

The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

Arts and Sciences Honours Academy 220, 2011-2012

The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly

Class Meeting: Tuesday/Thursday 9:30-10:45 am, SS 541

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Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 2:00—3:00 pm or by appointment

As an introduction to the study of culture and cultural history, this course offers one history of the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly. Our emphasis will be on the Western world, and in particular Western culture since the Enlightenment (including the reception of antique ideas). But this history will also serve as an occasion to examine contemporary research methodologies. The ultimate goal of this dual approach is to foster your ability to conduct independent research of your own and to improve your skills of writing, critical analysis, and discussion.

Our three broad themes represent values that have been fundamental to Western culture and yet nevertheless have meant different things to different people at different times. These themes are not meant to be exclusive or all encompassing. Rather, they are intended to serve as test cases to provide us with a point of entry into the history and study of culture. Our goal will be to examine these materials in their unique historical specificity, which is necessary to evaluate the implications they might have for us today. Here is an overview of the big questions that emerge from these themes:

- **The Good** traces a history of Reason, Love, and Liberty. It examines what makes us human – what we might have in common and what makes us unique individuals (or “subjects”). It investigates how we care for each other and matter to each other. And it traces the modern categories of identity by which some people have been excluded as different (i.e. race, class, gender, and sexuality), just as others have reclaimed and celebrated difference. The Good also examines the limits of this paradigm, including the notions of human rights and animal rights. It poses questions about happiness and utility; individuality and community; love, care and desire. But it also sets revolutionary promises of emancipation and autonomy against enduring realities of domination, exploitation, and poverty.
- **The Bad** denotes events and actions that escape and directly challenge our frameworks of morality and meaning. It confronts us with violence, suffering, and injustice and with modern attempts to grapple with these realities.
- **The Ugly** sketches a history of modern theories of beauty and taste (but of course these opposites are intertwined). Drawing from philosophy, sociology and – with Darwin – explanations of sexual selection, it examines the personal and social significance of theories of critical discrimination and distinction. It frames these theories within the stories

of two modern monsters who reflect a world in which our own bodies are increasingly modified (for good or ill) by technology and in which ancient, mythic fears about death, disgust, and decay also re-appear as reflections of technology.

In examining these themes, we will engage a number of research disciplines and methodologies to see how they approach similar questions in different ways. So another chief aim of the course will also be to think the big picture: to look at how these disciplines fit together (or not). This entails acquiring a habit of mind – a way of thinking – that I hope will be of benefit to you beyond this class. What does it mean to think critically? What are the terms of cultural analysis? How does academic or scholarly research into culture differ from wider social discourse, and how do they inform each other? What counts as a research question and how does one go about answering it?

Finally, our class will be highly collaborative and we will venture out into the cultural life of Calgary to examine the values of our own society. In examining cultural history, we will ask ourselves how the study and critique of cultural values relates to what we personally believe, think, or feel. To begin this collaboration, our first meeting will discuss the four photographs by Wolfgang Tillmans that you find in this syllabus, which are personal favorites of mine. We will also make several 'field-trips' into the cultural life of Calgary, including several performances and workshops with local performing artists and a visit to the Whyte Museum in Banff to talk about the cultural and historical environment that we inhabit together in Calgary.

Important note: Please come to the first day of class having completed two items of reading: Simon Blackburn's book *Being Good* and Emily Wilson's book *The Death of Socrates*.

Grading:

Active listening and active participation	required as a component of all assignments
Blackboard interventions + minor writing assignments	5% of final grade
Reading assignments	10% of final grade
Critical perspectives + Excursion report	10% of final grade
First and second papers (exercises in interpretation)	20% of final grade
Two research papers	40% of final grade
Final Project	15% of final grade

Grading scale: Marks will be given as letter grades rather than percentages.

A-level work clearly and forcefully defines and achieves its aims and arguments; formal aspects of writing (spelling, syntax, etc.) are without any major errors; the arguments are substantive, engage directly with the material being considered, and integrate the ideas we have been discussing in class.

B-level work has clear aims and arguments, but does not fully achieve them; there are significant formal errors; the arguments need to engage more closely with the material being considered and they leave room to include important ideas from class.

C-level work fails to fulfill the standards of A and B level work. It lacks a thesis, does not support its arguments or makes arguments that can be easily refuted.

I always reserve the right to adjust your final scores upward if I feel this is justified, for instance in case of continuous or marked improvement as the semester progresses.

Late assignments will be penalized with one letter grade deducted for each day late.

Required Texts (available in the bookstore). If you do not buy the books in the bookstore, please purchase only these editions. I will place great importance on the fact that books are historical artifacts, and on the syllabus these works are listed with the date of their first publication. The dates listed here obviously refer to currently available editions we will be using in class. All other texts are available on-line as pdf documents. Films will be shown in the media centre.

- Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (Penguin Classics, 2006), ISBN 0143039881.
- Simon Blackburn, *Being Good: A Short Introduction to Ethics* (Oxford University Press, 2001), ISBN 0192853775.
- Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave & Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, introduction Kwame Anthony Appiah (Modern Library, 2004), ISBN 0345478231.
- Terry Eagleton, *Why Marx Was Right* (Yale University Press, 2011), ISBN 0300169434.
- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (Modern Library, 2005), ISBN 0812969901.
- John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill, *On Liberty and the Subjection of Women* (Penguin Classics, 2006), 014144147X.
- John Milton, *Paradise Lost* (Norton Critical Edition, 1993), ISBN 0393962938.
- Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals* (Oxford Paperbacks, 2008), ISBN 0199537089.
- Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation* (Ecco, 2009), ISBN 0061711306.
- Emily Wilson, *The Death of Socrates* (Harvard UP, 2007), ISBN 0674026837.
- Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *Frankenstein*, ed. D.L. Macdonald & Kathleen Sherf (Broadview Press, 1999), ISBN 1551113082.

Assignments and Class Policies:

Active listening and active participation required as a component of all assignments

Participation in this class includes participation in class discussion, and this presupposes attendance. Roll will be taken each day at class. If you miss class more than twice during the semester, a legitimate excuse will be required for any further absences. Acceptable reasons for absence include illness (with a doctor's note only), a death in the family, or reasons of similar gravity. Extracurricular activities of any kind (sports, clubs, etc.) do not count as excused absences.

More than two unexcused absences will necessarily prevent you from participating adequately and will thus have a negative impact on your participation grade. **Each unexcused absence in excess of two will result a deduction of the participation component of all assignments equivalent to one-half of a letter grade on your final grade (for example, from an A to an A-, etc.).** Thus if your final grade works out to an A-, and you have three absences with no excuses, then your final grade will be reduced to a B+.

Different students have different styles of participation, but I ask that everyone be attentive and contribute to discussions. Inadequate participation in the discussion may have a similar effect upon final grades as not participating by not attending. Participation may also include pop quizzes.

Participation in this class will also include occasional writing assignments given in class and due to blackboard, to be posted for the entire class, within one or two days. These will not be graded but you are required to complete them. We will usually directly discuss them in class. **As with inadequate attendance, if you fail to complete these assignments on time, your final grade may be reduced to reflect the lack of active participation this represents.**

Blackboard interventions (grading based on completion only) 5% of final grade

At the beginning of each semester, each of you will choose (or be assigned) two topics. By 9 am on the day before the class discussion (that is, on Monday or Wednesday), you should post a brief – approximately one page – ‘intervention’ to blackboard. These assignments are called interventions because your contribution should intervene into our class discussion in a way that reflects your own interests and questions, but which also draws in the class as a whole. This intervention should pose a question about the text we are reading that you would like the class to discuss. You should make clear why you think this is a good question and why you think it will motivate a good discussion. **It should also be a question that can be answered by examining the materials on the reading list.** Twenty minutes of each class will generally be reserved for these questions. I will not take the lead in these discussions; their purpose is for you, as a community of peers, to practice and develop critical thinking and argumentation.

Within a week of this class discussion of your question, you should stop by my office to talk about your intervention. Please bring two printed copies of your intervention, and plan for 10-20 minutes. There is a sign up sheet on my door (Craigie Hall C204) on which you may reserve a time. **These meetings are required to receive a grade for the interventions, and it is required that you come to my office hours within one week of the discussion (unless there is a good reason for any delay).** The grade for the interventions is all or nothing: you must complete all of them on time to receive any points.

Reading Assignments 10% of Final Grade

In the second semester, you will be assigned several assignments that will serve to introduce the readings to the other students in the class. This will be explained in greater detail in December.

Critical Perspectives + Excursion reports 10% of final grade

These reports will be explained in class. In general, they will not be longer than two pages and will be posted to blackboard so that they can be shared with everyone in class. They should also be handed in to me in hard copy.

First and second papers (exercises in interpretation) 20% of final grade

Your first two papers will be short interpretive exercises of no more than four pages. The topics and specific format will be explained in class.

Two research papers 40% of final grade

Your research papers may be on topics that arise from our reading, or they may be on topics of your own choice. For each paper, you will go through a process of formulating a research question, finding relevant research literature, summarizing this literature in abstracts for me, and then writing your paper. Each stage of the process is required to receive a grade, but only the final paper will be graded.

Final Project 15% of final grade

Your final project may be a research paper, or it may be a creative or collaborative assignment with other students. We can discuss your ideas for this project in class.

Important Rules and Guidelines

1. Paper format: All papers must be turned in as a hard copy; I will not accept work via email. Papers should be with 1-inch margins, 12 point Times Roman font, double-spaced, with page numbers. The paper should have a cover page with your name and the title of the paper. Please do not submit papers in binders or similar. Please staple your papers before turning them in.
2. Citation: You may use one of several standard citation styles (MLA, Chicago, APA). Get a citation manual and be consistent. You can find these manuals in the library.
3. Plagiarism: Any instance of plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the course, with no exceptions. For definitions of plagiarism, see the course calendar. If you are in doubt, ask me before you turn the assignment in. By turning in an assignment to me, you certify that the work is your own and that you have properly acknowledged and attributed the work of others.
4. Ethics approval: Any research interaction with live subjects – human or animal – requires ethics approval from a university committee. If your project or paper requires interviews, for example, then you should talk to me as soon as possible so that we can obtain this approval.
5. Excursions: You are required to attend our excursions or, if you have a good reason why you cannot attend, complete a similar assignment. These excursions are equivalent to required reading for the course.

Some General Notes Regarding Class

Class Discussions: We are collectively responsible for class. My responsibility consists in guiding our inquiry, providing background and theoretical knowledge that you have not yet encountered, and moderating our discussion. Your responsibility is threefold. First, you should come to class having not only read, but actively *thought about* the material for that week. Quickly reading a text over breakfast will probably not suffice; reading a text with frequent pauses to digress along new avenues of thought is a good start; and stopping every page or so to jot down notes that try to synthesize what you have read is ideal. Please make it a habit to *write out* three questions that you think the class could discuss. The weekly writing assignments are meant in part to help you achieve this aim. Second, you should listen carefully and actively to the contributions of others. And third, you should express your own ideas in a manner that constructively advances our discussion and shows respect for others.

Weekly reading assignments: This class requires between 20 and 320 pages of reading a week. Some of the shorter readings might be the most challenging! The aim of our discussions is not to exhaust our thinking about the work, but to set the stage for further reflection by getting a handle on basic principles and ideas.

Writing and Re-Writing: Good writing requires concentration, practice, and *revision*. Your first thought or formulation will rarely be the best or most efficacious. Always ask yourself: does my first sentence express a novel idea? Does each following sentence maintain this tension in developing or supporting this idea? We will spend a lot of time discussing writing!

Weekly Schedule: Our weekly schedule may be adjusted during the course of the semester. Changes will be announced via email, in class, and posted under course documents in blackboard.



Wolfgang Tillmans
Shaker Rainbow, 1998

The Good

Week 1-2: Introduction and Opening Discussion on Beauty

- September 13: In our first meeting we will discuss the photographs by Wolfgang Tillmans reproduced on this syllabus.
- September 15: In our second meeting, we will discuss an assignment to be announced in the first meeting as well as Simon Blackburn's book *Being Good* (2001).
- September 20: In our third meeting, we will continue our discussion of Blackburn's book and also discuss Emily Wilson's book *The Death of Socrates* (2007).
- September 22: Workshops.

Readings to be completed over the summer: Simon Blackburn, *Being Good* (2001), and Emily Wilson, *The Death of Socrates* (2007). Also read: the entries in the "Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy" for Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle. (Google it.)

The Good of Love

Weeks 3-5: Three traditions of love

- September 27/29: *Eros*. Plato, *The Symposium*, Aristophanes' account of the two sexes and Diotima's account of beauty, and Emily Wilson, *The Death of Socrates* (2007)
- October 4/6: *Philia*. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books 8 and 9
- October 11/13: *Agape*. Pope Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est* (2005)

DUE DATES Oct. 5: First paper

Week 6-7: Modern Loving

- October 18/20: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774)
- October 25: **No class.**
- October 27: Visit to library / research and bibliography
- November 1: Elizabeth Brake, "Minimal Marriage"

DUE DATES

Oct. 20: Second paper

Oct. 27: First research paper question draft

The Good of Liberty

Weeks 8-10: Liberty Declared

- November 3
The US Declaration of Independence (1776)
"The Declaration of Rights of Man and of the Citizen" (1789)
The United Nations "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" (1948)
The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982)
Lynn Hunt's introduction to *Inventing Human Rights* (2007)
- November 8: Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (1848)
- **No class on Nov. 10: Reading Break**
- Nov. 15: Terry Eagleton, "Why Marx Was Right." **Collective assignment.**

DUE DATES

Nov. 3: First research question revision and bibliography

Nov. 15: Collective assignment on Terry Eagleton.

Weeks 11-12: Race, Gender, Sexuality

- November 17/22: *A Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (1845)
- November 24/29: John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill, *The Subjection of Women* (1869)
- December 1 Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, "Four Letters" (1862-1868), first published by Magnus Hirschfeld (1898)

DUE DATES

Nov. 17: Abstracts and book review

Nov. 29: First research paper draft

Dec. 1: Peer- and Self-assessments

Week 13

- December 6/8: Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation* (1975)

DUE DATES:

Dec. 8: First research paper



Wolfgang Tillmans
grey jeans over stair post, 1991

The Bad

Week 14

- January 10/12: John Milton, *Paradise Lost* (1667), Book 9

Weeks 15

- January 17/19: Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Book I (1887)

DUE DATES

January 12: Second research paper question

January 19: Bibliography

Week 16-17

- January 24/26/31: Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1963)

DUE DATE: January 26, Abstracts and book review

Week 17-18

- February 2/7: Stanley Milgram, *Obedience to Authority* (1974), excerpts, and video and Philip Zimbardo, *Quiet Rage: The Stanford Prison Experiment* (documentary, 1992)

DUE DATES

February 2: Second research paper draft

February 7: Peer- and Self-assessments

February 11 (tentative): Class Visit to Banff

During this semester, you should complete three reviews of performances in Calgary: *Attempts on Her Life* by Martin Crimp; *Lucy Lost Her Heart* by Theatre Junction Grande; and one of a performance of your choice. These should be posted to blackboard as well as handed in as hard copies.

***Attempts on Her Life* runs Feb. 15-25, 2012 at Theatre Junction.**

***Lucy Lost Her Heart* runs March 14-17, 2012, also at Theatre Junction.**



Wolfgang Tillmans
Pfingstrosen, 2004

The Ugly

Week 18-19

- February 9/14/16: Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *Frankenstein* (1818)

DUE DATE: February 16: Second research paper

Weeks 20-23

- February 28/March 1/6: David Hume, "Of the Standards of Taste" (1757)
- March 8/13 Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, Chapter 2 "On Civilization as a Specific Transformation of Human Behavior" (1939)
- March 15/20/22: Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, Chapter 3 "The Habitus and the Space of Life-Styles" (1979)

DUE DATES

February 28: *Lucy Lost Her Heart* Critical Perspective

March 1: Final project proposal

March 20: Final project bibliography and *Attempts on Her Life* Critical Perspective

Week 24

- March 27/29: Charles Darwin on sexual selection from *The Descent of Man* (1871)

Week 25

- April 3/5: F.W. Murnau, *Nosferatu* (Film 1922)

DUE DATE: April 3, Formal Analysis

Week 26

- April 10: Final discussion: Critical Perspectives.
- April 11: Workshop: peer review of final research paper

Final projects are due April 24th. There will be a mandatory evening meeting to present final projects during finals week (in lieu of a final exam).



Wolfgang Tillmans
we summer, left, 2004



Wolfgang Tillmans
we summer, right, 2004