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Labor, Idleness, Art

(3 credits)

01:470:388:01, Index 17854

Spring 2016 (*cross-listed with Comparative Literature 01:195:395:01*)

TTh3 11:30-12:50, Graduate School of Education 025B

Course Description

The course examines the intricate interrelations between labor, idleness, and art. Hannah Arendt famously called the modern capitalist societies that emerge in the 18th century and still persist today “laboring societies”: Their human members are first of all defined by their ability to work, toil, and labor. Practices of idleness tend, on the one hand, to get vilified as the demonic “other” of labor. On the other hand, they come to be seen as acts of heroic resistance. In this context, the status of works of art gets called into question: Are they the result of human labor, perhaps a “proper” labor freed from everyday constraints? Or are they made possible by the very absence of labor and the “real” human freedom of idleness? And what does happen when, in the 21st century, “creativity,” flexibility and other qualities formerly attributed to artists and idlers become central requirements on the labor market? – In order to explore these questions we will read theoretical and literary texts from around 1800 to the present including F. Schlegel, Marx, Nietzsche, and Arendt.

Discussion in English; all readings available in English translation and also in the original German whenever relevant.

PREREQUISITES: none

COURSE GOALS: At the end of this course, students should be able to identify as well as compare traditional lines of thought and traditional modes of their presentation with respect to the topic, close read a text on the topic while critically relating it to its genre and its historical context, and apply the various theoretical reflections in both written and oral form.

FINAL GRADE

Class participation	20%
3 response papers*	40%
Final Paper	40%

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

No late work will be accepted.

Grade distribution

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

Required texts: All readings on the syllabus are available on Sakai as pdf. Movies will be made available after Spring break.

Assignments:

Response Papers

Response papers (5 pages each; no less, no more!) should be submitted via the Sakai “Assignments”-tool (as pdf) by **February 12, March 12, April 8, 2016**. 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 via the Sakai “Assignments”-tool (as pdf) by **May 6, 2016**. You should focus on one or more assigned readings and are encouraged to make use of your analyses in your response papers. General expectations are the same as those outlined above with regard to response papers but you may use a more abstract question as a starting point. Format: 12-point Times or Times New Roman, double-spaced, 1” margins.

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: Overture

Tue 1/19:

Introduction

Thu 1/21:

Aristotle, *Politics* (4th century BCE) [extract] & Richard Sennett, *The Corrosion of Character* (1998)
[extract]

Week 2: Work Ethic and Its Others

Tue 1/26:

Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) [extract] & J.H. Campe, *Robinson the Younger, or, The New Crusoe* (1779) [extract], Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904) [extract]

Thu 1/28:

Friedrich Schlegel, “An Idyll of Idleness” (extract from: *Lucinde*, 1799)

Week 3: Romanticizing Idleness

Tue 2/2 & Thu 2/4:

Joseph von Eichendorff, *Memoirs of a Good for Nothing* (1822/23)

Week 4: Idleness as Regression

Tue 2/9 & Thu 2/11: Ivan Gontscharov, *Oblomov* (1859) [extract]

February 12: 1st response paper due

Week 5: Idleness as Refusal

Tue 2/16: Herman Melville, “Bartleby, the Scrivener” (1853)

Thu 2/18: Giorgio Agamben, “Bartleby, or, On Contingency” (1999)

Week 6: Modes of Literary and Theoretical Criticism

Tue 2/23: Georg Bücher, *Leonce and Lena* (1836) [extract]

Thu 2/25: Karl Marx, *Capital* & other writings (1844-1875) [extract]

Week 7: Working/Idling in Pamphlets, Manifestos, Aphorisms

Tue 3/1: Paul Lafargue, “The Right to Be Lazy” (1883)

Thu 3/3: Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All too Human* (1878) [extract] & *Dawn of Day* (1881) [extract]

Week 8: Assessing Modernity

Tue 3/8 & Thu 3/10: Walter Benjamin, “The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire” (1938)

March 11: 2nd response paper due

SPRING BREAK

Week 9: After the Catastrophe

Tue 3/22: Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia* (1951) [extract]

Thu 3/24: Martin Heidegger, "Releasement" (1959)

Week 10: Political Stakes

Tue 3/29 & Thu 3/31: Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (1958) [extract]

Week 11: The Labor of Postmodern Idleness

Tue 4/5: Thomas Pynchon, *Vineland* (1990) [extract] & "Sloth" (1993)

Thu 4/7: Tom Hodgkinson, *How to Be Idle* (2005) [extract]

April 8: 3rd response paper due

Week 12: Labor and Idleness on Film

Tue 4/12: Joel&Ethan Coen, *The Big Lebowski* (1998) [film]

Thu 4/14: Harun Farocki, *Workers Leaving the Factory* (1995) [film]

Week 13: Contemporary Criticism between Labor, Idleness, Art

Tue 4/19: Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude* (2004) [extract]

Thu 4/21: Bojana Kunst, *Artist at Work* (2015) [extract]

Week 14: Getting to Work

Tue 4/26: Final Paper Workshop

Thu 4/28: Extended Office Hours

May 6: final paper due

Student-Wellness Services:

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Just In Case Web App

<http://codu.co/cee05e>

Access helpful mental health information and resources for yourself or a friend in a mental health crisis on your smartphone or tablet and easily contact CAPS or RUPD.

Counseling, ADAP & Psychiatric Services (CAPS)

(848) 932-7884 / 17 Senior Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 / www.rhscaps.rutgers.edu/

CAPS is a University mental health support service that includes counseling, alcohol and other drug assistance, and psychiatric services staffed by a team of professional within Rutgers Health services to support students' efforts to succeed at Rutgers University. CAPS offers a variety of services that include: individual therapy, group therapy and workshops, crisis intervention, referral to specialists in the community and consultation and collaboration with campus partners.

Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance (VPVA)

(848) 932-1181 / 3 Bartlett Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 / www.vpva.rutgers.edu/

The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance provides confidential crisis intervention, counseling and advocacy for victims of sexual and relationship violence and stalking to students, staff and faculty. To reach staff during office hours when the university is open or to reach an advocate after hours, call [848-932-1181](tel:848-932-1181).

Disability Services

(848) 445-6800 / Lucy Stone Hall, Suite A145, Livingston Campus, 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Piscataway, NJ 08854 / <https://ods.rutgers.edu/>

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>.

Scarlet Listeners

(732) 247-5555 / <http://www.scarletlisteners.com/>

Free and confidential peer counseling and referral hotline, providing a comforting and supportive safe space.