



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

Location: 4320 Sangren Hall

Time: Thursdays 2:30-5:00pm

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 class exploring the *Anthropocene*, a newly-coined word for this current era in which we live, 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. This class is designed to be a “crash course” in humanities, pop culture, and the liberal arts. Throughout the year we will cover a lot of ground, with the intention of giving you a taste of a diverse array of writers, scholars, thinkers, and artists from all kinds of backgrounds and genres. A major component of this class will be your own contributions and input; many assignments are open-ended in subject and theme, and a primary portion of each class will be devoted to rigorous debate and discussion. We will explore not just how we got to “this” moment, but what “this” moment even is.

REQUIRED MATERIALS AND TEXTS

- Dedicated ATYP notebook
- Folder for organizing handouts, printouts, and readings
- Access to a printer (we’ll chat about this in class)
- Required Texts (all other readings will be provided; used copies, eBook, etc. acceptable)
 - First semester: Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (ISBN: 9780241301111)
 - Tom Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (ISBN: 9780802126214)
 - Second semester: Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass* (ISBN: 9781571313560)

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 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.

Units	Themes	# of Weeks
Unit 1:	Summer Reading/Intro to Discourse	4 weeks
Unit 2:	Power, Language, & Intersectionality	4 weeks
Unit 3:	Theories of (Alternate) History	2 weeks
Unit 4:	Post-Modernism & the Simulacra	3 weeks
Unit 5:	Surrealism & the Absurd	4 weeks
Unit 6:	Transhumanism & Afrofuturism	4 weeks
Unit 7:	Further Exploits in Tech & Ethics (Tethics?!)	3 weeks
Unit 8:	Ecodystopias & Urban Alienation	2 weeks
Unit 9:	Biophilia & Systems Thinking	4 weeks
Unit 10:	Doing the Work: Movements and Revolutions	4 weeks

EXPECTATIONS, POLICIES, AND REQUIREMENTS

Generally, I refer you to the standard Rules and Responsibilities memo that was 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 twice!

- **First**, via the Dropbox on eLearning by 10:00pm the night before class meets, unless otherwise specified.
- **Second**, you will also turn in printed copies of all homework at the beginning of each class period (again, unless otherwise specified). Graded work will then be returned to you within reasonable timeframes.
- **Bonus Third Point**, a reminder to keep all your graded homework organized! Putting it right into a binder or folder once you get it back is a great way to ensure this. More specifics on homework below.

Late/missing work: Should be avoided at all costs! I will contact you and copy your adults (noooooo) when you miss a due date. 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 an adult in your life OR an email from you with an adult copied on it explaining the absence. Repeated absences will require further discussion between me, you, and your adults.

Electronics Policy: Cell phones and laptops are, for better or worse, part of our modern lives, and after this year we might be even more attached to them than usual. So, let's aim for brief and utilitarian use of technology while in class. **You are allowed to use your laptop in class for taking notes, pulling up readings, researching discussion questions, and looking up author info**, but I want the cell phones stowed away while class is in session. This same rule applies to me too!

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

A major component of this class will be your own brilliant and unique contributions. As we will discuss when we read Freire, I believe deeply in the idea that you, as intelligent and passionate minds, will co-create this class with me to some extent. **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 and respectful attentiveness during class
- Conduct in keeping with university environment
- 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

Every week, we will read and write, you can always count on that. All homework will be labeled with Name, Week Number, and Assignment, single-spaced, 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 - REV (if applicable).

Readings: Various levels of difficulty, density, and genre. You will be responsible for notes and annotations; 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. So, do not stress about formal essay structure (intro, conclusion, etc.), though quotes and textual evidence will be expected when appropriate. Graded on the check system. **1-1.5 hours per week.**

Unit Projects: These will take a variety of forms throughout the year, including formal essays, creative writings, and other multimedia projects. Some form of outlining, prewriting, and/or rough drafts will be due preceding the final, as well as peer reviews and workshopping. Expect about 4 per semester. 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 assignments. See separate rubric for more specifics. Graded on check system, twice a semester (midterm and final). **About 1 more 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).

Reflections and Metacognitives: For most major assignments, you will turn in a half-to-full page reflecting on your process, challenges, successes, and takeaways. There will also be guided midterm and final reflective assignments. Graded on check system.

Revision: You will be expected to revise any work that receives a check-minus, i.e. deeply misses the mark on academic expectations or understanding of the readings. Revising checks will generally be optional, though I may require one at my discretion, as well as revisions of unit essays and other more substantial projects. I do expect that by Year IV, you are able to accomplish substantial revision that demonstrates progress in your writing and thinking abilities! Note that we will not be collecting revisions in a final cumulative portfolio; rather, revision grades will be updated individually.

COURSE EVALUATION

My grading philosophy is that I expect each and every one of you to excel in this course. An “A” is assumed from the get-go and you’ll prove all year that it’s the grade you deserve. That special ATYP amalgamation of hard work and dedication, revisions and perseverance, engagement and creativity matter a lot more than individual points on individual assignments. Focus on the work, and the grade will come!

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/Written Comments: You can expect me to comment on nearly all of your written work. This will include praise as well as critique; I want to give you a clear idea of what and how you should revise your work. Kind requests for deciphering my proud lefty handwriting accepted, as well as other clarifications within reason.

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.e. My Joy, It Overwhelms Me

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 believe that in return, you get out of it new ways of thinking about and being in this complex, topsy-turvy, challenging, and utterly fascinating world where we live. I know I will. Let’s get started.



“After everything that’s happened, how can the world still be so beautiful? Because it is.”

– Margaret Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*

