

## **Approaches to Postmodernism (ENPO75), 7.5 credits. Course Description.**



Most of us have some sort of idea of what postmodernism and postmodernity are. Whether we think of it primarily as a way of describing certain modes of cultural expression (Intertextuality? Pastiche? Experimental narrative?), a logic of a political and economic system (the end of ideology? The dissolution of grand narratives?), or a form of periodization (it is called “post” after all – does that simply mean it comes after Modernism?), or perhaps nothing that has much to do with literature and culture at all (architecture? History? Geography?), postmodernism and postmodernity are terms that are frequently used for example in media, at museum exhibitions, and, of course, in academic studies and research. The Master course Approaches to Postmodernism (7.5 hp) focuses on central discussions regarding the aesthetic, narratological, theoretical, and historical definitions of these concepts. Taking the course will give you a broad and deepened understanding of central literary and theoretical concepts associated with postmodernism. In this course we read original key texts on the topic of postmodernism. Through our readings and seminar discussions we will extract conceptual frameworks to apply to a set of central postmodern literary texts. We will develop our understanding of postmodernism as a theoretical and historical phenomenon and as a recent cultural dominant. By engaging with significant theorists of postmodernism, such as Lyotard, Derrida, Deleuze, Baudrillard, Jameson, Foucault and Irigaray, we will probe deeply into the complexity of ideas constituting the postmodern condition.

### **Intended Learning Outcomes**

On completion of the course the student is expected to be able to

- critically take a position in relation to, and construct arguments about, the theoretical as well as literary texts in the course
- with a certain historical and theoretical depth—well anchored in sample texts—reason about postmodernism as a concept and to identify and understand other central concepts
- independently formulate an interpretation of a literary text in relation to the problematisation of “reality” that is central in many postmodern texts
- present structured reasoning around different understandings of postmodernism and develop an individual stance

## Reading list

### Theoretical texts

Drolet, Michael (ed). *The Postmodernism Reader: Foundational Texts*. London & New York: Routledge, 2004. ISBN 978-0415160841. (You will be assigned a selection of texts from this anthology).

### Literary texts

Acker, Kathy. *Great Expectations*. London: Penguin, 2018 [1982]. ISBN 978-0241352144

Atwood, Margaret. *The Blind Assassin*. London: Virago, 2001. ISBN 978-1860498800

Auster, Paul. *The New York Trilogy*. London: Faber & Faber, 2011 [1988]. ISBN 978-0571276653

Banville, John. *The Book of Evidence*. London: Picador, 2014 [1989]. ISBN 978-1447275367

Byatt, A. S. *Possession*. London: Vintage, 2009 [1990]. ISBN 978-0099800408

DeLillo, Don. *White Noise*. New York: Penguin, 2011 [1985]. ISBN 978-0330524841

### Examination

The individual student will hand in two shorter assignments (900 words) and a 1500 words essay. Shorter assignments 40% and essay 60% of the final grade.

### Submission deadlines:

Essay 1: Fri 4/10 (re-submission deadline: Fri 8 Nov)

Essay 2: Fri 1/11 (re-submission deadline: Fri 6 Dec)

## Assessment and Grade Criteria

### OUTSTANDING

For a grade of **A** the student should ...

- Display wide-ranging knowledge of the themes and concepts covered by the course material and seminar presentations as well as a profound familiarity with the texts we have read.
- Show the ability, in written work and in active class discussion, to critically analyze theoretical arguments and literary works in a manner that is on occasion innovative and often illuminating, consistently deploying appropriate critical concepts in an elegant way.
- Present his/her arguments in a persuasive and coherent manner, in correct, fluent and idiomatic English, in a consistently academic style of writing and spoken delivery.

### EXCELLENT

For a grade of **B** the student should ...

- display a broad knowledge of the themes and concepts covered by the course material and seminar presentations as well as a solid familiarity with the texts we have read.
- show the ability, in written work and in class discussion, to critically analyze theoretical arguments and literary works in a manner that is on occasion illuminating, with frequent and correct use of appropriate critical concepts.

- present arguments in a solid and coherent manner, in correct and fluent English, in an academic style of writing and in an acceptably formal register of spoken delivery

### **GOOD**

For a grade of **C** the student should ...

- display considerable knowledge of most of the themes and concepts covered by the course material and seminar presentations as well as an adequate familiarity with the texts we have read.
- show the ability, in written work and in class discussion, to critically analyze theoretical arguments and literary works, with at least occasional and correct use of appropriate critical concepts.
- present arguments in a coherent manner, in adequate English with only minor errors, with only some lapses from an academic style of writing and with a correct and fluent spoken delivery.

### **SATISFACTORY**

For a grade of **D** the student should ...

- display basic knowledge of most of the themes and concepts covered by the course material and seminar presentations as well as some familiarity with the texts we have read.
- show the ability, in written work and in class discussion, to critically analyze literary works and theoretical arguments, with some, basic use of appropriate critical concepts.
- present his/her arguments in a largely coherent manner, in adequate English with only minor errors, in a consistent, formal register of writing and with a largely correct and fluent spoken delivery

### **ADEQUATE**

For a grade of **E** the student should ...

- display basic knowledge of some of the themes and concepts covered by the course material and seminar presentations as well as a basic knowledge of some of the elements of plots, characters, settings and narrative structure in most of the texts we have read.
- show some ability, in written work and in class discussion, to critically analyze literary works and theoretical arguments, with at least a minimal employment of technical terms.
- present his/her arguments in an intelligible manner, in adequate English, in a largely formal register of written or spoken delivery, with some fluency and few errors.

### **INADEQUATE**

A grade of **F** will be set if the student

- shows scant or no knowledge of the themes and concepts covered by the course material and seminar presentations; likewise shows very little or no familiarity with the texts we have read.
- fails to reach a satisfactory level of critical analysis in written assignments and in class discussion, a failure that includes inability to properly use critical concepts.
- fails to communicate adequately in English, with many errors and no sense of stylistic register.

Any of these failures is enough for an overall fail.

### **INCOMPLETE**

The **Fx** grade is set if the student has reached most of the Learning outcomes of the course, but must hand in revised or supplementary material in order to fully meet the requirements.