

Communication & Culture CMCL503 L04
Contemporary Culture
Winter 2013
W/F 12:30-13:45

Instructor: Christine Mains
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Office Hours: Wed 2-3 pm or by appointment

Course Description

A critical integrative examination of how Modernity has been transformed within an evolving global culture with attention to literature, art, philosophy, religion and economic, political, scientific and social texts. Focus will be on major ideas, principles and their implications in the later 20th and 21st centuries. Students will learn to appreciate our recent past and our complex present, and examine perspectives on basic issues that have always confronted humanity but are even more pressing as technology moves us into the future – what it means to be human; how technological progress shapes ethics, morality, justice and the social order; what rights and responsibilities come with knowledge and power; how the collapse of truth and “grand narratives” affects religion and science, work, economics and politics.

Prerequisite: CMCL 501

Objectives of the Course

- give students a sense of perspective on their own fundamental cultural assumptions
- familiarize students with the experience of learning how to read, critically evaluate, and creatively explore classic texts which articulate the fundamental cultural assumptions of Western and other civilizations
- learn how to develop and defend intellectual positions concerning those fundamental life questions to which classic texts address themselves
- develop holistic or integrative overviews of how different facets of a culture are inter-linked and evolve in coherent manner
- strengthen abilities to discuss and present insights gained in the course

Textbooks and Readings

There is no textbook to purchase for this course. Passages excerpted from different kinds of texts will be provided by the instructor and by students as part of lectures and class discussion.

Assignments and Evaluation

Participation	throughout term	10%
Essay (~1200-1500 words)	February 8	20%
Research Project Proposal	February 15	5%
Research Project	March 27	25%
Presentation of Research Project	April 3-April 12	10%
Take-home Exam	April 26	30%

All assignments must be completed or a grade of F may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor.

Participation: Students may participate in class or on the Blackboard Discussion Forums. Participation goes beyond simply attending class and reading assigned passages; students are expected to share insights into the texts, contribute relevant historical or cultural background, or make connections between different texts and between the text and different class themes. Students will be asked to keep a record of their contributions to class discussion in a journal that will be submitted to the instructor at the end of term.

Essay: Students will write an essay no shorter than 1200 words and no longer than 1500 words, exploring their understanding of a chosen topic through personal experience and engagement with 1-3 texts of their choice.

Research Project Proposal: This assignment consists of a few paragraphs explaining the chosen research paper topic along with a working thesis statement, and an annotated bibliography of 5-6 potential secondary sources.

Presentation: At the end of term, students will present their Research Project to the class. The aim of the presentation is to contextualize the Creative Text or the findings of the Research Essay within the larger discussion of topics that has been taking place throughout the term. Students should speak for 5-10 minutes.

Research Project: This assignment may take one of two forms, depending on the student's interests:

- Students may choose to write a researched essay of 2500-3000 words, requiring research into secondary sources on topics discussed in class.
- Students may choose to create a text (a piece of art, a short film, a short story or piece of creative non-fiction, a website, etc.) communicating their insights into topics discussed in class. Students who choose the creative option will be expected to write a short essay of 1200-1500 words contextualizing and explaining the creative text.

Students will be expected to go beyond the readings referenced in class discussion in order to develop a fuller understanding of a particular topic. Students selecting the Creative Text may choose to work in pairs, but each will need to submit an individual essay.

Final Take-home Exam: Questions for the take-home exam will require students to make connections between different passages. Students will choose from a set of questions, and will write short essay responses illustrating their understanding of the questions with reference to passages covered in class. While students will have access to their readings, notes, and returned assignments, and will be able to make use of their own computer technology in completing the exam, they are not expected to write more than would be required in a typical sit-down final exam.

All written assignments will be submitted and returned through Digital Dropbox on Blackboard. No assignments will be submitted in hardcopy, whether handed to the instructor, dropped at the main office, or slid under office doors, nor will assignments be accepted through email attachment. It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment, and to check email regularly for notices of missing assignments.

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

Policy for Late Assignments

Assignments are due through Digital Dropbox on the stated due date. Assignments may be submitted after the deadline only with the emailed permission of the instructor, and may be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late.

Grading System

In this class, you will receive grades in the 4-point GPA scale *rather than* percentages.

	Grading Scale	GPA
A+	96-100	4.0
A	90-95.99	4.0
A -	85-89.99	3.7
B+	80-84.99	3.3
B	75-79.99	3.0
B-	70-74.99	2.7
C+	65-69.99	2.3
C	60-64.99	2.0
C-	55-59.99	1.7
D+	53-54.99	1.3
D	50-52.99	1.0
F	0-49	0

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

In the first week of class, we will work together to develop a list of topics relating to the broader questions that are the focus of the class; we will create a schedule of discussion. The schedule of discussion will be posted to Blackboard; it is a good idea to get into the habit of checking Blackboard regularly.

Internet and electronic communication device information

Students may use laptops to take notes, but not to do any other personal work (such as Facebook or checking email); laptop use must not distract other students. At no time may students use cell phones for any reason whatsoever.

Writing Skills Statement

All written assignments (including written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc) but also general clarity and organization. Essays and Research papers must be properly documented, using either MLA or APA style correctly and consistently.

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>

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>

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>

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 using 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.

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

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

Please note the evacuation points for this particular classroom. All classrooms on campus exit to specific places in case of emergency. The emergency assembly points differ depending upon where your classroom is located. For information on the emergency evacuation procedures and the assembly points see

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>

"SAFEWALK" Program

Campus Security will escort individuals day or night -- call 403-220-5333 for assistance. Use any campus phone, emergency phone or the yellow phone located at most parking lot booths.