

L363-TH-01

Theory of the Everyday

MICA - Spring 2010

Tues. 1-3:45 PM

Bunting 460

Course Syllabus



Pitcher

Georges Braque, "Still Life with Pitcher"

Instructor:
Michael Sizer

Office: Bunting
413

Office Hours: M
12:30-1:30; T
12-1 or by
appointment

Phone (o): 410-
225-4276

Phone (h): 410-
467-0716

email:
msizer@mica.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION & GOALS:

The great hero of the 20th and 21st centuries has been the Everyman, the Average Joe or Plain Jane whose boring, normal life gets somehow instilled with profound significance. This is not an accident, as modern life has been structured and homogenized while it has also cultivated individualism and self-consciousness. Historians and theorists such as Michel de Certeau and Henri Lefebvre have articulated the concept of the 'Everyday' to describe a fundamental category of human (especially modern) existence: the repeating, patterned, highly structured, anomic and anonymous modern life. This course will study theories of the Everyday, important historical concepts of the analysis of Daily Life, and literature, art and media that revolve around the Everyday and employ it as a basis for normative existence. Readings will include de Certeau, Lefebvre, Virginia Woolf's *Mrs.*

Dalloway, Ionesco, Freud, Elias, studies of consumer politics and products, the feminist concept of the Personal is Political, still life paintings, and other materials. The final project will be an applied analysis of some aspect of Everyday life, read through the course materials. This course will provide students with a new way of looking at their everyday existence, and thus new ways of seeing in general.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING

This course will emphasize **class and small group discussion**. Your participation will be evaluated not only based on the quality of your comments in open discussion, but also on alertness, energy, and preparedness. Various organized activities will also provide an opportunity to participate in class ways other than in large- or small-group discussion. **Class participation is crucial to this course, constituting 25% of your grade.**

The **readings** are vital, as they will form the basis of our discussions and activities. The amount of readings varies, but at times is quite heavy. It is important not only that you do the readings thoroughly, but that you **bring them with you to class**, either printed out or on your computer screen (see below for comments on bringing laptops to class), to use as a basis for discussion. **Failure to do so will result in a grade of 'F' for your class participation for that day.**

There are several **short, informal assignments** in this class. They are assigned in a way that gives you some flexibility with your busy schedules. You will note that on the assignments section of the syllabus there are listed in several places (OPTION A, OPTION B, OPTION C): each student must do one from each of those categories (so, one from OPTION A, one from OPTION B, and one from OPTION C). Note that several of these assignments are group assignments. **Each of these 3 assignments will be worth 10% of your grade.**

Another small assignment is your performance of and reflection on an **Everyday Thought Experiment** as taken from Roger-Pol Droit's *Astonish Yourself: 101 Experiments in the Philosophy of Everyday Life* (2003). Towards the beginning of the semester, each student will draw 2 of Droit's experiments out of a hat, and will have several weeks to perform them. A reflective, informal write-up of the experience will be due in the second-to-last week of the class. **This assignment will be worth 10% of your grade.**

Just before the mid-term, you will have to write an **essay (2-4 pp.) discussing Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925)** and how it relates to concepts we have encountered in class. **This paper is worth 15% of your grade.**

The **final project in this class is to perform a field-study/ethnography** on some aspect (an object, ritual, group, person, space, activity, performance, comic book, cultural product, advertisement, etc.) in Everyday experience, and to write about this experience

in a **brief (4-6 pp.) paper**, applying some of the theories we encounter in class to your object of study. The paper can be **accompanied by photos, recordings, and any other documentation** relevant to the material at hand. Students will be expected to present the outlines of their project in the final meeting of the semester. **This final project will be worth 20% of your overall grade.**

LATE ASSIGNMENT POLICY

NOTE: Computer submissions of paper assignments are not allowed.

It is very **difficult to accommodate late papers and assignments** the way the semester is structured. It also defeats the purpose to hand in papers after a particular text or issue has been discussed in class, and **some assignments will not be accepted late**. In general, late papers will be marked down 1 grade (A to A-, B+ to B, etc.) for every day after the due date the paper is turned in, **starting with the end of class time** (so if you turn something in Tuesday afternoon after class, it will be considered a day late). **The final paper cannot be late**, as grades are due very soon after the final class.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

There are only 15 meetings in the semester and so we have to make the most of them. Any unexcused absence beyond 1 will result in a decrease of two grades from class participation (A to B+, B- to C, etc.). 2 late arrivals (> 10 minutes) equals 1 absence.

ADA Compliance Statement

Learning Resource Center ADA Compliance Statement Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss specific needs. Please contact the Learning Resource Center at 410-225-2416, in Bunting 458, to establish eligibility and coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: <http://www.mica.edu/LRC>

Health and Safety Compliance

From the Office of Environmental Health and Safety (EHS)

The Office works to provide EHS support for all members of the MICA community. The primary goal of the Office is to be proactive in establishing a culture of safety in which each member of the community shares ownership responsibility that allows each person to be involved in maintaining a healthy work and studying environment. EHS uses several methods to achieve this objective.

First, the EHS office looks at the totality of the EHS requirements by combining campus needs with state and federal requirements and clearly communicating the shared policies and procedures. Second, EHS identifies training needs and develops guidelines for the use of equipment, material and procedures. Third, we ensure compliance with policies through evaluations, inspections, and committees.

It is the responsibility of faculty and students to understand health and safety policies relevant to their individual activities and to review MICA's Emergency Action Plan, as well as to participate in training, drills, etc. It is also each faculty member's responsibility to coordinate with the EHS Office to ensure that all risks associated with their class activities are identified and to assure that their respective classroom procedures mirror the EHS and Academic Department guidelines. Each of the Academic Department's also publish EHS procedures and policies such as a dress code, the use of personal protective equipment, fire safety, training, and how to properly dispose of chemical waste. Each of these policies and procedures must be followed by all students and faculty. Most importantly, it is the responsibility of the faculty to review, test, and assess each

student's awareness of basic safety procedures, such as evacuation routes, use of chemicals, fire prevention, and all other guidelines posted by the Environmental Health and Safety Office, (e.g., smoking policy, independent studio policies, pet policy, disposing of hazardous and chemical waste, etc).

To become a member of the Faculty EHS Committee or for any questions relating to EHS, please contact Denelle Bowser, EHS Manager, at dbowser@mica.edu or by calling 410.462.7593. You can also visit the department online at www.mica.edu/ehs

H1N1 Pandemic Information

From the Office of Environmental Health and Safety (EHS)

What to do if I get sick?

If you are sick consider the following:

- *Limit contact with other people as much as possible. DO NOT GO TO CLASS! Seek medical attention at Mount Royal Medial Assoc. (410) 225-8855 but please call ahead*
- *Students who are sick should self-isolate for at least 24 hours after any fever is gone.*
- *Make sure to get plenty of rest and drink clear fluids to keep from being dehydrated*
- *Avoid normal activities including work, school, travel, shopping, social events, and public gatherings*

Reporting Procedures

- *Contact the Office of Student Affairs at 410-225-2422 who will assist with plans for self-isolation, arranging for meals, and any other necessary support*
- *Contact any faculty whose class you anticipate missing and inform them of your illness. Work with them to make arrangements for catching up on any missed work. If you have difficulty reaching your faculty or if your illness lingers to the point where you will miss two or more of any one class contact the Office of Student Affairs.*

CLASSROOM LAPTOP & CELLPHONE POLICY

Because students in previous classes have abused the privilege of having laptops in class, I am going to set limits on their use in our class. **If there are no online or Blackboard readings, an open laptop is not permitted in class, unless you receive special permission from me to take notes on it or for some other purpose.** If there are online or Blackboard readings, you can have the computer open. However, if you are observed using the computer for anything not related to classroom activity, **you will get an F for the day and your laptop privileges will be revoked.**

Cellphones must be **stowed away and turned off** for the duration of the class.

READINGS

Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*.

All other course readings will be available online or accessible on Blackboard.

COURSE SCHEDULE: TOPICS & ASSIGNMENTS- Subject to change if necessary.

Assignments are listed the day they are due, not the day they are assigned.

Week 1 - 1/19: Introduction to course

- READ: In class, William Carlos Williams, “January Morning”
<http://www.theotherpages.org/poems/2001/williams0102.html>

Week 2 - 1/26: What is the Day?

Assignments

- READ: Kevin Birth, “Time and Consciousness” (15 pp.)
- READ: John Natalini, “The Human Body as a Biological Clock” from *The American Journal of Nursing* 77 #7 (Jul. 1977): pp. 1130-1132.
- READ: Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, vol. 1, selections from “Forward,” (29-42; 83-99).
- OPTION A: WRITE: Your Schedule According to an Alternate Time Regime. Imagine your routines and doings not according to the measurements of clock time (hours and minutes), but according to some alternate mode of time measurement of your invention, and compose a schedule/draw a diagram and write an essay (2-3 pp. altogether max.) illustrating this new consciousness of time.

Week 3 - 2/2: Critique of Everyday Life

Assignments

- READ: Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, vol. I, “Notes Written One Sunday in the French Countryside” and “What is Possible” (approx. 50 pp.)
- OPTION A: WRITE: A short (1-2 pp.) informal reaction paper to Lefebvre.

Week 4 - 2/9: Just Beneath the Surface: Freud & Elias

Assignments

- READ: Sigmund Freud, “Parapraxes (1915-7)”
- READ: Siegfried Kracauer, “Boredom (1924)”
- READ: Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process* (1939)

Week 5 - 2/16: 1950s Culture of Consumption

Assignments

- READ: Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (1995), “Introduction” and “Hygiene and Modernization,” pp. 1-14; 71-122.
- READ: Karal Ann Marling, “Nixon in Moscow: the Kitchen Debate (1994)” (approx. 8 pp.)
- OPTION A: WRITE: A short (1-2 pp.) informal reaction paper to Ross.

Week 6 - 2/23: Unsettling the Quiet

Assignments

- READ: Eugène Ionesco 1-act play, *Victims of Duty* (1953)
- OPTION B: ACT: With 2 other classmates, prepare to act out a scene from *Victims of Duty* in class.

Week 7 - 3/2: Cleo from 5 to 7

Assignments

- READ: Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1980), “General Introduction,” pp. xi-xxiv.
- WATCH: In class today we will be watching Agnès Varda’s New Wave movie classic “Cléo de 5 à 7 (1962)” with discussion to follow.

Week 8 - 3/9: “To Go Deeper, Beneath What People Said”: Virginia Woolf

Assignments

- READ: Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925)
- WRITE: A short (2-4 pp.) paper on *Mrs. Dalloway*, connecting the book’s themes to those of the Everyday as discussed so far in class.

***** SPRING BREAK: NO CLASS 3/16 *****

Week 9 - 3/23: The Personal is Political: Feminism & the Everyday

Assignments

- READ: Carol Hanisch, “The Personal is Political (1969)” at <http://www.carolhanisch.org/CHwritings/PIP.html>
- READ: Betty Friedan, “The Problem that has No Name (1963)”
- READ: Susan Willis, *A Primer for Daily Life* (1991) “Playing House: Domestic Labor as Culture,” pp. 86-107.
- READ: Luce Giard, “Doing Cooking (1980)”
- WATCH (if available): In class today we will watch Judy Chicago, “Womanhouse (1972)” with discussion to follow.

Week 10 - 3/30: Revolt against Everyday Life: the Situationists

Assignments

- READ: Guy Debord, “Perspectives for Conscious Changes in Everyday Life (1961)” from the *Situationist International Anthology*, pp. 90-99.
- READ: Raoul Vaneigem, *Revolution of Everyday Life* (1965), pp. 5-11; 236-277.

- **OPTION B: OCCUPY:** Meet in person in a public space where there are other people (not your dorm rooms or studios - preferably a cafe, hallway of a downtown building, sidewalk bench, bar, Penn Station, etc.) with at least 2 others from the class and discuss the readings intensely for at least 45 minutes. One person should serve as informal scribe/memorialist. The group shall be asked to present (informally) the contours of the discussion, as well as the effects of the surroundings on your conversation. (If logistical issues prevent you from coordinating this with your colleagues, you may choose to read alone in a public place, preferably in a seat near a window).

Week 11 - 4/6: Power and Resistance in the Global Context

Assignments

- **READ:** James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (1985), "Normal Exploitation, Normal Resistance," pp. 28-47.
- **READ:** Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977), short selection on the habitus (approx. 10 pp.)
- **READ:** Xiaobing Tang, "The Anxiety of Everyday Life in Post-Revolutionary China (2000)" (approx. 11 pp.)
- **OPTION C: OBSERVE/REFLECT:** Observe or reflect on some specific manifestation of the sort of "everyday forms of resistance" described by Scott that operate in the MICA or Baltimore communities, and then write a short (1-2 pp.) informal piece on this.

Week 12 - 4/13: Ethnographies

Assignments

- **READ:** Erving Goffman, selections from *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959) (approx. 10 pp.)
- **READ:** Excerpts from Kathleen Stewart, *Ordinary Affects* (2007).
- **READ (Recommended but optional):** Harold Garfinkel, *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (1967), pp. 1-75.
- **OPTION C: ANALYZE:** Analyze your own or someone close to you's "presentation of self" in an everyday conversation, webpage/status update, classroom and discuss your findings in a short (1-2 pp.) informal essay.

Week 13 - 4/20: Things in Time

Assignments

- **READ:** Benjamin Moser, "Art is: the Audacity of Still Life" from *Harper's Magazine* (Feb. 2009):
<http://www.harpers.org/media/pages/2009/02/pdf/HarpersMagazine-2009-02-0082385.pdf>

- READ: Georges Perec, *Thoughts of Sorts* (1985), “Notes on the Objects to be Found on my Desk” (approx. 7 pp.)
- READ: Steven Connor, “Rough Magic: Bags (2000)” (approx. 5 pp.)
- LISTEN: Bob Dylan & the Band, “Clothesline Saga (1967),” Bobbie Gentry, “Ode to Billie Joe (1967),” and Talking Heads, “Once in a Lifetime (1980).” Also recommended (particularly for those doing the assignment option below): Moody Blues, *Days of Future Passed* (1967 album - if you have the deluxe version just listen to the 1st 7 songs, ending with “Nights in White Satin”); Beatles, *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band* (1967 album); or The Streets, *A Grand Don’t Come for Free* (2004).
- OPTION C: EXPERIENCE: In a group of at least 3 other classmates, attend or host a listening party/discussion circle in your home where you read and/or listen to the above materials together, followed by a free-flowing, casual discussion over food, drinks, etc. about how they connect to the theme of the Everyday. Within this group there should be at least 1 of the following: 1) host/hostess, who will arrange the space and provide food and drinks; 2) discussion leader, who will lead discussion; 3) recorder, who will document the gathering with pictures and/or take rough notes.

Week 14 - 4/27: Reading Things

Assignments

- READ: Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects* (1968), “Structures of Interior Design” (approx. 10 pp.)
- READ: Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (1957), “Operation Margarine,” “Toys,” “The New Citroën,” and “Plastic” (approx. 15 pp.)
- READ: Douglas Holt & Craig Thompson, “Man-of-Action Heroes: the Pursuit of Heroic Masculinity in Everyday Consumption” from the *Journal of Consumer Research* (2004) (approx. 17 pp.)
- EXPERIMENT: Perform one or both of your assigned everyday experiments from Roger-Pol Droit’s *Astonish Yourself: 101 Experiments in the Philosophy of Everyday Life* (2003) and WRITE a 1-2 pp. personal discussion of the experience.

Week 15 - 5/4: Last Class, Field Studies/Ethnographies due.

Assignments

- PRESENT: All students should be ready to present briefly their field study/ethnography of the Everyday topics and findings.
- ALL FINAL PAPERS DUE BY END OF CLASS TIME