



ATYP YEAR IV LITERATURE, PHILOSOPHY, & MEDIA: ROAMING THE ANTHROPOCENE

Location: 3520 Sangren Hall

Time: Thursday 5:00pm-7:30pm

Instructor: Laura Citino, laura.j.citino@wmich.edu



“Education as the practice of freedom...denies that [people] are abstract, isolated, independent, and unattached to the world; it also denies that the world exists as a reality apart from people.”

— Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*



COURSE DESCRIPTION

ATYP Year IV is an interdisciplinary humanities survey course exploring the *Anthropocene*, defined by everything from climate change to late capitalism, Big Data to meme culture, artificial intelligence to political division. This class invites students to define this present moment as it unfolds, to pause and unpack the complex questions bombarding us everyday. How do we form our identities in the hypervisible age of social media and cancel culture? How do we find common ground in an increasingly polarized, globalized world? What social, environmental, and personal challenges will we face down in the years to come, and where can we find the tools to solve them?

Through studying a wide variety of philosophical, critical, and creative texts, we will explore what living in the Anthropocene means for all of us. Over the course of these two semesters together, we will cover a lot of ground, with the intention of giving you a taste of an array of writers, scholars, thinkers, and artists from all kinds of backgrounds and genres, from academia to pop culture and everything in between. A major component of this class will be your own contributions and input; many assignments are open-ended, unit projects are primarily creative in nature, and a significant portion of each class will be devoted to rigorous debate and discussion. **Thus, we will explore not just how we got to “this” moment, but what “this” moment even is.**

REQUIRED MATERIALS AND TEXTS

- Dedicated ATYP notebook + writing utensils (brought every week)
- Folder for organizing handouts, printouts, and readings (brought every week)
- Required texts for fall semester (spring books will be announced in November)
 - Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (ISBN: 9781501314131)
 - Philip K. Dick, *The Man in the High Castle* (ISBN: 9780547572482)
 - Tom Stoppard, *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern are Dead* (ISBN: 9780802126214)
 - Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism* (ISBN: 9780300115468)

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To develop and demonstrate a foundational understanding of significant philosophical concepts and critical theories
- To identify, appreciate, and practice applying these philosophical concepts to literature, cultural criticism, art, and other forms of media
- To analyze the philosophical implications of aspects of contemporary existence, i.e. to bring awareness to and build a definition of the Anthropocene
- To engage productively with a scholarly community, both in this class and elsewhere
- To write critically, competently, and confidently and evaluate written work for effectiveness, clarity and flow, academic conventions, and cohesive, creative inquiry
- To apply creative approaches toward critical theory through a variety of artistic genres
- To develop a personal scholarly eye and academic focus in service of making you a more engaged, agile, and critical student, colleague, citizen, and human being

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Order and/or length of units subject to change. There will be three units per semester, with a respective B-side attached for further inquiry and texture on the primary topic. Each unit will culminate in a creative project that will be some various degrees of open-ended. These projects will often have a presentation element, as well as thorough scaffolding and workshopping ahead of each due date.

Units	Themes	# of Weeks
Unit 1:	Summer Reading/Intro to Pop Culture Studies <i>B-side: Power Structures</i>	5 weeks
Unit 2:	Theories of (Alt) History <i>B-side: Alt/Afro Futures</i>	6 weeks
Unit 3:	Theater of the Absurd <i>B-side: Notes on Humor & Tragicomedy</i>	6 weeks
Unit 4:	Language & the Simulacra <i>B-side: Frankenfood</i>	6 weeks
Unit 5:	Cyborgs & the Big Computer Brain in the Sky <i>B-side: Excursions in Nostalgia</i>	5 weeks
Unit 6:	Unveiling the Apocalypse <i>B-side: Biophilia</i>	6 weeks

EXPECTATIONS, POLICIES, AND REQUIREMENTS

Generally, I refer you to the standard Rules and Responsibilities memo mailed to you.

The following expectations and policies for ATYP Year IV are based on two big assumptions:

- 1) You have now had three years of rigorous ATYP classes under your belt.
- 2) You are enrolled in a class “above and beyond” a typical high school English curriculum.

Therefore, I assume that you very much want to be here and that by now, you at least sort of know what you’re doing! The less we worry about missing work, not doing the reading, etc., the more we can focus on our robust discussions and unique, thought-provoking projects.

In other words, the good stuff!

Digital Organization: You should use Google Drive or another file folder organization system of your choosing. Create folders for each week of class, organize by semester, and keep your files properly labeled. You have access to Google apps through WMU: wmich.edu/google.

Homework: Due first via the Dropbox on eLearning by 11:00pm the night before class meets, then printed and turned in at the beginning of each class period. Graded work will be returned to you within reasonable timeframes. This includes all work EXCEPT notebook work.

Late/missing work: Should be avoided at all costs! I will contact you when you miss a due date, and if you miss many due dates, I will bring your adults into the conversation. I reserve the right to cap chronically/egregiously late work at a check (i.e., chronically late work may not be eligible for a check-plus) or not accept it at all. I am more likely to be amenable to extensions if you let me know beforehand about potential conflicts.

Missing all/part of class, arriving late, or leaving early: Requires an email from you explaining the absence and telling me your plan to get class notes, turn in homework, etc. I’ll honor your understanding your own schedule best, but repeated/consistent absences will be troublesome. I know you are all delightfully motivated, driven, and thus very busy people, but this class should take priority just as often as your other commitments do. **Missing multiple, consecutive weeks of class for a sport or an extracurricular is not acceptable and will require a sit-down with you and your adults to discuss action plans.**

Academic Honesty in a Time of AI

In cases of plagiarism and other forms of cheating, I follow the definitions and processes outlined in WMU's Student Code of Conduct, and **I do consider the use of generative AI tools in completing your homework to be cheating.** Now, wonderfully, the proliferation of AI and other cyborgian concerns will be a subject we’ll address directly in this course, so we’ll learn and discuss lots more about the ins and outs of this touchy, trendy business. (You might even be asked to write some AI-generated work!) But in general, we are here to engage our minds and think critically, and numerous scholarly studies show that using AI is a detriment to that work. Do not use AI to assist you in your homework unless I direct you to, and I likewise pledge to not use AI to grade your papers or assist me in the creation of assignments. Using AI to write your papers for you is deeply and absurdly besides the point of taking this course. Don't do it. It's boring and unimaginative—two things we hate to be.

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

A major component of this class will be your own brilliant and unique contributions. I believe deeply in the idea that you, as intelligent and passionate minds, co-create this class with me.

Your success in this class is your primary responsibility, with me providing collaborative support. Specifically, I expect the following from each of you:

- Thoughtful, thorough, and timely completion of all assignments and close, careful reading of all material
- Energetic participation in and respectful attentiveness to others during class
- Professionalism, i.e. willingness to participate, keep notes, help others, arrive on time, be professional in correspondence, and contribute to our positive, scholarly community
- Frequent, consistent, and reliable communication with me (especially regarding homework difficulties, absences, etc.) and your classmates
- Articulation of ideas, beliefs, and opinions AND demonstrated respect for those of other writers/thinkers we encounter, as well as your fellow classmates

ASSIGNMENTS

We will read and write every week, you can count on that. All homework will be labeled with Name, Week Number, and Assignment, single-spaced in the upper left- or righthand corner, with a clever and interesting title centered one space above paper body. All files names for Dropbox will follow this format: Student Name - Week # and Assignment Type.

Readings: Various levels of difficulty, density, and genre. You will be responsible for notes and annotations on this reading (see below notebook requirements); printing readings out when needed is encouraged. **3-5 hours per week.**

Weekly Responses: Critical, reflective, or creative in nature, 1-1.5 pages (unless otherwise specified), single-spaced, Times New Roman, 1" margins, etc. Responses are for experimenting and thinking out loud; I encourage you to take risks and try out ideas. Formal essay structure is not emphasized, though a focused thesis/angle of exploration, scholarly vocab and voice, and clear use of quotes and textual evidence will be required. These responses will be graded on the check system. **1-1.5 hours per week.**

Unit Projects: For each of our six units, you will complete a longer unit project; these will take a variety of creative forms throughout the year, including creative writings, presentations, and other multimedia projects, with lots of creative freedom afforded to you and even more effort expected of you. You'll do some form of outlining, prewriting, and/or rough drafts as well as peer reviews and, afterwards, metacognitive writings. Projects will be graded on letter grade system. **4-6 hours each.**

Notebooks: Your dedicated ATYP notebook will be a) brought TO and used actively IN class every week, b) used extensively OUTSIDE of class for reading notes, prewriting, etc., and c) used exclusively FOR this class. In addition to weekly annotations, specific prompts will get you thinking outside the box to prepare for class discussion. Notebook work is neither optional nor an afterthought; it *precedes* and provides scaffolding for your other written and creative

assignments. See separate rubric for more specifics. Graded on check system, twice a semester (midterm and final). **About 30min-1 hour per week.**

Engagement and Professionalism: See above Student Expectations and separate rubric for more information on expectations and requirements. Graded on check system, twice a semester (midterm and final).

Revision: Ideally, we are not doing much in the way of revision this year. If your weekly work significantly and consistently misses the mark, I will ask you to redo until it's up to par.

COURSE EVALUATION

My grading philosophy is that I expect each and every one of you to excel in this course. We will read some works this year that will explain my educational philosophies more thoroughly on this point, but for now, know that the special ATYP amalgamation of hard work and dedication, revisions and perseverance, engagement and creativity matter a lot more than individual points on individual assignments.

Each semester, you will receive a letter grade based on the following calculation:
Unit projects (30%); Reflections and Metacognitives (10%) Weekly response essays (35%); Notebook, Engagement, and Professionalism (25%).

Grading Scale for Weekly Homework:

√- = You missed the mark. Potential issues include not answering the prompt or accepting its premise; no/not enough text examples; obvious lack of effort; length.

√ = Solid work. You nailed the analysis but had a mediocre execution, or had fabulous writing and weak analysis, or did pretty good on both. You're on the right track.

√+ = Great work! You had a strong concept, pursued it with examples, and executed it well. Maybe a weak spot or two, nothing distracting.

A Few Final Thoughts!

I am so excited to embark on ATYP Year IV with you all. I am a firm believer that every class is an experiment, an alchemical process of students + instructor + readings & writings + broader world context = something truly special, each and every time. This iteration of Year IV should prove to be no exception. While this class will naturally be rigorous and challenging in all kinds of ways, my hope is that it also is engaging and energizing—work that doesn't always feel like work. I promise you that, in return, you will get out of it new ways of thinking about and being in this complex, topsy-turvy, challenging, and utterly fascinating world where we live.



“After everything that's happened, how can the world still be so beautiful? Because it is.”
— Margaret Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*

