IP305-15 Posthumous Geographies II: Paradises

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 transdisciplinary module examines conceptions of paradise from a transdisciplinary and cross-temporal lens.

[Module web page](#)

Module aims

How have conceptions of earthly paradises served to legitimize colonial violence, to develop gendered geographies, and to promote music festivals and all-inclusive resorts? In what way do our conceptions of contemplative paradises within influence futuristic conceptions of cloud consciousness?

This transdisciplinary module explores these and other problems. The module employs a combination of approaches from cultural criticism, intellectual history, literary studies, philosophy, marketing, religious studies, and spatial poetics to explore problems such as how specific constructions of paradise spaces may critique the social, cultural, religious, and political values of a particular society; how ideas of profane and sacred spaces shape popular perceptions of ethical behaviour. In other words, this module examines the following broad issue from a variety of

complementary perspectives: 'How do cultural anxieties about finding paradise shape moral and intellectual values, colonial ideologies, intercultural encounters, and built environments.'

We will consider the foundational tropes that underlie and generate such spaces from the biblical account of Eden, across contemplative traditions, through medieval and renaissance conceptions of the earthly paradise, and in contemporary/futuristic reconfigurations. We will examine how such ideas have been instrumental in shaping gendered visions of the earthly paradise, and in turn, the extended impact that such visions have had on the horrors of Western colonialism, on paradisal prisons in chivalric literature, and on philosophical discussions of contemplation as paradise within. We will consider the future of such ideas through an examination of problems concerning cloud consciousness, uploaded minds, and digital afterlives. The module will also feature a critical examination of how such ideas are articulated today in organised sports (Cricket/Baseball), department stores, exotic getaways, and music festivals.

The course will allow students to develop and refine their multidisciplinary analytical skills by engaging with complex
problems that resist simple solutions.

N.B. This module is complemented by 'Posthumous Geographies I: Underworlds', which explores similar problems but focuses instead on underworlds. You may take either module individually or both in succession.

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.

The module progresses via a problem-based exploration of paradises, which begins with the biblical account of Eden and pseudepigraphical accounts of the fall. We then move to late medieval depictions of Eden as either healing spaces or deceptive erotic gardens, seeing how these ideas spurred changes in cartography, influenced the development of orientalism, and impacted upon colonial endeavours. The module then moves to a discussion of paradise within the self, looking at philosophical and contemplative texts from several traditions, before considering transhuman digital afterlives. The final problem focusses on paradise in the modern world: the packaging and selling of the idea of Eden and hopes for transhuman digital afterlives..

Weeks 1-2:
Introduction: Problems in the Nest of Humanity
a. Legends of the Fall
b. "I Want it All:" Ambition and Hubris
c. "Run to the Water:" Healing and Weeping in Eden
Weeks 3-5:
Problem I. Paradise, Empire, and Colonialism
a. Sex, Orientalism, and Paradise as Prison
b. Paradisial Geography and Colonial Violence
Weeks 6-7:
Problem II. Paradise as a State of Mind
a. Mysticism and the Fetish of Contemplation
b. Transhumanism and Uploaded Consciousness: Paradise in the Cloud
Weeks 8-9:

Problem III. 'Two Tickets to Paradise': Selling Eden in Sport, Retail, and Travel Packages
a. Innings: Baseball, National Identity, and Returning Home
b. Paradise and Capitalism: Retail, Travel, and Music Festivals
Week 10: Conclusions and Group Presentations

Learning outcomes

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

- Identify the central narratives of paradisal journeys in Western culture and their reception from the classical world to present day.
- Critically analyse the dynamic between how such narratives have been inherited, reconfigured, and reshaped according to changing cultural concerns and how they, in turn, influence and often justify such cultural values.
- Critically apply spatial theory to the paradises we will examine.
- Engage in weekly critical reflection on how narratives of paradises are articulated and marketed today as part of the `experience economy'.
- Apply advanced cognitive skills to build transdisciplinary knowledge that fosters transformative dialogue between the humanities, the social sciences, and business studies.
- Implement meta-cognitive skills in approaching complex contemporary problems, such as the debates concerning our digital afterlives and cloud consciousness.
- Discuss key theories of spatial poetics in depth, applying these to the paradises we will examine.

Indicative reading list

Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics
Bachelard, G. The Poetics of Space (1958)
Bartlett Giammatti, A. Taking Time for Paradise: Americans and Their Games (1989)
—, The Earthly Paradise and the Renaissance Epic (1966)
Brazeau, B. 'Take me Down to the Paradise City: An Ecocritical Approach to Paradise Spaces in Italian
Renaissance Epic,' in Epic Geographies, ed. T. Duffy (Forthcoming, Palgrave, 2019)
Butterworth, M. L. 'Ritual in the Church of Baseball': Performing Patriotism at the Ballpark," in
Baseball and Rhetorics of Purity: The National Pastime and American Identity During the War on
Terror. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2010, 29-50
Charlesworth, James H. The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha [selections] (2 vols.) (1985)
Columbus, C. The Four Voyages (1492-1504) (ed. Cohen)
Dante, Divine Comedy (Hollander Trans.)
del Castillo, Bernal Diaz, The Conquest of New Spain (1576) (ed. Cohen)
Foucault, M. 'Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias' (1967/1984)
Kozinets, R. 'Can Consumers Escape the Market? Emancipatory Illuminations from Burning Man,' Journal
of Consumer Research 29.1 (2002): 20-38. doi: 10.1086/339919
Lancaster, W. The Department Store: A Social History (1995)
Malcolm, D. Globalizing Cricket (2012)
Milton, J. Paradise Lost

Laine, T. Bodies in Pain: Emotion and the Cinema of Darren Aronofsky (2015)

O'Neill, K. Internet Afterlife: Virtual Salvation in the 21' Century (2016)

Petrarca, F. Petrarch's Lyric Poems (trans. Durling)

Pseudo Dionysius, 'Mystical Theology,' trans. Colm Luibheid (1987)

Salazar, N. Envisioning Eden: Mobilizing Imaginaries in Tourism and Beyond (2013).

Said, E. Orientalism (1978)

Scafi, A. Mapping Paradise: A History of Heaven on Earth (2006)

Tasso, T. The Liberation of Jerusalem (1581) (trans. Wickert)

Thorn, J. Baseball in the Garden of Eden: The Secret History of the Early Game (2011)

Virgil, Aeneid

Wilkes, K. 'From the Landscape to the White Female Body: Representations of Postcolonial Luxury in

Contemporary Tourism Visual Texts,' in Mediating the Tourist Experience: From Brochures to Virtual

Encounters, ed. Jo-Anne Lester and Caroline Scarles (2016), 33-56.

Wright, Louis B. The Colonial Search for a Southern Eden (2006)

2iiek, S. 'From Western Marxism to Western Buddhism,' Cabinet 2 (2001)

Films and Television:

Aronofsky, D. The Fountain (2006)

Brooker, C. Black Mirror:'San Junipero' [TV Series] (2016)

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

[View reading list on Talis Aspire](#)

Research element

This is an optional module on the Liberal Arts course which aims to facilitate the acquisition by students of a range of methods of enquiry from various disciplines and equip them to deploy those skills in research. Research skills are embedded into the teaching strategy of all of the course's modules which, collaboratively, seek to develop and enhance students' capacity to conduct independently original research into a current problem.

Interdisciplinary

This is an optional module on the Liberal Arts course which adopts an interdisciplinary approach spanning the arts, humanities, social and natural sciences fields in order to engage with debates on topical, local national and international issues.

International

This is an optional module on the BA in Liberal Arts course which offers a unique transdisciplinary learning experience allowing students to achieve breadth and depth of knowledge.

Subject specific skills

Complex problem solving skills
Critical thinking

Creativity
People management
Co-coordinating with others
Emotional intelligence
Judgment and decisions making
Service orientation
Negotiation
Cognitive flexibility

Transferable skills

Oral and written communication
Digital literacy
Professional communication
Working with others
Problem solving
Information technology
Numeracy
Research across various disciplines and using a variety of methods
Peer review

Study

Study time

Type	Required
Seminars	10 sessions of 2 hours (13%)
Practical classes	(0%)
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

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

You do not need to pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Students can register for this module without taking any assessment.

Assessment group A1

	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
Creative Group Presentation	25%	25 hours	Yes (extension)

Students will work together in small groups to design their own paradise based on the frameworks and lenses seen in class. The paradise 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 paradise 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.

Paradise Reflection 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 paradise spaces 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.

Paradise 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. 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.

Feedback on assessment

Detailed feedback for written assignments will be provided via Tabula. Group feedback on the presentation will be provided via Tabula. Feedback on online test will be provided on Moodle.

Availability

Courses

This module is Optional for:

- UVCA-LA99 Undergraduate Liberal Arts
  - Year 2 of LA99 Liberal Arts
  - Year 2 of LA92 Liberal Arts with Classics
  - Year 2 of LA73 Liberal Arts with Design Studies
  - Year 2 of LA83 Liberal Arts with Economics
  - Year 2 of LA82 Liberal Arts with Education
  - Year 2 of LA95 Liberal Arts with English
  - Year 2 of LA81 Liberal Arts with Film and Television Studies
  - Year 2 of LA80 Liberal Arts with Global Sustainable Development
  - Year 2 of LA93 Liberal Arts with Global Sustainable Development
  - Year 2 of LA97 Liberal Arts with History
  - Year 2 of LA91 Liberal Arts with Life Sciences
  - Year 2 of LA75 Liberal Arts with Modern Lanaguages and Cultures
  - Year 2 of LA96 Liberal Arts with Philosophy
  - Year 2 of LA94 Liberal Arts with Theatre and Performance Studies
  - Year 3 of LA99 Liberal Arts
  - Year 3 of LA92 Liberal Arts with Classics
  - Year 3 of LA73 Liberal Arts with Design Studies
  - Year 3 of LA83 Liberal Arts with Economics
  - Year 3 of LA82 Liberal Arts with Education
  - Year 3 of LA95 Liberal Arts with English
  - Year 3 of LA81 Liberal Arts with Film and Television Studies
  - Year 3 of LA80 Liberal Arts with Global Sustainable Development
  - Year 3 of LA93 Liberal Arts with Global Sustainable Development
  - Year 3 of LA97 Liberal Arts with History
  - Year 3 of LA91 Liberal Arts with Life Sciences
  - Year 3 of LA75 Liberal Arts with Modern Lanaguages and Cultures
  - Year 3 of LA96 Liberal Arts with Philosophy
  - Year 3 of LA94 Liberal Arts with Theatre and Performance Studies
- UVCA-LA98 Undergraduate Liberal Arts with Intercalated Year
  - Year 4 of LA85 Liberal Arts with Classics with Intercalated Year
  - Year 4 of LA72 Liberal Arts with Design Studies with Intercalated Year
  - Year 4 of LA79 Liberal Arts with Economics with Intercalated Year

- Year 4 of LA78 Liberal Arts with Education with Intercalated Year
  - Year 4 of LA88 Liberal Arts with English with Intercalated Year
  - Year 4 of LA77 Liberal Arts with Film and Television Studies with Intercalated Year
  - Year 4 of LA76 Liberal Arts with Global Sustainable Development with Intercalated Year
  - Year 4 of LA86 Liberal Arts with Global Sustainable Development with Intercalated Year
  - Year 4 of LA90 Liberal Arts with History with Intercalated Year
  - Year 4 of LA98 Liberal Arts with Intercalated Year
  - Year 4 of LA84 Liberal Arts with Life Sciences with Intercalated Year
  - Year 4 of LA74 Liberal Arts with Modern Lanaguages and Cultures with Intercalated Year
  - Year 4 of LA89 Liberal Arts with Philosophy with Intercalated Year
  - Year 4 of LA87 Liberal Arts with Theatre and Performance Studies with Intercalated Year
- Available to students from other departments by application
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