

English 3396
Spring 2012
Postmodern Fiction
Professor W. Lawrence Hogue
Course description

The works of post-structural (and post-structural feminist) and postmodern theoreticians such as Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Jean Baudrillard, Félix Guattari, Jacques Lacan, Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray, and Jean-François Lyotard attempt to sketch out a culture beyond existential humanism, the ego-centered subject, the patriarchy, the Freudian psyche, the nuclear family, capitalist economies, Western imperialism and xenophobia, hierarchies of class, race and gender--in short, beyond modernity and modernism. There is agreement on the general understanding of postmodernism as a new socio-cultural and socio-economic era. The break, expressed particularly by Foucault, Derrida and Lyotard, with modernity, which is central to postmodernism, is an objection to any form of systemacity, closure, or totalization, i.e. discursive formations and narratives, recognizing such activity as arbitrary and suppressive. The postmodern vacuum, the product of deconstructive activity, is a space in which the focus is shifted from homogeneity to heterogeneity (differences) as a result of the shift from repressive 'center' to the previously repressed margins. This course will focus on the literature that is produced by the culture that is beyond modernity and modernism, examining the literature that is a product of notions of de-centeredness and heterogeneity and differences. It focuses on the literature that takes the lessons of poststructuralist theories/analyses into domains of life (and fiction) and attempts to re-fabricate these endeavors on these de-centering, deconstructionist premises. International readings will be taken from Roland Barthes ("Myth Today" in *Mythologies*), Lyotard (*The Postmodern Condition*), Paul Auster (*The New York Trilogy*), Italo Calvino (*Invisible Cities*), Angela Carter (*Wise Children*), Salman Rushdie (*Midnight's Children*), Christine Brooke-Rose (*Amalgamemnon*), Kathy Acker (*Pussy, King of the Pirates*), Ishmael Reed (*Mumbo Jumbo*), Gerald Vizenor (*The Heirs of Columbus*), J.M. Coetzee (*Foe*), D.M. Thomas (*The White Hotel*), Milorad Pavić (*Dictionary of the Khazars*), and Clarice Lispector (*The Stream of Life*), Rikki Ducornet (*The Jade Cabinet*), Susan Daitch (*L.C. or The Colorist*), Carole Maso (*AVA*), Graham Swift (*Last Orders*), Sumitru Tsepeneag (*Vain Art of The Fugue*), Magdalena Tulli (*Dreams and Stones or Flaw*), Christine Montalbetti (*Western*), and Lily Hoang (*Parabola*). Students are required to take a mid-term exam and a final exam. They are also asked to write a short paper (6-8 pages).