

IP304-15 Posthumous Geographies I: Underworlds

21/22

Department

Liberal Arts

Level

Undergraduate Level 3

Module leader

Bryan Brazeau

Credit value

15

Module duration

10 weeks

Assessment

100% coursework

Study location

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

This is an optional module for the BA Liberal Arts degree.

[Module web page](#)

Module aims

Physical, spiritual, allegorical, and psychological journeys through the underworld present a wide variety of problems; How does a trip through hell and back change the person undertaking the journey? What forces shape the imaginary design of such underworlds and their often terrible punishments? What narratives about the self and society are intertwined in such underworlds and how do they manifest themselves today in recovery narratives, our conceptions of organised crime, and experiences of incarceration? This transdisciplinary module examines such problems (and more) across a wide variety of material.

Students wishing to undertake this module should note that it is decidedly not a Classics, Sociology, or Italian Studies module. While we draw on insights from these disciplines and many others (such as cultural criticism, philosophy, religious studies, psychology, and intellectual history), we employ a variety of student-led approaches to consider the problems of the

underworld from a transdisciplinary perspective. For example, in our discussions, we will explore problems such as the concept of the self in relation to political power, the reflexivity of normalizing power and social discourse on gender and race in the katabatic imaginary, the psychological reshaping of urban landscapes by criminal gangs, distorted experiences of space and time in carceral geography, and the relationship between the tyranny of originality and substance abuse. Through exploration of and reflection upon these problems, students will refine their analytical skills by thinking across disciplines to engage with complex problems that resist simple solutions.

Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

Week 1: Introduction: Fame and its Discontents

Weeks 2-5:

Problem 1: Individualism vs. Social Cohesion

- a. "Lovers in a Dangerous Time:" Romantic Love and Political Stability
- b. Hellish Punishments as Normalizing Discourses
- c. Akrasia, Alcoholism, and Autobiography
- d. "Bat out of Hell:" Infernal Liberty and Self-Reliance

Weeks 6-9:

Problem 2. Fire and Brimstone: Space and Place Down Under

- e. Hostile Environment: Ecological Allegories of Suffering
- f. Body and Soul: Placelessness and Separation
- g. Hell's Angels: Urban Battle Lines in the Quebec Biker Wars
- h. Carceral Geography and the Temporality of Imprisonment

Conclusions and Group Presentations

Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Articulate and discuss problems posed by underworld narratives.
- Critically analyse the dynamic between how such narratives have been inherited, reconfigured, and reshaped according to changing religious, political, and social concerns and how they, in turn, influence and often justify such cultural values.
- Examine underworld geographies from multiple perspectives (including spatial theory).
- Engage in sustained (weekly) critical reflection on problems generated by underworld narratives.
- Apply advanced cognitive skills to build transdisciplinary knowledge that fosters transformative dialogue.
- Implement meta-cognitive skills in approaching complex contemporary problems.
- Collaborate in the creation of their own version of an underworld, showcasing the new problems it generates and engaging in analytical reflection.

Indicative reading list

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (penguin edition recommended)

Aquinas, T. *Summa Theologica*

Bachelard, G. *The Poetics of Space* (1958)

Bremmer, J.N. 'Christian Hell: From the Apocalypse of Peter to the Apocalypse of Paul.' *Numen* 56 (2009): 298-235.

Burkert, W. 'Pleading for Hell: Postulates, Fantasies and the Senselessness of Punishment', *Numen*, vol. 56.2-3 (2009): 141-160.

Brown, P. *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (1988).

Dante, *Divine Comedy* (Hollander Trans.)

Emerson, R. W., "Self-Reliance" (Norton edition recommended)

Freccero, J. *Dante: The Poetics of Conversion* (1986)

Foucault, M. 'Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias' (1967/1984)

Jamison, L. *The Recovering: Intoxication and its Aftermath* (2018)

Jensen, D., "Criminals," in *The Culture of Make Believe* (2004)

Laing, O. *Trip to Echo Spring: Why Writers Drink* (2013)

Matthews, R. *Doing Time: An Introduction to the Sociology of Imprisonment*, McCraw, B. and R. Arp, eds., *The Concept of Hell* (2015)

Milton, J. *Paradise Lost*, Books I and II (Norton edition recommended)

Moran, D., N. Gil, and D. Conlon, eds., *Carceral Spaces: Mobility and Agency in Imprisonment and Migrant Detention* (2013)

Schneider, S. *Iced: The Story of Organised Crime in Canada* (2009)

Scher, J. and W. Marsden, *Angels of Death: Inside the Biker Gangs' Crime Empire* (2006)

Tuan, Y.-F. *Topophilia* (1990)

Virgil, *Aeneid* book VI; *Georgics* IV

Additional texts, specific book chapters and articles may be set for additional reading.

[View reading list on Talis Aspire](#)

Interdisciplinary

This is an optional module on the BA in Liberal Arts course which offers a trans disciplinary learning experience that allows students to develop breadth and depth of knowledge using problem based learning approaches to consider issues from a variety of disciplinary perspectives.

Subject specific skills

Skills of critical analysis attained through analysing the dynamic between how narratives of underworld journeys have been inherited, reconfigured, and reshaped according to changing cultural concerns and how they, in turn, influence and often justify such cultural values.

Transferable skills

Critical analysis

Critical reflection
Advanced cognitive skills
Meta-cognitive skills in approaching complex contemporary problems.

Study

Study time

Type	Required
Seminars	10 sessions of 2 hours (13%)
Other activity	5 hours (3%)
Private study	30 hours (20%)
Assessment	95 hours (63%)
Total	150 hours

Private study description

Students will engage in private study of approx. 3 hours per week to prepare readings, weekly tasks, problem development, and group discussion topics.

Other activity description

Film screenings 2 x 2.5 hours

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

You must pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Assessment group A3

	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
Underworld Challenges (Pop Quizzes)	15%	5 hours	No

Over the course of the term, the module will feature 5 pop quizzes, each composed of 5 multiple-choice questions.

	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
These will be direct and simple in nature, but will test whether or not students have been engaging with the in-class discussion and readings.			
The mark on the lowest of the 5 quizzes will be dropped, and the average (mean) of the top four quizzes will be used for this assessment.			
Creative Group Presentation	25%	25 hours	Yes (extension)
Students will work together in small groups to design their own underworld based on the frameworks and lenses seen in class. The underworld journey can be a video, a podcast, a series of branching scenarios on Moodle, a video game design, a choose-your-own-adventure text-based game or another format discussed with the instructor.			
Students will then present their underworld to the class and critically analyse the motivations for their choices and the impact of their design while receiving encouraging and collaborative feedback from peers.			
Underworld Reflective Diary	20%	15 hours	Yes (extension)
This assignment will involve students writing short formative blog entries (325 words each) throughout the term as formative assessments for ongoing feedback. They will then bring together their best four entries and submit these at the end of the term.			
3000 word essay	40%	50 hours	Yes (extension)
Students use the thematics of the underworld as developed throughout the module to examine a problem of their own choosing (either one seen in the module or one related to their own interests) in significant depth. The topic is open but should be linked to the students' own research interests, along with one of the themes discussed in the module.			
Students will explore the problem they choose by framing the problem within broader temporal and multidisciplinary contexts and conducting independent research.			
Students will have the option of submitting a 250-word abstract and preliminary bibliography (10 sources), but this must be approved by the instructor one month prior to the assessment deadline.			

Feedback on assessment

General feedback for written assignments will be provided via Tabula. Detailed feedback appointments available for all students upon request. Group feedback on the media assignment will be provided via Tabula Feedback on pop quizzes will be provided via moodle.

Availability

Courses

This module is Optional for:

- Year 3 of UVCA-LA99 Undergraduate Liberal Arts
- Available to students from other departments by application
- Available to students from other departments by application
- LA 98 BA Liberal Arts with Intercalated Year
- LA 99 BA Liberal Arts