EN3C8-30 Explorations in Critical Theory and Cultural Studies

26/27

Department
English and Comparative Literary Studies
Level
Undergraduate Level 3
Module leader
Nicholas Lawrence
Credit value
30
Module duration
20 weeks
Assessment
100% coursework
Study location
University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

ECTCS is designed to allow sustained and intensive engagement with selected traditions of classic and contemporary
critical theory. The module examines two interrelated topics: (1) the future of work (encompassing theories of
automation, digital labour, social reproduction, Afrofuturism, queer futures and post-capitalism); and (2) the question
of ecological futures (involving readings on climate breakdown, environmental justice, decolonising green movements,
eco-utopias/dystopias and debates around the Anthropocene/ Capitalocene). Each strand is anchored by a literary or
cultural work that extends and fleshes out the implications of the theory covered.

Module web page

Module aims

The format enables students to read in a focused manner across traditions of thought and to map

connections
between writers and their arguments. The module aims to explore ways in which the convergence of capitalist crises
around work and the environment sheds light on the origins and future of each, while feeding urgent projects of
envisioning and mapping alternatives to the status quo. Authors include, among others, Karl Marx, Tithi Bhattacharya,
Kathi Weeks, Kodwo Eshun, Mark Fisher, José Esteban Muñoz, Octavia Butler and Vandana Shiva.

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.

Peter Frase, Four Futures Kathi Weeks, The Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics, and Postwork
Imaginaries Marx, “The Fragment on Machines,” The Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy
Nick Dyer-Witheford, Cyber-Proletariat: Global Labour in the Digital Vortex Aaron Benanav, Automation and the
Future of Work Jason Moore, “Cheap Labor?: Time, Capital, and the Reproduction of Human Nature” Mark Fisher,
Postcapitalist Desire Silvia Federici, “Precarious Labor: A Feminist Viewpoint” Arlie Russell Hochschild, “Exploring the
Managed Heart,” The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling Tithi Bhattacharya, “Mapping Social
Reproduction Theory” Kodwo Eshun, “Further Considerations on Afrofuturism,” New Centennial Review (2003) José
Esteban Muñoz, Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity John Akomfrah, dir. The Last Angel of History
(1996)

Learning outcomes

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

- Improve their ability to critically assess significant tenets and claims within the field of modern critical and cultural theory.
- Better understand and evaluate the argumentative concerns, traditions and methodological approaches within a variety of analytic modes, together with their formal and rhetorical strategies
- Enhance their ability to make abstract connections between individual ideas and conceptual frameworks
- Develop confidence in understanding, interrogating and applying a variety of theoretical positions
- Enrich their awareness of the relation of critical-theoretical arguments to the general study of

literary and cultural works.

Indicative reading list

Reading lists can be found in Talis

Research element

Independent research required for writing essays and creating podcasts/video presentations

Interdisciplinary

Exploration of a variety of theoretical approaches drawn from across the arts and social sciences.

Subject specific skills

- Ability to identify and critically assess significant tenets and claims within the field of modern critical and cultural
  theory;
- Ability to recognise historical contexts shaping critical debates;
- Ability to broaden awareness of the relation of critical-theoretical arguments to the general study of literary and
  cultural works.
- Enhanced confidence in understanding, interrogating and applying a variety of theoretical positions.

Transferable skills

- Ability to work individually as well as a member of a group;
- Ability to construct well supported arguments and express them plausibly in both oral and written forms;
- Ability to recognise the relative values of web-based and multimedia resources;
- Enhanced ability to make abstract connections between individual ideas and conceptual frameworks;
- Enhanced ability to work efficiently and professionally toward stated deadlines

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Study

Study time

Type	Required
Seminars	18 sessions of 1 hour (6%)
Other activity	18 hours (6%)
Private study	264 hours (88%)
Total	300 hours

Private study description

Reading of primary and secondary texts, preparation for seminars

Other activity description

Flexible mixture of lecture/seminar dependent upon syllabus and number of students.

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 A3

	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
Assessment component			
Essay 1 First essay (2500 words)	40%		Yes (extension)
Reassessment component is the same			
Assessment component			
Essay 2 Second essay (2500 words)	40%		Yes (extension)

	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification

Reassessment component is the same

Assessment component

Video presentation	20%	Yes (extension)

Video recording of a presentation on a critical theme or work

Reassessment component is the same

Feedback on assessment

Comments on feedback sheets

Availability

Courses

This module is Core for:

- Year 4 of UENA-QQ00 Undergraduate English & Cultural Studies

This module is Core optional for:

- Year 3 of UENA-QP36 Undergraduate English Literature and Creative Writing
- Year 4 of UENA-QP37 Undergraduate English Literature and Creative Writing with Intercalated Year

This module is Optional for:

- Year 3 of UENA-Q300 Undergraduate English Literature
- Year 3 of UENA-QP36 Undergraduate English Literature and Creative Writing
- Year 4 of UENA-QP37 Undergraduate English Literature and Creative Writing with Intercalated Year
- Year 4 of UENA-Q301 Undergraduate English Literature with Intercalated Year
- Year 3 of UENA-VQ32 Undergraduate English and History
- Year 4 of UENA-VQ33 Undergraduate English and History (with Intercalated year)
- Year 4 of UENA-QW35 Undergraduate English and Theatre Studies with Intercalated Year
- Year 4 of UFIA-QW26 Undergraduate Film and Literature (with Study Abroad)

This module is Core option list A for:

- Year 3 of UPHA-VQ52 Undergraduate Philosophy, Literature and Classics

This module is Option list A for:

- Year 3 of UCXA-QQ37 Undergraduate Classics and English
- Year 3 of UFIA-QW25 Undergraduate Film and Literature

This module is Option list B for:

- Year 3 of UTHA-QW34 Undergraduate English and Theatre Studies

This module is Option list C for:

- Year 3 of UPHA-VQ72 Undergraduate Philosophy and Literature