie Had Nine Lives* (2020)

Nov. 13 - 17 Study break

**Parody vs. Character**

**Nov. 20 Essay Due**

Nov. 20 - 24 Wes Anderson, *The* *Royal Tenenbaums* (2001) (1:50)

*Note:* ***20 Nov.*** *class will run from 1:40 - 3:30 in order to watch the whole film*

**After Postmodernism?**

Nov. 27 - Dec. 8 Richard Powers, *Generosity* (2009)

Dec. 8 Review

**Dec. 15**  **Final Exam Fri., 2-4 p.m.**

**Seminar Presentations**

By **15 Sept.** choose one work on which to present & one work to respond to.

You will present on the first day that we study the work.

Yourseminar presentation can become the basis of your research paper if you wish.

Responders should be prepared to ask 2 questions directly related to the topic presented.

***Length***: 5 minutes (prepare slightly more material than needed; plan cuts to meet the time limit)

***Topic***: --in relation to the topic, explain the writer’s approach, thematic elements, and style(s)

--explain how the work is postmodern (either stylistically or in its depiction of society)

--no biographies, please

--use lecture style (don’t read your paper); you’re welcome to use PowerPoint

***Topic*** ***suggestions*:** (you may choose different topics, but please clear them with me first)

Undermining Realism in *The Real Inspector Hound*

Truth *or* the Self *or* Filmic Technique in *Adaptation*

Individualism *or* Love/Relationships *or* Social Media *or* the Nation in *Super Sad True Love Story*

Media Manipulation *or* the Shifting Self *or* Music *or* Time in *A Visit from the Goon Squad*

The Nature of the Self *or* The Role of Chance in *If Sylvie Had Nine Lives*

Character *or* Genre *or* Filmic Technique in *The Royal Tennenbaums*

Genetic Manipulation *or* Media *or* the Narrator in *Generosity*

***Research***: --use at least 1 of the works in the Bibliography below

--use secondary sources on the works or on the authors, if available

--if you can’t find secondary sources, use a 2nd work from the Bibliography below

--just before the presentation, give me a sheet containing your main points and references

***General Bibliography:***

Baudrillard, Jean. *Selected Writings*, 2nd ed., 2001.

Bauman, Zygmunt. *Liquid Modernities*, 2000.

\_\_\_. *Postmodernity and its Discontents*., 1997.

\_\_\_. *Postmodern Ethics*, 1993.

Boggs, Carl & Tom Pollard. *A World in Chaos: Social Crisis and the Rise of Postmodern Cinema*, 2003.

Booker, M. Keith. *Postmodern Hollywood*, 2007.

Butler, Christopher. *Postmodernism: A Very Short Introduction*, 2002.

Gregson, Ian. *Postmodern Literature*, 2004.

Hutcheon, Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*, 1988.

Kirby, Alan. *Digimodernism*, 2009.

Kramer, Reinhold. *Are We Postmodern Yet? And Were We Ever?* 2019.

Lipovetsky, Gilles. *Hypermodern Times*, 2005.

McHale, Brian. *Pöstmodernist Fictiön*, 1987.

\_\_\_. *The Cambridge Introduction to Postmodernism*, 2015.

Pinker, Steven. *Enlightenment Now*, 2018. (Ch. 20 “The Future of Progress” & Ch.21 “Reason”)

Sim, Stuart. ed. *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*. 3rd ed., 2011.

Timmer, Nicoline. *Do You Feel It Too? The Post-Postmodern Syndrome in American Fiction*, 2010.