

Prof. Nicola Behrmann
Department of Germanic, Russian, and East European Languages and Literatures
172 College Avenue, Room 206
T: (732) 932-7201
E: behrmann@rutgers.edu
Office Hours: W 10-12pm, and by appointment

Fall Semester 2014
From Nietzsche to Superman: Literature & Pop Culture
(3 credits)

German 01:470:388:01, cross-listed with Comp Lit 01:195:396:01
INDEX: 18622
M/W 2:50-4:10pm
German House Seminar Room 102



Course Description:

What is popular culture? What, actually, distinguishes “high” and “low” culture? How do they inform each other? In what way can pop culture alter and challenge the established canon? This seminar explores canonical works of (mostly German writers, in English) literature and film in regard to popular culture. We will investigate Nietzsche’s *Übermensch* (Overman) and its gradual translation into the American *Superman* hero. We will explore the role of dreams in Kafka short prose as well as in Kubrick’s movie *Eyes Wide Shut*, and we will compare 1920s cabaret culture and gender performance with the “material girl” of contemporary culture. We will study the influence of Hermann Hesse’s famous novel *Steppenwolf* on American rock music, and listen to the ways in which revolution is presented in the lyrics of Bertolt Brecht and Bob Dylan. Lastly, we are going to discuss the boundary between illusion and reality as shown in the science fiction movie *The Matrix*. The course and readings are in English.

Course Goals: At the end of this course, students should be able to identify the interactions between “high” and “low” forms of cultural expression, close read a story or a film while critically engaging its historical context and the medium in which it is told, compare “high” and “low” forms of culture, and apply the various theoretical reflections in both written and oral form.

Prerequisites: None.

Required Books*

- Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (Wordsworth Classics of World Literature, 2000) **ISBN-13:** 978-1853264849 **ISBN-10:** 1853264849
- Hermann Hesse, *Steppenwolf* (Picador, 2002) **ISBN-13:** 978-0312278670
- Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Cambridge University Press, 1996) **ISBN-13:** 978-0521602617 **ISBN-10:** 0521602610

*All other readings, images, and video clips on the syllabus are available on Sakai. The films are available at the MediaReserve desk of Alexander Library.

Course Grading

Final Grade:

Participation	20%
Weekly discussion board posts	20%
3 response papers (5 pages each)*	30%
Final paper (12 pages)	30%

*You may replace one response paper with an oral presentation (20 min).

No late work will be accepted. Only two unexcused absences allowed.

Grade distribution: A=90-100%; B+=85-89; B=80-84; C+=75-79; C=70-74; D=65-69; F=64 and below

Assignments

Weekly discussion board posts and responses

Starting **Tuesday, September 16th**, you participate in regular topic discussion posts in order to formulate and refine some thoughts about that week's assigned reading(s) and our discussion in class. Go to "Discussion and Private Messages" on Sakai to post your message.

- To receive full credit for a week's online discussion, you are required to **post one original message (150-250 words) about the week's assigned reading by Tuesday at noon.**
- In addition, you must **respond to at least two other posts (75 words each).** You will be given one week to respond to each topic.
- Discussion messages for a topic that are posted after the specified due dates will not be graded.
- Both your original posting and your responses need to **engage analytically with the assigned readings and the discussion.** See the instructions at the Sakai "Discussion and Private Messages" page for more detail about my expectations.

Response Papers

Response papers (5 pages each; no less, no more!) should be submitted via “Dropbox” on Sakai. You are required to write a mini essay in response to class discussions or in form of own ideas in relation to a reading assignment. You are encouraged to compare two or more readings with each other

Response papers should not simply repeat back what we’ve already discussed; they build on the ideas formulated collaboratively in class discussion but the work of planning your argument, organizing material should be your own. Once you’ve thought about the question, work out your “thesis statement” or leading question (which you’ll need to present clearly in a sentence in the opening paragraph of your response). Cite or paraphrase relevant passages (and *always* include page numbers, as you would in a paper). Check your quotations for accuracy.

Finally, be sure to proofread your essays to make sure that they’re coherent, that they answer all aspects of the question, and that they’re articulated grammatically and clearly. Poorly written essays will lose points. . Format: 12-point Times or Times New Roman, double-spaced, 1” margins. Word-Document. Always include page numbers.

Final Paper

The final paper (12 pages) should be submitted as a hard copy. You should focus on one or more assigned readings and are encouraged to make use of your discussion board posts and individual analyses in your response papers. Expectations are the same as those outlined above with regard to response papers. Format: 12-point Times or Times New Roman, double-spaced, 1” margins. Please submit your hard copy to my mailbox in the main office of the German Department, 172 College Avenue by **December 12, 2015**.

Departmental Policies

Attendance

All students must attend regularly and arrive prepared; if you expect to miss one or two classes, please use the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me. Those who miss more than two class sessions without a compelling excuse should expect a one-step reduction in the course grade (i.e. an A becomes a B+, a B+ becomes a B). Every additional three absences may entail a further one-step grade-reduction. Three late arrivals count as one absence. Note: It is the responsibility of students who have been absent (for any reason) to find out what they have missed and obtain materials that may have been handed out.

Cell Phones

Cell phones and all other technological devices (beepers, iPods, MP3players...) must be turned off during class out of respect for the instructor and fellow students. Please schedule all important phone communications outside of class time.

Disability Support Services

Students who may be requesting accommodations due to disabilities are encouraged to familiarize themselves with procedures and policies regarding disability support services at the following website: <http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/>. It is recommended that students seeking accommodations begin filing paperwork as soon as possible as the documentation review process may take up to 30 business days. Students are encouraged to speak with teachers about these issues at the beginning of the term. All such conversations will be kept strictly confidential.

Academic Integrity

Violations of academic integrity are an extremely serious matter, and can lead to a student's failing the course and being referred to the University's Office of Student Conduct for disciplinary action. When referring to ideas other than your own, always acknowledge your sources clearly and completely, whether you are quoting or paraphrasing. Note also that use of online translation services is not permitted as a tool for generating work that you submit for course credit. Please see the University's policies on academic integrity at <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>, and discuss with your instructor any questions you may have about this and related issues.

Tentative Course Schedule

Week 1 Wed 9/3

Introduction: **Overman – Superman – End(s) of Man.**

Week 2 Mon 9/8 • Wed 9/10

IMAGE: John Heartfield, "Adolf, the Superman" (1932). MOVIE: Charlie Chaplin, *The Great Dictator* (1940). COMIC: Joe Siegel & Jerry Shuster, *Superman Chronicles* (1938-1946).

READINGS: Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883-1885), pp. (prologue); Claudia Schmölders, *Hitler's Face*, pp. 143-181.

Bad Dreams

Week 3 Mon 9/15 • Wed 9/17

READINGS: Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams* (chapter VII); Arthur Schnitzler: "Dream Story" (1926).

Week 4

Mon 9/22 • Wed 9/24

MOVIE: *Eyes Wide Shut* (Kubrick, 1999). READING: Hermann Hesse, *Steppenwolf* (1927), part I. **1st response paper due.**

Outsiders and Loners

Week 5

Mon 9/29 • Wed 10/1

READINGS: Hermann Hesse, *Steppenwolf* (1927), part II.; Maurice Blanchot: "H.H." (in *The Book to Come*, pp. 18). MUSIC: The Doors, "The End" (1967) and Nirvana, *Nevermind* (1991).

Week 6

Mon 10/6 • Wed 10/8

MUSIC: David Bowie: "Hymn of Baal." READINGS: Bertolt Brecht, *Baal* (1918/1919); Walter Benjamin: "The Author as Producer" (in *Reflections*, pp. 220-238).

Material Girls: Gender (and) Revolution

Week 7

Mon 10/13 • Wed 10/15

MOVIE: Marlene Dietrich in *The Blue Angel* (1930). VIDEOS: Josephine Baker, "Banana Dance" (1926); Madonna, "Material Girl" (1984). READING: Judith Butler, "Critically Queer" (in *Bodies That Matter*, pp. 223-284).

Week 8

Mon 10/20 • Wed 10/22

MUSIC: Bertolt Brecht/Kurt Weill, "[Pirate Jenny](#)" (1931), and Bob Dylan, "[When the Ship Comes In](#)" (1964). **2nd response paper due.**

Idiot Boys and Superman

Week 9

Mon 10/27 • Wed 10/29

READINGS: Nietzsche, "The Ass Festival" (in *Zarathustra*, pp. 255-258); Dada poems by Richard Huelsenbeck, Hugo Ball, and Hans Arp; Franz Kafka, "The Test"; Avital Ronell, "The Disappearance and Return of the Idiot" (in *Stupidity*, pp. 169-245).

Week 10

Mon 11/3 • Wed 11/5

MOVIE: Robert Zemeckis, *Forrest Gump* (1994). READING: Gilles Deleuze, "The Image of Thought" (in *Difference and Repetition*, pp. 164-213).

More Human Than Human

Week 12

Mon 11/10 • Wed 11/12

READINGS: Philip K. Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968); Laurence A. Rickels, *I Think I Am: Philip K. Dick* (excerpts). MOVIE: Ridley Scott, *Blade Runner* (1982).

Waking Up...

Week 11

Mon 11/17 • Wed 11/19

READINGS: Franz Kafka, "The Metamorphosis" (1915); Henry Sussman, "Extraterrestrial Kafka: Ahead to the Graphic Novel." COMICS: Peter Kuper's Kafka-comics. **3rd response paper due.**

...Into The Desert of the Real

Week 13

Mon 11/24

READING: Friedrich Nietzsche, "Of Truth and Lies in an Extra Moral Sense" (1873)

Week 14

Mon 12/1 • Wed 12/3

MOVIE: Wachowski Brothers, *The Matrix* (1999). READING: Zizek: "The Matrix or Two Sides of Perversion." ~ Term Paper Workshop (presentation of final paper).

Final Paper due: December 12, 2015.