

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION AND CULTURE

COMMUNICATION AND CULTURE CMCL 503 – L20

CONTOURS OF CONTEMPORARY CULTURE

Spring 2013

TTh 12:00-2.:45pm

Dr. Glenn R. Wilkinson

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course looks at the contemporary world as a discursive interface between different cultural traditions as they struggle to formulate a global perspective. Classic texts and scholarly commentary will be interpreted and analyzed by way of the following themes: life-death, freedom, slavery, wisdom-folly, and good-evil.

OBJECTIVES OF THE COURSE

- (1) Give students an overview of a contemporary cultural configuration in which we all live;
- (2) Learn how to interpret classic texts and scholarly commentaries in an inter-cultural context using a variety of disciplinary perspectives;
- (3) Understand the contemporary world from a critical perspective;
- (4) Explore our contemporary world from the perspectives of ‘Life-Death’, ‘Freedom-Slavery’, ‘Wisdom-Folly’, and ‘Good-Evil’;
- (5) Develop writing and communication skills

INTERNET AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION DEVICE INFORMATION

No restrictions on use of laptops in class if they are used to take notes and there is no disturbance of other students by visiting inappropriate web sites. Please ensure that your phones are switched off during lectures, unless it is required for extenuating circumstances, such as medical emergencies. If this is the case, you should let your instructor know.

TEXTBOOKS AND READINGS:

The following texts are all required and have been ‘bundled’ together to reduce costs:

Gochberg, Donald, ed. *Classics of Western Thought – The Twentieth Century* (Mason, Ohio: Cengage Learning, 2003).

Hallman, Max O. *Traversing Philosophical Boundaries*, 4th Ed. (Boston: Wadsworth, 2012).

ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION

(A) Essay #1	20%
(B) Essay #2	30%
(C) Final Exam	40%
(D) Participation	10%
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	100%

(A) Essay # 1

Due Date: May 30, 2013

Length: 5-10 pages double-spaced

Goal: Discussion of Evil OR Wisdom

Method: A personal reflection on your own experience of good and evil OR wisdom and folly in comparison with that portrayed in two course texts. Specifically, you are encouraged to analyze (a) the source of evil or wisdom, (b) the nature of evil or wisdom, (c) compare your response to that of an author or authors of the texts under discussion, and (d) possible remedies or coping strategies.

(B) Essay #2

Due Date: June 20, 2013

Length: 12-15 pages double-spaced

Goal: Critique of Contemporary Culture

Method: Discuss your view of contemporary culture based on what you have read in the course and discussed in class using one of the course themes. Using four authors, write an essay with the following elements:

- (i) Your definition of contemporary culture;
- (ii) What you base your definition on;
- (iii) Which of the course texts best represents that definition; which least;
- (iv) What is right and what is wrong with contemporary culture?;
- (v) Link your findings to a cultural artifact that exemplifies your points.

N.B.: While there is no upper limit on the number of course texts you can use in the essay, you should include at least three. Proper footnoting is expected. Please note that you should keep a copy of all your assignments and also that you should hand in a physical copy **and** an electronic version in the digital dropbox on Blackboard.

(C) Final Exam (Registrar Scheduled)

Time: 3 Hours

The exam will be in two parts: Part A (worth 20%) will be based on identification of short excerpts from the readings. Part B (worth 80%) will consist of an essay or two. Students can take into the exam a sheet of paper with whatever notes they deem helpful.

(D) Class Participation

Class participation is more than just showing up in class, but it is also more than merely talking a lot also. Your contribution to the course will be gauged by the quality of your contribution and the degree to which you demonstrate your understanding and engagement with the texts and with others in the class.

Policy for Late Assignments

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late. All assignments must be completed or a grade of F may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor.

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

This course is conducted in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP). As one consequence, **students should identify themselves on all written work by placing their name on the front page and their ID number. Also you will be required to provide a piece of picture identification in order to pick up an assignment or look at a final exam from SS320 after classes have ended.**

For more information see also <http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy>.

Writing Skills Statement

Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, although to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. For details see <http://comcul.ucalgary.ca/needtoknow>. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc) but also general clarity and organization. Research papers must be properly documented.

If you need help with your writing, you may use the Writing Centre. Visit the website for more details: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

GRADING SYSTEM

The following grading system is used in the Department of Communication and Culture:

Grading Scale			
A+	96-100	C+	65-69.99
A	90-95.99	C	60-64.99
A -	85-89.99	C-	55-59.99
B+	80-84.99	D+	53-54.99
B	75-79.99	D	50-52.99
B-	70-74.99	F	0-49

The ‘**A**’ range denotes exceptional performance; goes far beyond the standards required by the assignment, examination, or course.

The ‘**B**’ range denotes above average performance; exceeds standards required.

The ‘**C**’ range denotes average performance; meets standards required.

The ‘**D**’ range denotes below average performance; does not meet standards required.

An ‘**F**’ denotes incomplete or inadequate performance; unable to show competence.

SCHEDULE OF LECTURES AND READINGS

Abbreviations: CWT = *Classics of Western Thought – The Twentieth Century*

TPB = *Traversing Philosophical Boundaries*

Day 1: May 14

Introduction – Basic Concepts and Background

(A) Good/Evil

Day 1: May 14

Bettelheim, Wiesel: CWT 3-29; 416-421

Arendt: CWT 30-46

Solzhenitsyn: CWT 75-116

Day 2: May 16

Robinson: CWT 422-437

Daly: TPB 415-422

Radhakrishnan: TPB 377-382

Day 3: May 21

Carol Christ: TPB 663-673

C.W. Mills: CWT 204-221

Huxley: CWT 184-203

(B) Wisdom/Folly

Day 4: May 23

C.P. Snow: CWT 119-130

Farber, Brustein: CWT 467-485

Heisenberg: CWT 303-313

Day 5: May 28

Hawking: TPB: 163-168
Dobzhanski: CWT 261-270
Dennett: TPB 70-80

Day 6: May 30

Benally: TPB 292-297
Anderson: TPB 336-344
Gandhi: TPB 541-545

***** Essay # 1 Due*****

(C) Freedom/Slavery

Day 7: June 4

Ellul: CWT 131-145
Marcuse: CWT 60-74
DeBeauvoir: CWT 486-505

Day 8: June 6

Hooks: TPB 564-571
Fanon: CWT 506-521
Abu'l A'la Maududi: TPB 506-516

Day 9: June 11

Wiredu: TPB 689-698
Frye: TPB 225-237
Foucault: TPB 58-63

(D) Life/Death

Day 10: June 13

Kafka, Camus: CWT 321-338
Breton: CWT 522-532
Beckett: CWT 339-334

Day 11: June 18

Heller: CWT 345-370
Maslow: CWT 604-614
Toffler: CWT 640-660

Day 12: June 20

Schweitzer: TPB 383-388
Starhawk: TPB 635-642
The Earth Charter: TPB 408-414

***** Essay #2 Due *****

No class on June 25

*****Final examination – date and time determined by the Registrar*****

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

Plagiarism

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university.

You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. Readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin. This includes assignments submitted in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media, and material taken from such sources.

Please consult your instructor or the Writing Centre (3rd Floor Taylor Family Digital Library, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>) if you have any questions regarding how to document sources.

Academic Misconduct

For information on academic misconduct and the consequences thereof please see the current University of Calgary Calendar at the following link;
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability who may require academic accommodation, it is your responsibility to register with the Disability Resource Centre (220-8237) and discuss your needs with your instructor no later than fourteen (14) days after the start of the course.

Students' Union

For details about the current Students' Union contacts for the Faculty of Arts see
<http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/governance/elections/home.html>

Student Ombudsman

For details on the Student Ombudsman's Office see
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds>

Emergency Evacuation and Assembly points

For information on the emergency evacuation procedures and the assembly points see
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>

"SAFEWALK" Program -- 220-5333

Campus Security will escort individuals day or night -- call 220-5333 for assistance. Use any campus phone, emergency phone or the yellow phone located at most parking lot booths.

Ethics

Whenever you perform research with human participants (i.e. surveys, interviews, observation) as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve of your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, see

The Department of Communication and Culture Research Ethics site:

<http://www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/ethics>

or the University of Calgary Research Ethics site:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/research/ethics/cfreb>