

ETHN 106: Life, Death, and the Human
Spring 2020
MWF 12:00-12:50pm

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Office Hours: email me to set up Zoom appt (available afternoons M-F)

Course Description

This will be taught in three sections, which correspond to the title of the course:

Life will encompass how governments and organizations define and regulate life, drawing on Michel Foucault's concept of 'biopolitics' and Giorgio Agamben's 'homo sacer'. We will pay special attention to how certain rights are granted or denied to certain people/populations in the context of the Coronavirus outbreak and "the immigration crisis". At the end of this section we will analyze how biopolitics materialize in science fiction, especially in vampire movies.

Death will explore 'necropolitics', which is about the right to control who dies. This postcolonial concept was coined by Cameroonian philosopher Achille Mbembé as a critique of Foucault's biopolitics. We will read about how this concept has been applied to border politics, queer and trans bodies, and drone warfare. At the end of this section we will consider how necropolitics relates to the depiction of zombies in popular culture.

The Human is about how humanity has been defined, denied or extended. In the first place, we will read postcolonial thinkers such as Frantz Fanon whose classic text *The Wretched of the Earth* outlines how most of the world's population was de-humanized through colonialism and slavery. We will then shift our focus to new technologies (e.g., genetic engineering, cloning, artificial intelligence) that force us to re-consider what it means 'to be human'. We will conclude by reading posthumanist/feminist Donna Haraway's classic text on cyborgs.

Readings and other Requirements

You are not required to purchase texts for this course. All required readings – PDFs and links to articles – will be available online on Canvas in the modules on a week-by-week basis.

Expectations

While this course will be taught asynchronously (lectures and readings will be available on demand), it will be very important to keep up with your readings and assignments. Each week of the course builds off the previous week. Make sure to submit your assignments and assessments in on time because that is the safest way to keep up with the material.

Communication

I encourage you to reach out to through email whenever you need to talk about ideas or concerns in this class. Make sure you read over the syllabus and any instructions I have shared via e-mail announcements or Canvas carefully before you ask any questions. I will not respond to e-mails asking me for any information that is readily available on the syllabus.

Make sure to follow proper email etiquette when sending me an email:

- a) include ETHN 106 in the subject heading of the email
- b) provide a salutation (e.g., “Hello Alex”)
- c) end the email properly (e.g. “Sincerely”, “Kind regards”...etc.)

Please check your email regularly to keep up to date with any possible changes to our schedule.

Assessments (100 points total)

Weekly Discussion Posts: 30 points – 10 posts total, worth 3 points each
(submitted every Sunday by 11:59pm on Canvas)

Midterm Exam: 30 pts – Essay question format (submitted on Canvas during Week 6)

Final Project (Zine): 40 pts

- Proposal: 5 Points (due Week 7)
- Bibliography: 5 Points (due Week 9)
- Zine: 30 Points (due Week 10)

What is a zine?

‘Zine’ is short for magazine. The original zines were handmade publications made for fans of comics. Later on, zines became a medium to publish without having to work for an actual magazine ([History of Zines](#)). In other words, people made their own publications without having restrictions about who could publish and what content they could publish. You will be making a digital zine, which you could make by hand and then digitize or make entirely in a digital format ([VICE: How to Make a Zine](#)) ([Blogger: How to Make a Zine](#)).

Why a zine?

This is a project that allows you to creatively apply what you learned in this class. Your zine will include text that draws on concepts from the class and complement your writing with images/videos that illustrate your point.

What will the zine be about?

That will be up to you to decide. Every week of the class is an opportunity to think about something in a new way. Your zine could be about a current event, a historical event, or an element of popular culture. I will prompt you to think about this frequently.

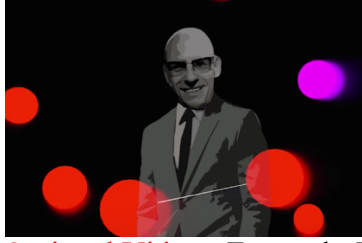

DISCLAIMER:


THINK OF THIS SYLLABUS AS AN ORGANIC DOCUMENT THAT WILL INEVITABLY CHANGE THROUGHOUT THE QUARTER. ALWAYS CHECK FOR THE LATEST VERSION OF THE SYLLABUS IN CANVAS

PART 1: LIFE

Week 1	Overview: the Biopolitics of 2020
Mon 3/30	Introduction and Syllabus
Wed 4/1	<p>Website Article – “Why the coronavirus presents a global political danger” (Horvat 2020) https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/health/2020/02/why-coronavirus-presents-global-political-danger</p> <p>Website Article - “‘The Right to Have Rights’ and the Plight of the Stateless” (Gessen 2018) Introduction https://www.newyorker.com/news/our-columnists/the-right-to-have-rights-and-the-plight-of-the-stateless</p> <p>Chapter 1 from the <i>Routledge Handbook of Biopolitics</i>– “Introduction” (Rentea 2017)</p>
Fri 4/3	Article - “Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège De France 1975-1976” (Foucault 2003)

Week 2	Biopolitics & Homo Sacer
Mon 4/6	<p>Article – “Coronavirus and Philosophers” – European Journal of Psychoanalysis</p> <p>Video - Corona Revolution: Plagues & Power Russell Brand & Philosopher Brad Evans (20:44) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PIScK4o67jU</p> <p>Website Article - Michel Foucault: Biopolitics and Biopower (Adams 2017) https://criticallegalthinking.com/2017/05/10/michel-foucault-biopolitics-biopower/</p>

	 <p>Optional Video - Foucault: Biopower, Governmentality, and the Subject(19:52) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AXyr4Zasdkg</p>
Wed 4/8	 <p>Video - Giorgio Agamben's Homo Sacer by John David Ebert (Ebert 2016) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y7T2weiKFPo</p> <p>Chapter from <i>Homo Sacer</i> - “Biopolitics and the Rights of Man” (Agamben 1998)</p>
Fri 4/10	<p>Chapter from <i>Placing the Border in Everyday Life</i> – “Policing Borders, Policing Bodies: The Territorial and Biopolitical Roots of US Immigration Control” (Coleman and Steusse 2014)</p>


Week 3	Vampires and Biopolitics
Mon 4/13	<p>Article - “Introduction: Science fiction and biopolitics” (Vint 2011)</p>
Wed 4/15	 <p>Video - <i>Daybreakers</i> Virus + Vampires Explored (11:09) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dzgaxJcgrdg</p>

	Article – “The Expectational Body: The Becoming of the Tortured Vampire Horde in <i>Daybreakers</i> ” (Bacon 2016)
Fri 4/17	Article - “Monsters in the Closet: Biopolitics and Intersexuality” (Guidotto 2007)

PART II: DEATH

Week 4	Necropolitics & Decolonial Thinking
Mon 4/20	Article - “The Society for the End of Necropolitics” Part 1 of Article – “Necropolitics” (Mbembé and Meintjes 2003) [Read pages 11-25]
Wed 4/22	Part 2 of Article – “Necropolitics” (Mbembé and Meintjes 2003) [Read pages 25-40]
Fri 4/24	Article - “Necropolitics, Narcopolitics, and Femicide: Gendered Violence on the Mexico-U.S. Border” (Wright 2011)

Week 5	Necropolitics in Neoliberal Times
Mon 4/27	Article - “Necropolitics, Postmortem/ Transmortem Politics, and Transfeminisms in the Sexual Economies of Death” (Valencia 2019)
Wed 4/29	Article - “Violent Inaction: The Necropolitical Experience of Refugees in Europe” (Davies et al 2017)
Fri 5/1	Article – “The Necropolitics of Drones” (Allinson 2015)

Week 6	Survival: Necropolitics and Zombie Politics
Mon 5/4	Article - “‘We Are the Walking Dead’: race, time, and Survival in zombie narrative” (Canavan 2010)
Wed 5/6	 <p>Video - The Walking Dead Timeline...So Far (18:40)</p> <p>Article - “Politics of the Living Dead: Race and Exceptionalism in the Apocalypse” (Fishel and Wilcox 2017)</p>
Fri 5/8	Article - “Zombie Politics and Other Late Modern Monstrosities in the Age of Disposability” (Giroux 2010)

PART III: THE HUMAN?

Week 7	The Human in Postcolonial Theory
Mon 5/11	<p>Website Article - Historical Context of <i>The Wretched of the Earth</i> https://www.college.columbia.edu/core/content/historical-context-wretched-earth-0</p> <p>Video – Three Minute Thought: Frantz Fanon On Violence (4:13) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YcBuCcydP68</p>
Wed 5/13	Selection from Article - “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation--An Argument” (Wynter 2003)
Fri 5/15	Article - “‘Shithole Countries’: The Wretched of the Earth, Frantz Fanon” (Anderson 2018)

Week 8	Posthumanism & Cyborgs
Mon 5/18	Chapter from <i>Posthumanism</i> - “Introduction: Approaching Posthumanism” (Badmington 2000) Video – WALL-E and Posthumanism (4:59) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CVx4g1bKorc
Wed 5/20	Selection from <i>How we became posthuman: virtual bodies in cybernetics, literature, and informatics</i> – “Toward Embodied Virtuality” (Hayles 1999) [pages 1-13]
Fri 5/22	Video - Humans, Cyborgs, Posthumans: Francesca Ferrando at TED x Silicon Alley (18:39) https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=cyborg+posthumans

Week 9	Cyborgs and Identity Formation
Mon 5/25	Memorial Day (No Class)
Wed 5/27	Selection from <i>A Cyborg Manifesto</i> (Haraway 2016) [pages 1-14]
Fri 5/29	Selection from <i>A Cyborg Manifesto</i> (Haraway 2016) [pages 15-27]

Week 10	TBD
Mon 6/1	TBD
Wed 6/3	TBD
Fri 6/5	TBD