

Fall 2021

**English 6029: Postmodernism: Late 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Literature, Film, and Culture  
(Class meetings will be held on Zoom)**

Instructor: Professor Swope  
Office: Pedreira Basement, 3  
Hours Th 3:30-4:30 or by appointment  
Email: richard.swope1@upr.edu

**Required Texts:** Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49*; Ishmael Reed, *Flight to Canada*; J.G. Ballard, *Crash*; William Gibson, *Neuromancer*, Kathy Acker, *Empire of the Senseless*; Angela Carter, *The Bloody Chamber*; Michael Ondaatje, *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*; Giannina Braschi, *United States of Banana*

**Required Films (all available on streaming services):** *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (Kubrick); *Blade Runner* (Scott); *Mulholland Drive* (Lynch); *Memento* (Nolan)

**Description:** This course will familiarize students with cultural phenomena—literary and cinematic movements, forms, and practices—typical of postmodernism. To better understand this now loosely used term, we will explore what Fredric Jameson terms “postmodernism theory,” or attempts to theorize certain international trends that primarily coincided with the period from Post-World War II to the close of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Analyzing examples of postmodern literature and film will allow students to also analyze the cultural logic(s) or the socio-historical context—postmodernity—predominant in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Lastly, the course will trace the history of criticism from the mid-1980s, when the term first became predominant as critics like Jameson attempted to understand their present moment, to more recent reflections that now look back with some critical distance.

Note that most of the works we will discuss have been, at least at the time of their publication or screening, described as experimental, avant-garde, or cutting-edge.

**Requirements:** The first requirement is that you read. At times I will assign secondary texts to supplement your reading of the primary texts; supplementary readings are posted on Moodle. In conjunction with the reading, you will research five essays or book chapters relevant to postmodernism in general or one of our primary texts or films and complete a one-paragraph **Annotation** for each. The first annotation may respond to one of the supplemental readings I have provided. The others must come from sources you have found through your own research. I will collect the first 3 annotations separately at intervals throughout the semester (see schedule) and then the final **Annotated Bibliography** with all five sources on 12/7.

Each student will also make a 20 minute **PRESENTATION** on one of the authors/texts from the reading list. These presentations should include biographical information (notable events rather than a boring list of dates), the author’s place within or impact on 20<sup>th</sup> C. literature and art (include influences on the author along with the author’s influence on other writers/artists), as well as the history and reception of the text itself. You should feel free to bring handouts, use technology, or other materials when appropriate.

Each student will complete both a **Mid-Term Exam** (take home) and a **Final Paper**. For the mid-term I will give you a choice of questions, each of which will ask you to compare or contrast and analyze at least two of the texts we will read. For the **Final Paper** each student will complete an original researched term paper on a topic of the student's choosing (pending instructor's approval) which discusses at least two of the texts/films from our syllabus.

Participation	10%
Presentation	20%
Mid-term	20%
Annotated Bibliography	20%
Final Paper	30%

**Schedule:** (subject to revision)

- 8/19: Introduction to course: Prior to our meeting, Read Max Apple, "A Little Postmodernism" (Moodle PDF) and Donald Barthelme, "A Manual for Sons" (Moodle PDF)
- 8/26: Criticism: Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Ch. 1 (Moodle PDF)  
Film: *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (Kubrick)
- 9/2: Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49*  
Criticism: McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, Preface and Chapter 1 (available through Ebooks Central in UPR Library databases).
- 9/9: Ishmael Reed, *Flight to Canada*  
Criticism: Hutcheon, *Poetics of Postmodernism*, "Preface" and "Chapter 1" (available through Ebooks Central)  
Supplemental: "Neo-HooDoo Manifesto"  
**Due: Annotation 1**
- 9/16: J.G. Ballard, *Crash*  
Criticism: Baudrillard, *Simulacra & Simulation*, excerpt (Moodle PDF)
- 9/23: **No Class: Grito de Lares**
- 9/30: William Gibson, *Neuromancer*
- 10/7: Kathy Acker, *Empire of the Senseless*  
**Due: Annotation 2**
- 10/14: Film: *Blade Runner* (Scott)  
**Midterm Due**

10/21: Angela Carter, *The Bloody Chamber*

10/28: Film: *Mulholland Drive* (Lynch)

11/4: Postmodern Poetry: Selections from *Poetry Since 1950* (Moodle PDF). Read poems by Cage, O'Hara, Baraka, Antin, Howe

11/11: **No Class: Veterans Day**

11/18: Michael Ondaatje, *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*; Gerald Vizenor, "Almost Browne" (Moodle PDF)

**Due: Annotation 3**

11/25: **No Class: Thanksgiving**

11/30: Films: *Memento* (Nolan) and *The Big Lebowski* (Coen Brothers)

12/2: Giannina Braschi, *United States of Banana*

12/7: Film: *Chunking Express* (Wong Kar-Wei)

Supplemental: McHale, "Afterword: Reconstructing Postmodernism" (Moodle PDF)

**Due: Final Annotated Bibliography**

12/14: **Due: Final Paper**

The University of Puerto Rico prohibits discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity in any of its forms including that of sexual harassment. According to the Institutional Policy Against Harassment at the University of Puerto Rico, Certification Num. 130, 2014-2015 from the Board of Governors, any student subjected to acts constituting sexual harassment, must turn to the Office of the Student Ombudsperson, the Office of the Dean of Students, and/or the Coordinator of the Office of Compliance with Title IX for an orientation and/or a formal complaint.

**Sexual harassment policy:** "The University of Puerto Rico prohibits discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity in any of its forms including that of sexual harassment. According to the Institutional Policy Against Harassment at the University of Puerto Rico, Certification Num. 130, 2014-2015 from the Board of Governors, any student subjected to acts constituting sexual harassment, must turn to the Office of the Student Ombudsperson, the Office of the Dean of Students, and/or the Coordinator of the Office of Compliance with Title IX for an orientation and/or a formal complaint.

Los estudiantes que reciban servicios de Rehabilitación Vocacional deben comunicarse con la profesora al inicio del semestre para planificar el acomodo razonable y equipo asistivo necesario conforme a las recomendaciones de la Oficina de Asuntos para las Personas con Impedimiento (OAPI) del Decanato de Estudiantes. También aquellos estudiantes con necesidades especiales que requieren de algún tip de asistencia o acomodo deben comunicarse con el/la profesor/a.

**Integridad académica:** La Universidad de Puerto Rico promueve los más altos estándares de integridad académica y científica. El Artículo 6.2 del Reglamento General de Estudiantes de la UPR (Certificación Núm. 13, 2009-2010, de la Junta de Síndicos) establece que “la deshonestidad académica incluye, pero no se limita a: acciones fraudulentas, la obtención de notas o grados académicos valiéndose de falsas o fraudulentas simulaciones, copiar total o parcialmente la labor académica de otra persona, plagiar total o parcialmente el trabajo de otra persona, copiar total o parcialmente las respuestas de otra persona a las preguntas de un examen, haciendo o consiguiendo que otro tome en su nombre cualquier prueba o examen oral o escrito, así como la ayuda o facilitación para que otra persona incurra en la referida conducta”. Cualquiera de estas acciones estará sujeta a sanciones disciplinarias en conformidad con el procedimiento disciplinario establecido en el Reglamento General de Estudiantes de la UPR vigente.

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