



Prof. Nicola Behrmann
 Department of Germanic, Russian, and East European Languages and Literatures
 15 Seminary Place, room 4126
 Main office tel.: (848) 932-7781
 E-mail: behrmann@rutgers.edu
 Office Hours: Tuesdays, 1-2:30pm



From Nietzsche to Superman

Philosophy and Popular Culture

(3 credits)
 01:470:258:01, index 20108 (German), cross-listed with 01:195:258:01, index 20117 (Comparative Literatures)
 Fall 2019
 Tues/Thu 2:50-4:10pm, Scott Hall 102

Course Description

This course examines the gradual transformation of Nietzsche's *Übermensch* (overman) into the various American *Superman* heroes of our contemporary culture. The superman myth and his many manifestations suggest a possible transgression of the classic division of mind and body, society and nature, human and animal, organic and technological and opens up the way to the post-human. We will analyze the impact of the fantasy of transgression on gender studies, animal studies, and contemporary media technologies: Hitler's racist Aryan superman and its dismantling in modern art; female versions of Superman such as Wonder Woman or the "material girl" in contemporary pop culture; the figure of the "outlaw" as negative version of the great hero; the figure of the "idiot" who is bound to be great despite his lack of authority. We will also consider visions of transgression from human to animal and from human to inhuman (the cyborg) and their theoretical underpinnings.

Readings include: Hugo Ball, *Tenderenda*; Bertolt Brecht, *Baal*; Franz Kafka, "Metamorphosis" and "Report to An Academy," Heinrich von Kleist, *Penthesilea*; Jerry Siegel/Schuster, *The Superman Chronicles*. Films: *Ghost in the Shell*, *Forrest Gump*, and *Wonder Woman*. With theoretical back-up from Judith Butler, Gilles Deleuze, Donna Haraway, Vicki Hearne, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Avital Ronell. Soundtrack provided by David Bowie, Marlene Dietrich, Bob Dylan, Lady Gaga, Madonna, and Kurt Weill.

Taught in English. **Prerequisites:** None

Course Goals



This course satisfies SAS Core Curriculum Requirement **Arts and Humanities Goal o (AHo)**.



Student is able to examine critically philosophical and other theoretical issues concerning the nature of reality, human experience, knowledge, value, and/or cultural production.

By the end of this course students will be able to: analyze the degree to which gender, race, and class difference shape our perspective on the world; critically reflect on the Western value system; trace pressing social issues in works of contemporary popular culture; close read a story or a film while critical engaging its social and philosophical underpinnings as well as the medium in which they are told; formulate well-organized written interpretations grounded in textual evidence and supported by secondary literature.

Required Books

- Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Cambridge University Press, 1996) **ISBN-13:** 978-0521602617 **ISBN-10:** 0521602610

Required Films*

- *Wonder Woman* (dir. Lauren Montgomery, 2017)
- *Forrest Gump* (dir. Robert Zemeckis, 1994)
- *Ghost in the Shell* (dir. Mamoru Oshii, 1995)

*All other readings, images, and video clips on the syllabus are available on Sakai. The required films must have been viewed before the beginning of class. They are available at the MediaReserve desk of Alexander Library.



Course Grading

Participation	20%
Discussion posts	15%
2 presentations in class	10%
2 short essays (5 pages each)	30%
Final paper (10 pages)	25%

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

Discussion board posts and responses: Starting **Tuesday, September 17th**, 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 Exam: The final exam will be a take home exam (2 days). You will receive five questions; please choose three and compose a beautifully written mini essay, altogether 6-9 pages (according to the formatting guidelines posted on Sakai). 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. You can make reference to any outside source as well. Be sure to quote appropriately.

Save your essay as ***"FinalEssay-followed by your last name"*** and in a **Word-Document** and upload on Sakai/Dropbox no later than **December 16, 12pm**.



Assessment Rubric for Participation¹:

Criteria	Not Met	Needs Improvement	Effective	Exemplary
<i>Level of Engagement</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fails to contribute to class activities • Fails to invite comment/opinions from other students • Demonstrates little understanding of main points • Does not identify or summarize main points. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occasionally contributes to class activities by offering ideas and asking questions • Sometimes engages others in class discussions • Sometimes has an understanding of main points Identifies and summarizes some of the main points 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributes to class activities by offering ideas and asking questions on a regular basis • Often engages others in class discussions by inviting their comments • Challenges the accuracy and relevance of statements made • Identifies and summarizes main points 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributes to class activities by offering quality ideas and asking appropriate questions on a regular basis • Actively engages others in class discussions by inviting their comments • Constructively challenges the accuracy and relevance of statements made • Effectively identifies and summarizes main points
<i>Preparedness</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistently unprepared for class • Expresses no relevant foundational knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seldom prepared with assignments and required materials • Expresses limited foundational knowledge pertaining to class discussions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually prepared with assignments and required materials • Expresses basic foundational knowledge pertaining to class discussions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always prepared for class with assignments and required materials • Accurately expresses foundational knowledge pertaining to issues raised during the discussion
<i>Attitude</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rarely if ever participates in classroom projects and discussions • Occasional disruptive behavior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seldom actively participates in classroom projects and discussions • Sometimes supportive of other students' ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually positive and cooperative with classroom projects and discussions • Often supportive of other students' ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistently positive, cooperative attitude during class • Always supportive of other students' ideas

¹ Adapted from rubric published by Texas Education Agency, https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0ahUKFwib6pglloHWAhVGSiYKHXrxxA80QFggmMAA&url=https%3A%2F%2Ffacultyinnovate.utexas.edu%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2FClassroom_Discussion_rubric.doc&usq=AFQjCNEJRqCSBKFD-I9ODklr-imJOU82sw



Assessment Rubric for Discussion Posts:

In grading discussion topics, the following rubric will be used. 20 total points are possible for each discussion topic.

Criteria	Not Met	Needs Improvement	Effective	Exemplary
<i>Critical Thinking</i>	(0 points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No evidence of critical thinking whatsoever (or nothing posted). 	(1 point) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Superficial posts No valid connections made between content. No analysis or insight. <i>Critical</i> presentation of opinion not present. 	(3 points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some connections made, although all might not be valid. Analysis of content is evident, although possibly not complete. <i>Critical</i> presentation of opinion is not complete. 	(4 points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Valid connections made. Posts are complete with analysis and insight. Opinions are presented at a <i>critical</i> level.
<i>Uniqueness</i>	(0 points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Originality of post is completely unacceptable (or nothing posted). 	(1 point) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Originality of posts is not evident (ideas are not your own). Posts consist of little more than "I agree with you ..." Plagiarism may be evident. Sources not cited. 	(3 points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Originality of posts might be questionable, but valid. Some new ideas. Plagiarism not evident. Sources are cited. 	(4 points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Original ideas are presented. Plagiarism not evident. Sources are cited.
<i>Timeliness</i>	(0 points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post is made after the deadline (or nothing posted). 	(1 point) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Original posts are added at the last minute, leaving no time for classmates to respond. 	(3 points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Original posts are present, but may have been posted during the last half of the discussion period. Participation is infrequent during the discussion period. 	(4 points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Original posts are added during the first half of the discussion period. Participation is evident throughout the entire discussion period.
<i>Quantity</i>	(0 points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quantity is completely unacceptable (or nothing posted). 	(1 point) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Length of all required posts do not meet requirements. One or more required postings are missing. 	(3 points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Length of all required posts meets the requirements but includes considerable "fluff" or "filler." All required postings are made. 	(4 points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Length of all required posts meet requirements. All required postings are made.
<i>Stylistics</i>	(0 points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Content is illegible (or nothing posted). 	(1 point) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many spelling or grammar errors Content is difficult to understand. Inappropriate language used. 	(3 points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Few spelling or grammar mistakes Content is generally easy to understand. 	(4 points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No spelling or grammar mistakes. Content easy to understand.



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.

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: <https://ods.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/academic-integrity-at-rutgers>, and discuss with your instructor any questions you may have about this and related issues.

Turnitin plagiarism detection

Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to [Turnitin.com](https://turnitin.com) (directly or via learning management system, i.e. Sakai, Blackboard, Canvas, Moodle) for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the [Turnitin.com](https://turnitin.com) reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the [Turnitin.com](https://turnitin.com) service is subject to the Usage Policy posted on the [Turnitin.com](https://turnitin.com) site.

Students who do not agree should contact the course instructor immediately.



Course Schedule

Tue 9/3 Introduction

Overman – Superman – End(s) of Man

Thu 9/5 COMIC: Joe Siegel & Jerry Shuster, *Superman Chronicles* (1938-1946). Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883-1885), prologue

Tue 9/10 ART: John Heartfield, "Adolf, the Superman" (1932); Schmölders, *Hitler's Face*, pp. 143-181; FILM clip: *The Great Dictator* (dir. Charlie Chaplin, 1940)

Thu 9/12 Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (I). **short presentations.**

Wonder Women and Material Girls

Tue 9/17 Heinrich von Kleist: *Penthesilea* (1808), part I.

Thu 9/19 **FILM: Lauren Montgomery, *Wonder Woman* (2017);** Brake, "Feminist Symbol or Fetish?"

Tue 9/24 *Penthesilea*, part II.

Thu 9/26 Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (II).

Tue 10/1 **FILM: Joseph von Sternberg, *The Blue Angel* (1930). 1st short essay due.**

Thu 10/3 Judith Butler, "Critically Queer" (in *Bodies That Matter*, pp. 223-284). FILM clip: Josephine Baker's "Banana Dance" (1926); MUSIC VIDEOS: Madonna, "Material Girl" (1984) and Lady Gaga: "Born this Way" (2011).

Tue 10/8 Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (III).

Poor in Spirit: Idiot Songs

Tue 10/22 Nietzsche, *Thus Zarathustra* (IV – "The Ass Festival").

Thu 10/24 Dadaist poems by Hugo Ball and Hans Arp.

Tue 10/29 **FILM: Robert Zemeckis, *Forrest Gump* (1994).**

Thu 10/31 *Forrest Gump*, cont.; Avital Ronell, *Loser Sons*, pp. 1-18.

Tue 11/5 Franz Kafka, "A Hunger Artist" (1922).



Thu 11/7 “A Hunger Artist,” cont.; Meister Eckhart, “The Poor in Spirit”

On the Way to the Animal

Tue 11/12 Franz Kafka, “Wish to Be an Indian.” MUSIC: Patti Smith, “Horses”.

Thu 11/14 Franz Kafka, “A Report to An Academy” (1922); Vicki Hearne, *Adam’s Task: Calling Animals by Name*, pp. 166-172.

The Outcast as Anti-Hero

Thu 10/10 Arthur Rimbaud, “The Drunken Boat” (1871); Nietzsche, *Thus Zarathustra* (IV – “The Drunken Song”).

Tue 10/15 MUSIC: Bertolt Brecht/Kurt Weill, “[Pirate Jenny](#)” (1931); Bob Dylan, “[When the Ship Comes In](#)” (1964).

Thu 10/17 Bertolt Brecht: *Baal* (1918/1919). MUSIC: David Bowie: “Hymn of Baal.”

More Human Than Human: Cyborgs

Tue 11/19 Donna Haraway: “A Cyborg Manifesto” (1985). *2nd short essay due.*

Thu 11/21 **FILM: Mamoru Oshii, *Ghost in the Shell* (1995)**

Tue 11/26 *Ghost in the Shell*, cont.

Thu 11/28 NO CLASS (THANKSGIVING RECESS)

Tue 12/3 Donna Haraway, “Ecce Homo, Ain’t (Ar’n’t) I a Woman, and Inappropriate/d Otherness: The Human in a Posthumanist Landscape”.

Thu 12/5 Term Paper Workshop

Thu 12/10 Term Paper Workshop (*presentation of final paper*)

Final Essay: December 16, 2019