

ENGLISH 581/A01 (#31184)

STUDIES IN COMMONWEALTH AND POSTCOLONIAL LITERATURES: SPECIAL TOPIC

Terror and the Virtual: Literature, Film, Theory (1.5 units)

May 9 to June 24, 2016

Tuesday and Thursday, 1:30-4:20 p.m.

CLE C316

Dr. Lincoln Z. Shlensky

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Email: shlensky@uvic.caCourse Web site: shlensky.com/teachingElectronic submission link: <http://bit.ly/english581summer2016>**Course description**

This course will consider terror as a particular kind of event—a virtual event. That is, terror, in the self-conscious performance and disturbance that it arouses, incites discourse as to not only the event that has taken place, but what might have happened, and what could yet happen. Terror, in this sense, has become the 21st century’s extreme version of the “shock” of the new that Walter Benjamin claimed was the quintessential experience of modernity. Terror’s significance in the present era, however, is complex and ambiguous because the experience of contemporary terror calls epistemology into question in ways that seem entirely unprecedented, even in a time of expansively defined traumas. This radical uncertainty of knowledge—the traumatic impulse of terror—must be balanced against the fact that contemporary terror arguably has numerous antecedents and analogues in human history and art that raise the question of its singularity and specificity. What have literature and art to say about terror or terrorism? Can the question of art’s potency (or the desire of the artist to assume meta-artistic power) be connected in any way with the aims of terror? Towards a contemporary analysis of terror, this course considers terror in light of the discourse of “the virtual” in the writing of Gilles Deleuze (*Dialogues II*), and in the theoretics of such writers as Michel Foucault (“The Subject and Power”), Frantz Fanon (*The Wretched of the Earth*), Slavoj Žižek (*Terror and the Virtual; Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*), Peter Sloterdijk (*In the World Interior of Capital*), and Judith Butler (*Prearious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*). A number of recent essay collections (*Terror, Theory and the Humanities*, 2010; *Terror and the Postcolonial*, 2009; *Literature and Terrorism: Comparative Perspectives*, 2012; *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, 2003; and others) will help us to approach the discourse of terror as elaborated in a range of compelling literary and film texts.

Course objectives

This course will provide you with an introduction to contemporary literature, film and theory dealing with terror and related subjects. In surveying a range of historical and contemporary texts, you will be able to familiarize yourself with some of the key political moments in the contemporary academic and literary conversation on terror and the virtual.

In addition to a survey of significant recent texts, you will also have the opportunity to deepen your knowledge of theories of the virtual and the question of terror through readings of a range of analytical essays and chapters on these topics.

You will gain concrete knowledge during the term through reading novels, viewing films, reading selected critical and theoretical literature, preparing your presentations and research, participating in class discussion, and taking and reviewing detailed notes as you read and discuss seminar materials. Your seminar work will include: writing brief responses to the readings and film(s) of the week before each seminar; preparing two oral presentations during the term; submitting preparatory work towards your research essay; and researching and writing a scholarly essay of about 20 pages.

Required texts

Kamel Daoud, *The Meursault Investigation* (2013)

Mohsin Hamed, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007)

Michel Houellebecq, *Submission* (2015)

Susan Abulhawa, *Mornings in Jenin* (2010)

Thomas King, *Green Grass, Running Water* (1993)

Many readings will be available in the library or online. I will give you access to others electronically. I will expect you to watch (which may entail renting, watching in the library or viewing online, as available) all films assigned for the course in advance of our discussions of them.

Assignments

Assignments for the term are as follows:

- Two response papers dealing with course materials, turned in prior to class, of at least 300 words each (10% of the final grade).
- Two in-class presentations, 15 to 20 minutes each with write-ups, one of which may be preliminary to your seminar paper (30% of the final grade). These should not be on the same topic as your response papers.
- An outline, thesis paragraph, and annotated bibliography for your seminar paper (20% of final grade), due by Tuesday, June 14 at 9:00 AM.
- A final research essay of 4500-5500 words (40% of the final grade), due by Thursday, June 30 at 1:30 PM.

For more specific information about how to do well on the essay you will write for this class, please see "Assessment Criteria for Graduate Student Research Essays" on my website.

I will give you ample notice of any changes to the syllabus.

If you have a disability, please let me know so I can help to accommodate you. Please also

register at the Resource Centre for Students with a Disability if you wish to have them prepare alternate examination arrangements.

Submission guidelines

Please submit all written assignments to me online as **Microsoft Word files** only (no other file formats, please), with file names that include your first and last name. Upload your assignment to me using the electronic submission link shlensky.com/teaching on my website. Be sure to keep a copy of all the written work you submit.

Late Submission Policy

I know that completing your work on time requires self-discipline, and I want to reward students who meet their responsibility to turn in assignments when they are due. To be fair to these students, I will deduct credit for assignments turned in late: 3 points per late day. I will grant submission extensions under some circumstances, if you let me know at least one week in advance. Please give me documentation if there is a medical or other emergency situation for which you are requesting an exception to this policy.

Course grades

I adhere to the Faculty of Graduate Studies grading system, as follows:

Grade	Grade Point Value	Percentage	Description	Achievement of Assignment Objectives
A+	9	90 – 100	Exceptional Work	Technically flawless and original work demonstrating insight, understanding and independent application or extension of course expectations; often publishable.
A	8	85 – 89	Outstanding Work	Demonstrates a very high level of integration of material demonstrating insight, understanding and independent application or extension of course expectations.
A-	7	80 – 84	Excellent Work	Represents a high level of integration, comprehensiveness and complexity, as well as mastery of relevant techniques/concepts.
B+	6	77 – 79	Very good work	Represents a satisfactory level of integration, comprehensiveness, and complexity; demonstrates a sound level of analysis with no major weaknesses.
B	5	73 – 76	Acceptable work that fulfills the expectations of the course	Represents a satisfactory level of integration of key concepts/procedures. However, comprehensiveness or technical skills may be lacking.

B-	4	70 – 72	Unacceptable work revealing some deficiencies in knowledge, understanding or techniques	Represents an unacceptable level of integration, comprehensiveness and complexity. Mastery of some relevant techniques or concepts lacking. Every grade of 4.0 (B-) or lower in a course taken for credit in the Faculty of Graduate Studies must be reviewed by the supervisory committee of the student and a recommendation made to the Dean of Graduate Studies. Such students will not be allowed to register in the next session until approved to do so by the Dean.
C+	3	65 – 69		
C	2	60 – 64		
D	1	50 – 59		
F	0	0 – 49	Failing grade	Unsatisfactory performance. Wrote final examination and completed course requirements.

N grades

Students who have completed the following elements will be considered to have completed the course and will be assigned a final grade:

- Two response papers
- Two in-class presentations
- Seminar paper

Failure to complete these assignments will result in a grade of 'N' regardless of the cumulative percentage on other assignments for the course. An 'N' is a failing grade, and it factors into a student's GPA as 0 (maximum percentage that can accompany an 'N' on a transcript is 49).

Course participation and attendance

Your active participation in class discussions represents an important contribution to your own development of ideas and that of others in the class. When you ask a question or answer one, you are contributing to the intellectual growth of all the students in the class. I greatly value the efforts of students who enrich discussion by offering their own views in class. Attendance is a vital part of participation, and so I ask that you attend all classes for this course. I understand, however, that there will be rare occasions when you cannot attend class for personal reasons. More than two absences during the semester compromises your ability to participate and will affect your final grade. If you must be absent for more than two classes due to medical factors or other urgent reasons, please bring documentation of these issues. I will factor participation and attendance into your final grade.

Learning environment

The University of Victoria is committed to promoting, providing, and protecting a positive, supportive, and safe working and learning environment for all its members. We, students and faculty members, are all expected to adhere to the UVic [human rights policy](#). Please let me know if something is going on in the classroom that makes you feel personally uncomfortable.

Equity Statement

The University of Victoria and surrounding areas are located on Coast Salish and Straits Salish

Territories, home of the Esquimalt, Songhees, and WSÁNEĆ peoples. Our colonial communities, including that of the University of Victoria, are implicated in myriad ongoing impacts on First Nations, and we, members of the University of Victoria community, commit to working towards a more just society that challenges existing structures of power and privilege.

Academic integrity

Academic integrity is a sign of your interest in helping to build and support an intellectual community. Please be aware of and adhere to the UVic academic integrity policy web.uvic.ca/calendar/FACS/UnIn/UARe/PoAcI.html. Using someone else's ideas or writing without attribution (plagiarism), cheating, multiple submission, or other forms of academic dishonesty may result in a student's receiving a failing grade for the course and further sanctions by the University. *You can easily avoid plagiarism by putting any material taken from another person's writing in quotation marks, and by acknowledging the source of any ideas or information you are paraphrasing.* I may submit student writing assignments to an evaluative service for an originality review.

Computers in the classroom

I have found that computer use during class is often a source of distraction. If you feel you must use a computer in class, please refrain from using it for any activity not directly related to class.

Accessing films

You are responsible for renting and viewing the weekly films for the course. You are also responsible for viewing the clips from other films I may show in class (make sure to get notes from a classmate if you have to miss a class). When available, I have given links to the UVic library copy of the films. My recommendation is that you check availability of films and videos online. Video stores such as Pic-a-Flic in Cook Street Village also carry a wide selection of films on DVD.

Course Experience Survey

The Course Experience Survey (CES) is an online tool that allows the University of Victoria to hear about the student learning experience. By compiling the information submitted in the CES, the university is able to gather feedback and comments on courses and instructors to help improve the student experience. Please complete the course experience survey (<http://ces.uvic.ca>), available in the final two weeks of the course, to help me improve courses like this for the benefit of future students.

About me

It may be helpful for you to know a little about me. I completed my graduate work at the University of California, Berkeley, in Comparative Literature. My MA focused on the Enlightenment French philosophers, Rousseau and Diderot. My PhD dissertation was a comparison of the writing of two late-modernist/postmodernist writers, Aharon Appelfeld, an Israeli author who writes in Hebrew, and Edouard Glissant, a francophone writer from the Caribbean island of Martinique. I have since continued to work in both Caribbean and Jewish studies, writing about the francophone regions and, increasingly, the anglophone West Indies,

as well as about Hebrew literature and Middle Eastern topics. I am currently working on a new research project on postcolonialism and Third Cinema. Additionally, I teach and have research interests in film and semiotic theory, which were the focus of my BA at Brown University. Just so you'll know, I have two small children who keep me very busy when I am not at work!

Assignment Schedule

Please read and view the assigned material before the due date, except where "in class" or "suggested" is indicated, and be prepared to discuss it.

Tuesday, May 10: Introduction

- Course introduction
- Choose presentation dates and response paper dates.
 - In class: *Battle of Algiers* (Italy/Algeria 1966, 120 mins)

Thursday, May 12: Our Man in Absurdistan

Films

- Kathryn Bigelow, *Zero Dark Thirty* (USA 2012, 157 mins)

Texts

- Mick Taussig, "Terror as Usual: Walter Benjamin's Theory of History as a State of Siege." *Social Text* No. 23 (Autumn-Winter 1989), 3-20. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/466418>
http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/stable/pdf/466418.pdf?_=1462659873833
- Margaret Scanlan, *Plotting Terror: novelists and terrorists in contemporary fiction* (2001). Introduction (1-15).
 - Suggested: Scanlan, chap. 1, "Don DeLillo's *Mao II* and the Rushdie Affair" (19-36) and chap. 6, "Friedrich Dürrenmatt's *The Assignment*" (108-120). (PDF) PN3352 T35S35
- Slavoj Žižek, "Zero Dark Thirty: Hollywood's gift to American power." *The Guardian* (Jan. 2013). <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/jan/25/zero-dark-thirty-normalises-torture-unjustifiable>

Tuesday, May 17: A Passion of the Fictive

Presentation

Blake

Novel

- Kamel Daoud, *The Meursault Investigation* (2013, 143 pp) PQ3989.3 D365M4813 2015
 - Suggested: Albert Camus, *The Stranger* (1942) PQ2605 A3734E813 1993

Films

- Suggested: The Wachowski Brothers, *The Matrix* (Australia/USA 1999, 136 mins).

Texts

- Slavoj Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real!* (2002). 5-57. http://rebels-library.org/files/zizek_welcome.pdf

Thursday, May 19: *Mauvaise foi*

Presentation

Jamin

Films

- Michael Haneke, *Caché* (France/Austria/Germany/Italy 2005, 117 mins)

Texts

- Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, "On Violence," 1-62. (PDF)
- Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (Verso 2009), "Non-Thinking in the Name of the Normative" (137-63). <http://humanities.wisc.edu/assets/misc/Butler.pdf>
- Jean Baudrillard, "The Spirit of Terrorism" (2002). 3-34.
<http://www01.homepage.villanova.edu/michael.olson/Documents/Baudrillard.pdf>
 - Suggested: Ipek A. Celik, "'I Wanted You to Be Present': Guilt and the History of Violence in Michael Haneke's *Caché*," *Cinema Journal* 50:1 (Fall 2010), 59-80. http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/40962837.pdf?_seq=1462832995432
 - Suggested: Frances L. Restuccia, "The Virtue of Blushing: Assimilating Anxiety into Shame in Haneke's *Caché*," *symplokē* 18:1-2 (2010), 155-170. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/10.5250/symploke.18.1-2.0155.pdf>

Tuesday, May 24

Class cancelled.

Thursday, May 26: Modernity and Its Discontents

Presentation

Lora

Novel

- Mohsin Hamed, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007, 191 pp)

Films

- Errol Morris, *Standard Operating Procedure* (USA 2008, 118 mins)

Texts

- Neferti Tadiar. "Metropolitan Life and Uncivil Death" (316-20) (2007). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25501695>

- Suggested: Joseph Darda, "Precarious World: Rethinking Global Fiction in Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*," *Mosaic* 47:3 (2014), 107-122. <http://muse.jhu.edu.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/article/555665/pdf>
- Suggested: Claudia Perner, "Tracing the Fundamentalist," *Ariel* 41:3-4 (2011), 23-31. [EBSCO](#).

Tuesday, May 31: Fanatic or Prophet? The Postcolony's Legacy

Presentation

Erica

Films

- Raoul Peck, *Lumumba* (France/Belgium/Germany/Haiti (2000, 120 mins) PN1997 L847
 - **In class:** Raoul Peck, *Lumumba: Death of a Prophet* (1992, 70 mins) DT663 L8L8

Texts

- Elleke Boehmer, "Postcolonial Writing and Terror," in *Terror and the Postcolonial* (2011), [chap. 5] (12 pp) <http://bit.ly/1NoNer0>
- Hanif Kureishi, "My Son the Fanatic" (1994 short story) <https://monicaenglishteacher.files.wordpress.com/2015/01/my-son-the-fanatic-by-hanif-kureishi.pdf>
 - Suggested: Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, Introduction and Chap. 1. 1-58. <https://archivocienciasociales.files.wordpress.com/2012/09/a-mbembe-on-the-postcolony.pdf>

Thursday, June 2: States of Exception and the Unspoken Norm

Presentation

Blake

Novel

- Michel Houellebecq, *Submission* (France 2005, 256 pp): first half

Texts

- Gil Anidjar, "Terror Right," *CR: The New Centennial Review*, Vol. 4, No. 3, theory of the partisan (winter 2004), 35-69. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41949451>
 - Suggested: Adam Gopnik, "The Next Thing," *The New Yorker*, Jan. 26, 2015, 28-32. <http://web.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=3&sid=018f85ef-ff55-4a1f-912c-690e38c15e64%40sessionmgr4005&hid=4114>

Tuesday, June 7: Fundamentalist, Anti-Modernist or Cosmopolitan?

Novel

- Michel Houellebecq, *Submission* (France 2005, 256 pp): second half

Texts

- Marco Roth, "Among the Believers: Michel Houellebecq's immortal longings," *Harper's Magazine*, October 2015. <http://harpers.org/archive/2015/10/among-the-believers-2/?single=1>
- Pheng Cheah, "Cosmopolitanism," in *Theory Culture Society* 23 (2006), 486-96. <http://tcs.sagepub.com/content/23/2-3/486.full.pdf+html>

Thursday, June 9: Redressing the Repressed

Presentation

Films

- Jacques Audiard, *Dheepan* (France 2015, 115 mins)
 - Recommended: Stephen Gaghan, *Syriana* (USA 2005, 128 mins)

Texts

- Achille Mbembe, "The Colony: Its Guilty Secret and Its Accursed Share," *Terror and the Postcolonial* (2010), ed. Elleke Boehmer. (PDF)
- Neil Whitehead et al., *Virtual war and magical death* [electronic resource] (2013): Introduction (1-25). <http://reader.dukeupress.edu/virtual-war-and-magical-death/12>
 - Suggested: Montesquieu, *The Persian Letters* (1721)

Tuesday, June 14: Re/turn of the Screwed

Presentation

Mel

DUE BY 9:00 AM

- Seminar paper outline, thesis statement, and annotated bibliography.

Novel

- Susan Abulhawa, *Mornings in Jenin* (2010, 352 pp): first half

Films

- Shira Geffen, *Self-Made* [Ha-boreg] (Israel 2014, 130 mins)
 - Suggested: Dror Moreh, *The Gatekeepers* (Israel 2012, 95 mins)

Texts

- Suggested: Scott Horton, Interview with Rashid Khalidi. *Harper's Magazine* (March 2013). <http://harpers.org/blog/2013/03/brokers-of-deceit-how-the-u-s-has-undermined-peace-in-the-middle-east/>

Thursday, June 16: Five Uneasy Pieces

Presentation

Jamin

Novel:

- Susan Abulhawa, *Mornings in Jenin* (2010, 352 pp): second half

Films

- Emad Burnat and Guy Davidi, *Five Broken Cameras* (Palestine/Israel/France 2011, 90 mins)
 - In class: Laura Bialis, *Rock in the Red Zone* (Israel/USA 2014, 133 mins)

Texts

- Amira Hass, "Inverse Hasbara: How '5 Broken Cameras' changed Palestinians' attitude toward nonviolence," *Haaretz*, Apr. 7, 2013 (PDF)
- Sidra Dekoven Ezrahi. "'To What Shall I Compare You?': Jerusalem as Ground Zero of the Hebrew Imagination" (2007). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25501682>
 - Suggested: Rebecca Weaver-Hightower and Peter Hulme, *Postcolonial Film: History, Empire, Resistance* (2014). Selections. <http://www.amazon.com/Postcolonial-Film-Resistance-Routledge-Advances/dp/0415716144>
 - Suggested: Margaret Scanlan, *Plotting Terror*, Chap. 6: "The Jerusalem Novels."

Tuesday, June 21: Not the Indian You Were Hoping For

Presentation

Mel

Erica

Novel

- Thomas King, *Green Grass, Running Water* (Canada 1993, 469 pp): first half

Film

- Jeff Barnaby, *Rhymes for Young Ghouls* (Canada 2013, 88 mins)

Texts

- Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (Verso 2009), "The Claim of Nonviolence" (165-84). <http://humanities.wisc.edu/assets/misc/Butler.pdf>
- Laura Westra, "Environmental Racism and the First Nations of Canada: Terrorism at Oka" *Social Philosophy* 30:1 103-24 (2002). <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/doi/10.1111/0047-2786.t01-1-00007/epdf>
 - Suggested: Jamaia DaCosta, "Interview with Filmmaker Jeff Barnaby" (2014). <http://muskratmagazine.com/interview-with-filmmaker-jeff-barnaby-on-rhymes-for-young-ghouls/>

Thursday, June 23: Apocalypse by Any Other Name

Presentation

Lora

Novel

- Thomas King, *Green Grass, Running Water* (Canada 1993, 469 pp): second half

Texts

- Slavoj Žižek, *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections* (2008), chap. 3 “A Blood-Dimmed Tide is Loosed” (74-104).
- Alex Schmid, “Terrorism: the Definitional Problem” in *Case Western Reserve Journal of International Law* 36 (2004).
http://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/cwrint36&div=24&g_sent=1&col_lection=journals

SEMINAR PAPERS ARE DUE BY THURSDAY, JUNE 30 AT 1:30 PM.