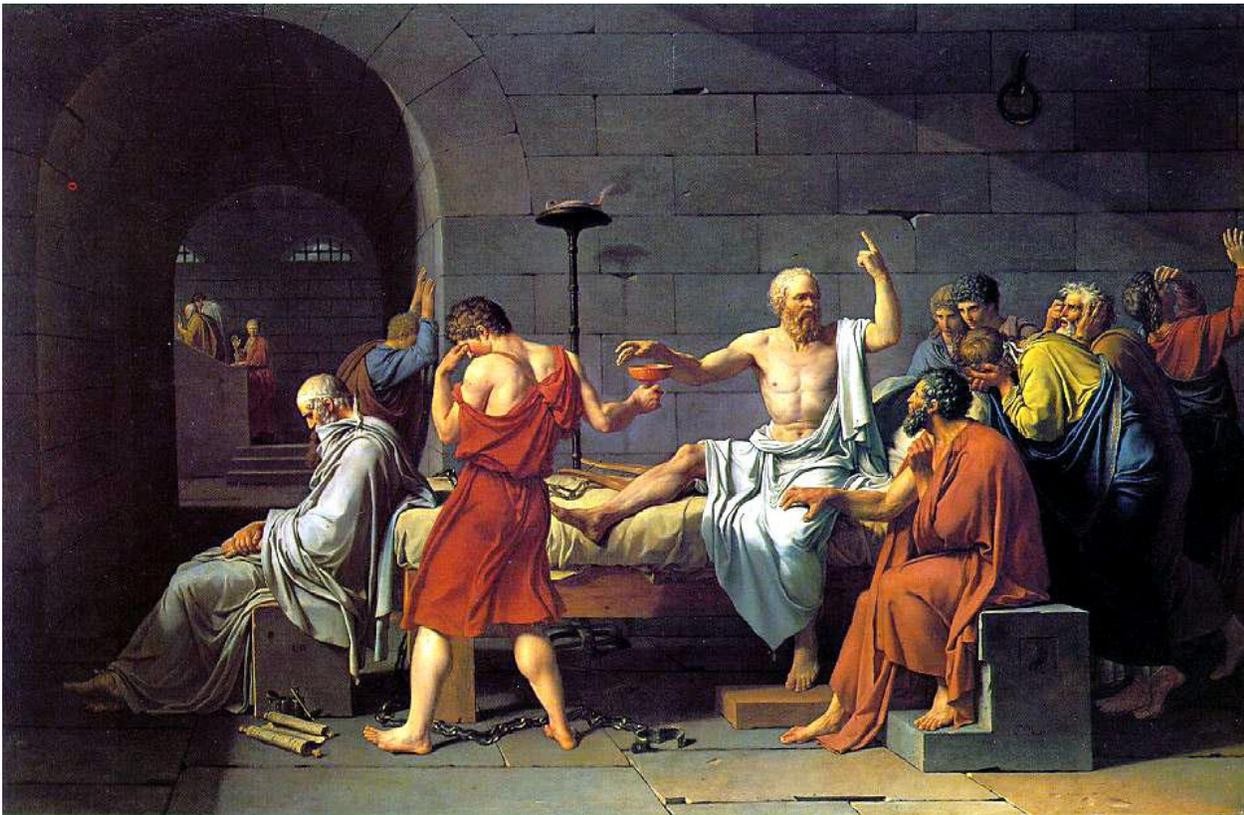


Autumn Term 2013

**Department of English and Cultural Studies
McMaster University**

**English and Cultural Studies 3Q03E
Cultural Studies and Critical Theory 3Q03E**

**History of Critical Theory:
Representation, Education, and the Question of the Just Community**



Death of Socrates, by Jacques-Louis David (1787)

Instructor: Dr. David L. Clark

E-mail: dclark@mcmaster.ca
Office Hours: Monday 4:30-5:30 pm, CNH 210
Website: <http://www.humanities.mcmaster.ca/~dclark/index.html>
Coursepage: <http://www.humanities.mcmaster.ca/~dclark/courses.html>

Teaching Assistant: Mr. Andrew Reszityk
E-mail: reszita@mcmaster.ca
Office Hours: Monday 5:30-6:30 pm, CNH 203

Class time: Monday 7:00-10:00 pm
Classroom: TSH B106

Course Description:

Since the time of Greek antiquity, critical understandings of “representation”—especially fictions, *mimeses* (“imitations”), media, rhetoric, drama, art, and literature—have been the charged cultural location of a range of problems, anxieties, desires, and questions. How is the making of fictions and the judgement or experience of fictions different from other human activities? What are the criteria by which we determine what is beautiful or deleterious in art or mimesis? What does it mean to be *educable*, and what role do representations and discourses play in teaching and being taught? Who are “we”? I.e., who are those for whom representations, discourses, and mimesis *matter*? Who are in a position to create, manage, teach, take up, or refuse representations, especially representations that are authoritative, powerful, and sovereign? What are the possibilities and risks that come with the creation, judgment, and reception of fictions and other un-real representations? What is the relationship between representation, knowledge, and our obligations towards each other?

Two queries in particular knit together the diverse strands of this course:

1. What roles do representations and *mimeses* play in teaching both individuals and communities how to govern and how to be governed?
2. How is the question of justice and ethical responsibility related to the question of representation and education?

This course addresses these large and largely unanswerable questions through an examination of how others thinkers have asked them from the time of Plato and Aristotle to the end of the eighteenth century, i.e., to the dawn of the age that is recognizably “ours.” In addition to Plato and Aristotle we will consider work by Sir Philip Sidney, John Locke, Immanuel Kant, and Friedrich Schiller. Special emphasis will be given to the historical and cultural circumstances in which these thinkers wrote, and to the fact that the question of representation and education has been consistently raised in the context of the more fundamental question of the creation of a just community and a civil society. How does one conduct oneself ethically and critically within a society? What has representation, discourse, mimesis, and art to do with that? What are the relationships between creating art and literature, on the one hand, and living a life of critical dissent and non-conformity, on the other?

Among today’s most pressing social problems is the complex relationship between the discourses and frameworks at work in culture, the question of education, and the possibility of creating more just communities. Many of you will have taken courses in critical theory and cultural studies in which these sorts of problems were the subject of discussion and debate. In what ways is society a vast classroom or teaching-machine, its discourses schooling our hopes and fears, forming and deforming our knowledge and feelings? Is it possible to teach and learn “against the grain,” i.e., to marshal the resources of representation in general (words, images, and ideas) and fiction-making in particular to activate critical practices and a dissenting intelligence in the midst of that “education”? The wager of this course is that it helps to know that these are questions that aren’t entirely new; indeed, queries about education, justice, and representation have a history going all the way back to the time of Plato. This course investigates elements of that richly suggestive past to better understand the history of our vexed and vexing present.

Required Texts:

Coursepack for English and Cultural Studies 3Q03 / Cultural Studies and Critical Theory 3Q03E (available in *Titles*).

Film (screened in class): *Perpetual Peace* [2011] (Dir. Laura Hanna, Alexandra Lerman, and Aaron Levy)

You are also responsible for all materials posted on the “Study Questions and Course Blog” (see below) and encouraged to consult the Discussion thread hosted by Andrew on Avenue to Learn.

Course Assignments and Weighting:

Midterm examination:	20%	(Written in class, 50 minutes.)
Essay (10 pages / 2500 words):	45%	(Essay assignment will be circulated and posted on the course-page.)
Final Examination (2 hours):	35%	(Written during the examination period at the end of the semester.)

Provisional Lecture Schedule

September	9	Prefatory Remarks
	16	Plato, selections from <i>The Republic</i> (Book 2, 3, 10)
	23	Plato, selections from <i>The Republic</i> (Book 2, 3, 10) + selection from <i>Phaedrus</i>
	30	Aristotle, <i>Poetics</i>
October	7	Aristotle, <i>Poetics</i>
	14	Thanksgiving (no classes)
	21	Midterm Examination (no class after examination)
	28	Sidney, <i>Apology for Poesy</i>
November	4	Sidney, <i>Apology for Poesy</i>
	11	Locke, selections from <i>Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i>
	18	Locke, selections from <i>Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i>
	25	Kant, <i>Toward Perpetual Peace</i>
December	2	Kant, <i>Toward Perpetual Peace</i>

Other Course Matters

Note: Course materials are *not* posted on *Avenue to Learn*. All course-related materials that require posting will be found on the course-page that has been created for this course on Dr. Clark’s website:

<http://www.humanities.mcmaster.ca/~dclark/courses.html>.

As the course unfolds, these materials will include:

1. [Course Outline](#)
2. [Study Questions and Course Blog](#)
3. [Midterm Examination Format and Study Tips](#)
4. [Essay Question Assignment](#)
5. [Midterm Examination Debrief](#)
6. [Online Course Evaluation Form Link](#)
7. [Final Examination Format and Study Tips](#)

Central to the course is an on-going document updated regularly on the course-page, “Study Questions and Course Blog.” Here students will find study questions derived from the content of lectures—i.e., not summaries of the lectures but questions to help you retain key concepts, details, and arguments made in the lectures. The blog will also include remarks that extend and supplement some of the points that are raised in class. Students are strongly advised to follow this document as the course unfolds, and to put it to good use.

It is purpose-built to help you grasp the course materials, explore new questions arising from those materials, and to prepare for the course assignments (mid-term, essay, final examination).

Andrew Reszityk, the course Teaching Assistant, will be offering several scheduled on-line Discussion Sessions on Avenue-to-Learn. Here you will be able to discuss the course material and to share questions about that material with Andrew and with your classmates.

Students are warmly encouraged to liberate this course from the confines of the Tuesday night classroom, and to form independent study groups to discuss and debate the course materials and questions.

Students interested in considering my evolving view of undergraduate education and the role of the university are encouraged to consider "Thought & Theory," an unfolding reflection on teaching and learning posted on my website, <http://www.humanities.mcmaster.ca/~dclark/interviewBtL.html> . See too a brief interview at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aIBSM7Nv4mY>

Essay Due Date and Late Submission Policy:

There are two due-dates for your final essay. You may choose either date. Essays are initially due in class, in person, at start of class, Monday 18 November 2013. Essays submitted at this point will receive a full marking commentary. Essays handed in after 18 November 2013 will be graded exactly the same but without comment. Essays may be submitted in class up to 2 December 2013, the last day of the course. No essays will be accepted after this point. A grade of zero/F will therefore be assigned to essays not submitted to me by 7 pm, 2 December 2013. No essays can be accepted as e-mail attachments or dropped off with the Department of English and Cultural Studies.

If you are a smoker, please ensure that you print your essay in a smoke-free environment.

Twelve Important Notes About the Course

1. The importance of the final essay:

Note the weight given to the final essay--worth 45% of the final mark. Why that weighting? My position is that students in third-year should be given every opportunity to demonstrate their abilities to write and think in an expansive way that only an essay can afford. The midterm and the final examination are important ways to measure your understanding of the material, to be sure, but those sorts of assignments test quite different strengths than writing an essay. Critical theory is largely about rigorous analysis and clear-minded argumentation; moreover, it is about taking the time to parse and explore challenging questions and difficult knowledge. There is no better place to affirm those strengths and to demonstrate them than in a carefully written essay.

Once the course is underway, you'll be given some suggested essay topics, plus encouraged to develop an essay topic of your own. Andrew and I will be available to help you craft your essay.

2. Class cancellations:

In the unlikely event of a class cancellation, students will be notified on the Department of English and Cultural Studies website and on Dr. Clark's website. The url's for those websites are, respectively:

<http://www.humanities.mcmaster.ca/~english/>

<http://www.humanities.mcmaster.ca/~dclark/courses.html>

Students will also be notified via their McMaster University email address through Avenue-to-Learn.

3. Class attendance, preparedness, and intellectual development:

Although there is no roll-call, attendance in lectures is mandatory. Be aware that missing one evening class is equivalent to forfeiting a full week of the course---a loss that will be *very* difficult to make up. Uneven class attendance will have a profound impact on your ability to thrive in the course and to do well in the term work and in the final examination. Make every possible arrangement to ensure that you are able to attend lectures. If you must miss class, arrange to borrow good notes from others. Ensure that you come fully prepared for lectures by reading the assigned materials with care.

Read the course materials prior to the lecture that takes those materials up. It's perfectly okay not to understand everything that you are reading. The texts we are reading together are difficult because the questions that they ask and the problems that they explore are difficult. *You aren't meant to get everything, much less get it all at once.* Be patient, but curious. Return to the assigned materials, weaving together, step by step, what you do understand. Go back to the texts after class, connecting what was said in lecture to what you are reading. Like engaging anything that matters, understanding critical theory takes time.

Don't forget to take notes during the lectures. You'll need those notes to do well in the course, so taking lots of them in class is a very good habit to learn. If you don't take notes, or many notes, ask yourself why? Is *not* taking notes enriching your education or compromising it?

Bring assigned materials to class. I will be referring to them throughout the course. Having the course materials in front of you will go a long way towards helping you understand those materials.

Why not use this term to make a concerted effort to *develop and mature* as a thinker, reader, and writer? No undergraduate student I have ever met is doomed to stay in one place, intellectually speaking. Far from it. Every student can strengthen, complicate, and improve her or his school-work . . . and although a one-term evening course goes by pretty quickly, it remains an auspicious and generative place to realize that kind of change if you put your mind to it. After all, the critical theories of the sort that we study on this course treat life as a complex scene of transformation and self-transformation. Movement, not stasis, is their call-sign. Are you up to that sort of change in your own educational practices? For example, why not use the course to determine precisely how you can improve your essay-writing and exam-writing skills . . . and then do so? Or how about finding ways to bolster your note-taking abilities? Are you having trouble actually making it to all the classes? A course like this one---meeting but once a week--is a good occasion to think carefully about why that is so, where that trouble is coming from, what effect it is having on your education, and most important, what you can do to participate more fully in your own learning and to take responsibility for your own education. Is there room for you to improve your time-management and organizational abilities? What can you do in this course to ensure that---step-by-step---you ensure that your experience is crazily hectic but not over-whelming? Critical theorists are not alone in offering this encouragement: don't be a victim of your own prejudices and fixed ideas, in particular ideas you that you might have about school, writing essays, going to class, and being a student. What kind of student have you been schooled into becoming? Is that the student you want to remain? Beware of the unproductive habits sapping the life out of your own learning! Instead, try as best you can to break with these habits. Jettison the things that don't work or work very well when it comes to being a student. *Be creative*, i.e., approach the course with curiosity, energy, and courage. *Take responsibility*, i.e., engage the course material as something to which you are answerable, as a series of questions that are querying *you*, here, and now.

4. E-mail policy and protocols:

It is the policy of the Faculty of Humanities that all email communication sent from students to instructors and T.A.'s and from instructors and T.A.'s to students must use McMaster University email accounts. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. Instructors and T.A.'s will delete emails that do not originate from a McMaster email account.

Note: please ensure that your McMaster e-mail account quota is not full. Messages will not be resent if your quota is full.

All e-mails to your instructor or T.A. must be written in full sentences (i.e. no point form, no text-messaging short form), and must contain a subject line that includes the course designation, "3Q03E." All e-mails must contain some form of salutation and valediction (i.e., "Dear Andrew or Dear Dr. Clark" *and* "Yours sincerely," respectively, or equivalents). Receipt of all e-mails from me or from your TA must be acknowledged. For example, a simple "Thank you for getting back to me" will suffice. Be professional, courteous, and respectful in all communications.

Your instructor or T.A. will respond to your e-mail in a timely manner. Do not assume that you will hear back immediately, or at any time of day or night, especially if you send an e-mail outside of regular business hours.

5. Contacting the course Teaching Assistant:

Students are free and encouraged to contact me with questions regarding the course. But all questions should *first* be directed towards the course Teaching Assistant, Andrew Reszitaryk, who will be happy to help you. (See the Andrew's office hours and e-mail address at the top of this course outline.)

6. University Statement Regarding Academic Dishonesty:

Academic dishonesty consists of misrepresentation by deception or by other fraudulent means and can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various kinds of academic dishonesty see:

<http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicIntegrity.pdf>

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

- i) Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- ii) Improper collaboration in group work.
- iii) Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld.

See: <http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity/students/index.html>

7. Statement from the Office of the Associate Dean, Faculty of Humanities, regarding course modifications:

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type

of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check their McMaster email and instructor websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

8. Copies of Essays:

Keep a copy of the essay that you submit for the course.

9. Course evaluation:

Students will be invited to evaluate the course on-line towards the conclusion of the term.

10. Cell phones and internet connections:

All cell phones must be turned off and all internet connections must be suspended during lectures. It's important to be courteous and professional in class: that means abiding by this very modest requirement and attending to the course materials. Surfing, texting, and checking for texts or messages is not permitted while class is underway. You will have an opportunity to surf and text at least twice during each class, i.e., when we break, roughly every fifty minutes. Failure to comply with this instruction will result in you being asked to leave class.

Imagine, if you will, this scene: In the middle of a lecture I stop my remarks, take my smart phone out of my pocket and check for texts and then send a text. Teaching and learning comes to a halt while I selfishly check for incoming messages. Or imagine this scene: you are addressing me and the class, raising a good question about the course materials. I nod my head, pretending to listen to you, but in fact checking for updates on Facebook. You would find that kind of behaviour totally unacceptable, wouldn't you? Wouldn't you find that kind of behaviour to be not only unprofessional and discourteous but also, much worse, *disrespectful and insulting*? I wouldn't dream of behaving that way with my students. So it makes sense not to behave that way with me or your classmates.

11. Students with Letters of Accommodation:

I am happy to assist students with their accommodation needs. Student Accessibility Services reminds students that they bear the following four "Responsibilities:"

- Students must, within a reasonable time, provide...the instructor a letter of accommodation under SAS letterhead, during office hours or by appointment.
- Students must negotiate with the instructor appropriate implementation and timelines of accommodations (e.g. due dates for assignments, etc.).
- Students must negotiate with the instructor timely information regarding difficulties encountered with or during the course
- Students must discuss with the instructor all information related to scheduling and administration of class tests and exams.

12. McMaster University Grading Scale:

Grade	Equivalent Grade Point	Equivalent Percentages
A+	12	90-100
A	11	85-89
A-	10	80-84
B+	9	77-79
B	8	73-76
B-	7	70-72
C+	6	67-69
C	5	63-66
C-	4	60-62
D+	3	57-59
D	2	53-56
D-	1	50-52
F	0	0-49 -- Failure