

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

ENGLISH 6503H:
PAIN: THEORY, CRITICISM, AND LITERATURE OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Tuesday 7 9pm
7 Kings' College Circle, Room 2001

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Office: Medical Arts Building (Bloor and St. George), Room 333
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Office Hours: Thursday 9am 12pm

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After great pain, a formal feeling comes--
The Nerves sit ceremonious, like Tombs--
The stiff Heart, questions--was it He, that bore,
And yesterday, or Centuries before?

The Feet, mechanical, go round--
Of Ground, or Air, or Ought--
A Wooden way
Regardless grown,
A Quartz contentment, like a stone -

This is the Hour of Lead--
Remembered, if outlived,
As Freezing persons, recollect the Snow--
First- Chill -then Stupor--then the letting go--

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Pain--has an Element of Blank--
It cannot recollect
When it begun - or if there were
A time when it was not--

It has no Future -but itself
Its Infinite contain
Its Past--enlightened to perceive
New Periods--of Pain.

- Emily Dickinson

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Feelings and bodies are hurt, and have been hurt for quite some time. But if, as Frederic Jameson argues, "history is what hurts," the twentieth century is particularly attuned to understanding its own history of pain. The century's critical focus on the reaction to injuries, wounds, traumas, disappointment, failure, and heartbreak became a dominant reading protocol; indeed, in many ways, the articulation of "pain" in theory, criticism, and literature became a bit of an obsession. In this course, we'll chart a twentieth century

intellectual history of pain in order to figure out what is at stake in making pain such a dominant theoretical and critical concept. We'll explore the ways that psychoanalysis, Marxism, continental philosophy, deconstruction, identity politics, critical race theory, feminism, queer theory, and postcolonial theory all rely on a variety of conceptions of "pain" when creating radical analyses of the post Age of Reason person, or "subject." The course will be primarily theoretical and philosophical, but each member of the seminar will also select a major literary text to work on throughout the term, using the literary to frame the vibrant conversations of crucial theoretical and philosophical thinkers.

REQUIRED READING:

A Substantial Course Packet, with theoretical and philosophical essays.

(Available for purchase at the Toronto Women's Bookstore)

Leopold von Sacher Masoch, *Venus in Furs*

Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*

Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*

Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*

Cathy Caruth, Ed., *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*

METHODS OF EVALUATION:

Active, lively seminar participation, with the hope of learning skills geared toward contributing to an intellectual community and conversation beyond the seminar room (30%). You must attend every meeting of the course. Included under the "participation" mark, you must also serve as an official discussant for one of the seminars. You must also produce one conference paper style class presentation on your research (30%). One twenty page research paper, clearly demonstrating the following: a) knowledge of a field of primary and secondary sources; b) the intellectual questions that make the writing of the paper necessary; c) writing and argumentation that has publishable promise (40%). I do not accept late work, unless arranged well in advance of the deadline, or if dire emergencies occur (but you must discuss that emergency with the Director of Graduate Studies, and have the DGS contact me first). I will mark the work according to the guidelines outlined in the *SGS Handbook*

RESEARCH PAPER:

Immediately, you must choose one major piece of literature, selected on the basis of what would be the most essential primary text for you to use as your "case study" of pain. In all likelihood, it should be a work that corresponds with your intended field of expertise, or it could be an opportunity to indulge something outside of your interests, helping you gain greater "coverage." Nevertheless, the piece of literature will be the basis of much of your work inside and outside of the seminar, culminating in an excellent presentation and an excellent research paper.

URGENT NOTE ON EMAIL:

Although EXTREMELY convenient, email poses unique problems for busy academics (you and me). I would prefer not to spend three hours a day answering student emails, so I request that you choose, more often than not, to contact me in office hours, in class, or by telephone. Only in the most urgent cases can you email me, although extension requests are better made in person, and you must understand that there might be a time delay in a response. Often there are issues of tone, of expectation, of entitlement, of disrespect that occur during the email event, so I'd prefer to have more direct and human contact when negotiating various issues surrounding the course and the academy at large.

URGENT NOTE ON PLAGIARISM:

I take seriously the academic crime of plagiarism, and according to the *SGS Handbook*, I am obligated to address the issue, which could result in your failure of the course, as well as dismissal from the graduate program. Advanced degrees in the academy require responsible and ethical work, and you must abide by this code of conduct. Do not steal work not from published sources, not from Internet sources. Cite all of your sources, and write all your own papers. Do not be tempted. And if you are confused about what constitutes plagiarism, please talk to me.

CLASS SCHEDULE:

(SUBJECT TO REVISION)

WEEK ONE (14 SEP): COURSE INTRODUCTIONS—"OUCH"

WEEK TWO (21 SEP): THE BODY IN PAIN

Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).
Maurice Merleau Ponty, "The Intertwining -The Chiasm" (Packet)
Raymond Williams, "Structures of Feeling," from *Marxism and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

WEEK THREE (28 SEP): SOME PAINFUL THEORIES

Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," from *The Standard Edition of The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Vol. XIV* edited and translated by James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1957). (Packet)
Jacques Lacan, "Tuque and Automaton," from *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis* translated by Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1981). (Packet)
Michel Foucault, "The Body of the Condemned," from *Discipline and Punish* translated by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1995). (Packet)
Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *Language, Counter Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews* edited by Donald F. Bouchard and translated by Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977). (Packet)

WEEK FOUR (Oct. 5): PAIN'S EXTRAORDINARY INFLUENCE

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, "What is a Minor Literature?" from *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* translated by Dana Polan (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1986). (Packet)
Slavoj Zizek, "How Did Marx Invent the Symptom?" from *Mapping Ideology* (London and New York: Verso, 1994). (Packet)
Cathy Caruth, "Introductions"; Shoshanna Felman, "Education and Crisis, or the Vicissitudes of Teaching"; Dori Laub, "Truth and Testimony: The Process and the Struggle"; Bessel A. Van Der Kolk and Onno Van Der hart, "The Intrusive Past: The Flexibility of Memory and the Engraving of Trauma" from *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*

WEEK FIVE (12 OCT): PAIN'S EROTICS

Leopold von Sacher Masoch, *Venus in Furs*
Gilles Deleuze, *Masochism*

WEEK SIX (19 OCT): PAINS EXTREME POLITICS

Lauren Berlant, "The Subject of True Feeling: Pain, Privacy, and Politics," in *Feminist Consequences: Theory for a New Century* edited by Elisabeth Bronfen and Misha Kavka (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001). (Packet)
Wendy Brown, "Wounded Attachments," from *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995).
Mark Seltzer, "Wound Culture," from *Serial Killers: Death and Life in America's Wound Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

WEEK SEVEN (26 OCT): PAIN, RACE, AND ETHNICITY

Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," in *Black, White, and in Color* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003). (Packet)
Edouard Glissant, selections from *Poetics of Relation* translated by Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1997). (Packet)
W. E. B. Du Bois, selections from *The Souls of Black Folk*, edited by Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Terri Hume Oliver (New York: Norton, 1999). (Packet)
Homi K. Bhabha, "The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination, and the Discourse of Colonialism," from *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994). (Packet)
Mary Pat Brady, "Double Crossing la Frontera Nomada," from *Extinct Lands, Temporal Geographies: Chicana Literature and the Urgency of Space* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002).

WEEK EIGHT (2 Nov): THE PAIN OF FEMINISM, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY

Julia Kristeva, "Suffering and Horror," from *Powers of Horror* translated by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).
Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Feminism and Critical Theory," from *The Spivak Reader* edited by Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean (New York: Routledge, 1996).
Judith Butler, "Melancholy Gender/Refused Identification," from *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997).
Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "A Poem in Being Written," from *Tendencies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993).
Ann Cvetkovich, "Sexual Trauma/Queer Memory: Incest, Lesbianism, and Therapeutic Culture" from *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).

WEEK NINE (9 Nov): PAIN AND THE RULE OF BARE LIFE

Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*

WEEK TEN (18 Nov): WAR, ATROCITY, AND OTHER PAINFUL EVENTS

Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*

We'll also devote time to reading/ discussion overspill that must wrap up before we start the conferences

WEEK ELEVEN (23 Nov): CLASS CONFERENCE

WEEK TWELVE (30 Nov): CLASS CONFERENCE

WEEK THIRTEEN (7 DECEMBER): CONFERENCE; FINAL CLASS

DUE TO THE LARGE ENROLLMENT, WE'LL NEED TO ARRANGE ONE FUTHER BLOCK OF TIME TO COMPLETE THE CONFERENCE.

PAPERS DUE 14 DECEMBER