

IDSVA SYLLABUS

Seminar VIII: Contemporary Readings: Ecosystems of Thought

Course Number:	903
Course Name:	Seminar VIII
Dates:	January 25 – April 17, 2021 (Spring Break: March 1-7)
Format:	Online & Videoconference
Instructor:	Professor Dejan Lukic
TA:	
Credits:	5 Credits

Course Description

The purpose of Seminar VIII is to situate the issues covered in Seminar VII within contemporary issues in philosophy, aesthetics, and art theory. As with Seminar VII our problem remains to answer the question: What is *our* contribution to the ongoing dialogue in contemporary philosophy, aesthetics, and art theory?

While Seminar VII addressed the figure of the artist-philosopher and its particular ways of doing “contemporary” philosophy, Seminar VIII expands this philosophical journey into a wider realm of thought, where a philosophical figure turns into a philosophical climate, where art turns into poetics and essences into ecosystems. Texts that provided us with foundations for thinking now connect us to an entire ecosystem of being where conceptual, environmental, decolonial, and futural concerns are envisioned. Artist-philosopher here stands on a geo-ontological ground where continental glissement includes not only two European countries dominating one continent, but all continents that exert their visible and invisible influence on thought that is yet to come – including the ‘archipelago’ as a new spatial paradigm.

To this end, readings will follow a little axiom provided by artist Richard Tuttle: “Artists are like clouds.” Extending this view in different directions, the concerns in our texts will involve: (1) a demonstrative and critical relationship to the post-human and the atmospheric in terms of the matters they address and the methods they employ; (2) a skepticism of ‘given,’ ‘natural,’ or ‘totalizing’ foundations of Thought and Being; and (3) an intertextual procession of ‘semblances in motion’ through which new orders of (re)presentation and new possibilities of Being write themselves into existence and the ‘sense’ of meaning; (4) investigation of techniques and ways in which philosophers write about artists.

What do the readings, as they unfold throughout the semester, tell us specifically? John Cage finds a spirited call to attend to sound and silence for a more alert and receptive indeterminacy in art. Michel Foucault’s utopian body reveals a more diffused idea of our body-potential as another heterotopic space upon which to inscribe dreams of political and aesthetic reality and irreality. Gilles Deleuze augments Foucault’s overcoming of humanism through Nietzsche. Jean-Luc Nancy takes on an old theme in art - that of the portrait - in order to deconstruct and renew philosophical concepts of appearing and disappearing, self and non-self, face and surface. Michel Serres continues this radical engagement with the classical figure - this time with statue - by crossing different eras, continents, and mediums, in order to reveal the elemental vicissitudes of

philosophical knowledge. Jacques Ranciere exemplifies his theory of aesthetics in writing about the durational cinema of Bela Tarr, where time is a pure and delicate surface onto which events (past, present, future) inscribe themselves. Edouard Glissant takes us on board of a ship departing from the Caribbean archipelago, guided by its own postcolonial trajectories, where poetics of opacity, transparency, and distancing begin to outline a new ontological possibility. Catherine Malabou introduces us to a new concept - destructive plasticity - as it relates to a type of ontology that is not blind to the “accident” present in all transformations. Anna Tsing and Donna Haraway reveal how the worlds of human and nonhuman connect through sym-poiesis. And finally, Giorgio Agamben loops us back to the beginning of the class with his take on the indeterminacy of the limit and of the ways in which one can imagine the constitution of a community. In light of everything we read, community can now only be conceived as planetary, just as our own thought can be viewed as a peculiar microclimate.

Learning Goals

- To intertextually integrate Contemporary Readings with our previous seminar readings, and to continue the work of shaping these readings into an organically developed narrative. This narrative, which we call the history of ideas, is meant to inform our thinking in preparation for the oral examinations and to deepen the theoretical scope of the dissertation project.
- To gain understanding of the contemporary debates in geo-philosophy and anthropocene studies.
- To gain insight into the nature of “community”, as a social, political, and planetary phenomenon.
- To gain insight in the specific ways in which philosophers write about artists.

Course Requirements

- **Writing Assignment –**
 - **Assignment 1 (6-8 pp double-spaced) Q1 Posted 3/1 Due 3/21**
 - **Assignment 2 (9-10 pp double-spaced) Q2 Posted 3/27 Due 4/17**
- **Note:**
 - Writing assignments should be submitted to Professors Farred and Lukic via Canvas (Assignments section).
 - Late submissions will be accepted but not given credit unless prior arrangements have been made with Professors Farred and Lukic.
 - Extensions will only be granted on a case-by-case basis in response to exceptional circumstances.
 - Papers must follow MLA Style.
 - Files MUST be named according to the following format:
familyname, givenname_803_assignment #_yymmdd
(e.g., “Jones, Sally_803_assignment 1_160223”).

- **Open Class Forum:** Students can initiate optional written discussion in Canvas (“Discussions” area) every week. However, in designated OCF weeks the discussion will be more structured and will require students to answer specific questions. OCF should be considered as a focused conversation with the readings and one another (not a social-media style forum for scattered musings). The primary goal for the OCF is to guide students in the task of “formulating the question”; the TA will model the questions to facilitate the learning process.
 - During OCF weeks, the TA will post a couple of intertextual questions based on the assigned readings (these questions will be ‘pinned’ by the TA). Each student is required to answer/address a question at least once in the discussion thread, and for each OCF-designated week. Students are encouraged to pose their own questions as well, as part of their answers.
 - These responses should be posted preferably by the middle of the week, to allow for the discussion to take place with other members of the class.
 - Replies to questions should be **thoughtful and succinct (under 200 words)** in order to keep the conversation lively and to the point.
 - Replies should (i) address at least one of the questions, and (ii) engage productively with other student comments.
 - The TA will act as a mediator and step in whenever necessary to provide feedback or refocus the conversation if it goes out of track.

In addition to serving our immediate learning and engagement with the material, Open Class Forum discussions should also lay the groundwork for the seminar essay assignments. Cohort OCF discussion is archived for this purpose. Moreover, if you have a good solid OCF trail, oral exam prep is very doable. Without that, orals prep can be very difficult.

- **Individual Telephone Calls** – Faculty will conduct a phone call with each student roughly every three weeks. The TA will circulate a spreadsheet ahead of time for students to sign up for a 30-minute slot. Students are responsible to keep a calendar with scheduled calls and make up for any missed call.
- **Videoconferences:** The seminar will convene a series of videoconferences over the course of the semester. All videoconferences are recorded and archived in Canvas/Conferences. Attendance policy: students are expected to attend *every* class. Video recordings are available as a make-up resource for missed classes, but they should not be considered equivalent to attending the class in person. More than two missed conferences will lower the final grade of 0.25 points per missed conference.

903.1 Assessment and Grades

Grades will be determined by assessment of contributions to

Open Class Forum (10%)
Individual Calls (20%)
Videoconferencing (10%)
Writing Assignments (60%). All assignments must be completed.

903 Required Texts

It is very important that you acquire the correct editions (listed below). If you intend to use an electronic version please make sure it is the correct edition. ‘❖’ indicates that the assigned reading will be limited to certain selections; see schedule. PDF indicates the readings are available as electronic files (Canvas/Files).

In reading order:

1. **Cage, John.** *Silence*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1973 (1961). ISBN: 0819560286 or 978-081956028.
2. **Agamben, Giorgio.** *What Is Philosophy?* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018. ISBN-13: 978-1503602212 or ISBN-10: 1503602214. •Read: *Appendix: The Supreme Music. Music and Politics.* (PDF)
3. **Foucault, Michel.** *Manet and the Object of Painting*. London: Tate Publishing, 2011. (PDF)
4. **Foucault, Michel.** “Utopian Body,” in *Sensorium: embodied experience, technology, and contemporary art*. Caroline A. Jones, ed. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2006. 229-234. (PDF)
5. **Deleuze, Gilles.** *Foucault*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988. ISBN: 978-0-8166-1675-6.
•Read: “Appendix: On the Death of Man and Superman,” 124-132.
6. **Nancy, Jean-Luc.** *Portrait*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2018. ISBN-13 9780823279951. (PDF)
7. **Serres, Michel.** *Statues: The second book of foundations*. London: Bloomsbury, 2015. ISBN: 978-1-47253-031-8. (PDF)
8. **Ranciere, Jacques.** *Béla Tarr, the Time After*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013. ISBN: 978-1-937561-15-4. (PDF)
9. **Glissant, Édouard.** *Poetics of Relations*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997. ISBN: 978-0-472-06629-2.

10. **Malabou, Catherine.** *The Ontology of the Accident: An essay on destructive plasticity.* Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012. ISBN-13: 978-0745652610 or ISBN-10: 9780745652610. (PDF)
11. **Stengers, Isabelle.** "The Cosmopolitical Proposal," in Bruno Latour & Peter Weibel (eds.), *Making Things Public.* Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005. ISBN-10: 0262122790; "Speculative Philosophy and the Art of Dramatization," in *The Allure of Things: Process and Object in Contemporary Philosophy,* London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014. ISBN-10: 1472525205; "Reclaiming Animism," e-flux journal #36 - July 2012. (PDFs)
12. **Tsing, Anna.** *The Mushroom at the End of the World.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017. ISBN: 9780691178325. Read: Parts I and III. (PDF)
13. **Haraway, Donna.** *Staying With The Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene.* Duke University Press, 2016. ISBN: 978-0-8223-6224-. •Read: Chapters 1, 2,
14. **Kathryn Yusoff.** *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018. ISBN: 978-1-5179-0753-2. (PDF)
15. **Agamben, Giorgio.** *The Coming Community.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993. ISBN 978-0-8166-2235-1.

Schedule

Please complete readings *prior to the week* in which they are listed, then *review* them in depth during the assigned week.

Week 1 Jan 25-31

OCF 1

Cage, John. *Silence.*

Agamben, Giorgio. *What Is Philosophy?* (Appendix on "Supreme Music")

Week 2 Feb. 1 - 7

VC 1: Wednesday 2/3, 5-7pm

Foucault. book on 'Manet' and 'Utopian Body'

Deleuze, Gilles. *Foucault.* "Appendix: On the Death of Man and Superman" (124-132)

Week 3 Feb. 8 - 14

Calls 1: TBA

Nancy, Jean-Luc. *Portraits.*

Michel Serres. *Statues.*

Week 4 Feb. 15 - 21

OCF 2

Kathryn Yusoff's *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*

Week 5 Feb. 22 - 28

VC 2: Wednesday 2/24, 5-7pm

Eduard Glissant. *Poetics of Relations*

Q1 posted March 1—Due March 21 (6-8pp double-spaced)

Week 6 SPRING BREAK (March 1 - 7)

Week 7 March 8 - 14

Calls 2: TBA

Stengers, Isabelle. "The Cosmopolitical Proposal," in Bruno Latour & Peter Weibel (eds.), *Making Things Public*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005. ISBN-10: 0262122790; "Speculative Philosophy and the Art of Dramatization," in *The Allure of Things: Process and Object in Contemporary Philosophy*, London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014. ISBN-10: 1472525205; "Reclaiming Animism," e-flux journal #36 - July 2012.

Week 8 March 15 - 21

OCF 3

Tsing, Anna. *The Mushroom at the End of the World (Parts I and III)*

Haraway, Donna. *Staying With The Trouble (Chapters 1, 2, 3)*

Q1 due March 21 (6-8pp double-spaced)

Week 9 March 22 - 28

VC 3: Wednesday 3/24, 5 - 7pm

Ranciere, Jacques. *Time Regained: On Bela Tarr*

Q2 posted March 27—Due April 17 (9-10pp double-spaced)

Week 10 March 29 - April 4

Calls 3: TBA

Agamben, Giorgio. *The Coming Community*

Week 11 April 5 - 11

VC 4: Wednesday 4/7, 5 - 7pm

Malabou, Catherine. *Ontology of the Accident*

Week 12 April 12 - 17
Writing period

Q2 due April 17 (9-10pp double-spaced)

END OF SEMESTER

**Course schedule may be subject to change*