

Political Science 703, spring 2017

Writing Politics

Mondays 3 – 5:30 in Saunders 624

Michael J. Shapiro

The catalogue description: “Seminar on the politics of writing, grammar, translation, argument, genre, and style with significant content on indigenous issues of oral traditions, alternative modes of writing and argument, and language continuance.”

The specific focus of this version of Political Science 703 is on the way political thinking/philosophy is articulated in popular culture texts, especially films (but also in a variety other visual texts, exemplified in the collection *Sensible Politics*). Regarding texts as (what Roland Barthes calls) as “methodological fields,” the aim of the course is instruction on how to write effective essays that reference visual texts – intervening in them with theoretical practices in ways that are intelligible for your disciplinary readership and promising as regards scholarly accomplishment. For purposes of illustration, I focus much of the course on the films of Lars Von Trier because they have been creatively (re)thought in a monograph that brings critically-oriented political thinking to readings of his films. However, in addition to following the main readings and cinematic texts in the course students are encouraged to inflect the course in directions that enable your particular interests and to work on the genre of popular culture texts that are your focus. After the initial 4 sessions, course materials will be added once the distribution of interests in the seminar is established.

Books to acquire for the course:

Bonnie Honig and Lori J. Marso eds. *Politics, Theory, and Film: Critical Encounters with Lars von Trier*

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*

James Phillips ed. *Cinematic Thinking: Philosophical Approaches to the New Cinema*

Meg McLagan and Yates McKee ed. *Sensible Politics* (Zone books hard cover but many used on Amazon)

(purchase the books from online book sellers)

Reading/discussion/viewing schedule: (TBA)

January:

9th Read *What is Philosophy*, pp. vii – 34 and heed this quotation from C. Wright Mills:

“When events move very fast and possible worlds swing around them, something happens to the quality of thinking. Some...repeat formulae; some...become reporters. To time observations with thought so as to make a decent level of abstraction with crucial happenings is a difficult problem. Its solution lies in the *using* of intellectual residues of social-history, not jettisoning them except in precise confrontation with events” (From his review of Franz Neumann’s *Behemoth: The Structure and Function of National Socialism 1933-1944*. Online at: <http://www.wbenjamin.org/Behemoth.html>).

16th Holiday, no class meeting

23rd Panagia Preface in Honig and Marso, *Politics, Theory, and Film*, James Phillips, “Introduction in *Cinematic Thinking*,” and Shapiro, “Toward a Politics of Now Time..” (available thru the UH library at: <http://muse.jhu.edu.eres.library.manoa.hawaii.edu/article/32511>)

30th Miriam Leonard, “I Know What has to happen”... Chapter 15 in Honig and Marso, and Shapiro, “Resisting Resolution: Genre and the Family,” in *For Moral Ambiguity* (available in our Laulima site). Recommended: Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* and Thomas Hardy’s novel *Jude the Obscure* (at a minimum, read a synopsis of it).

February

6th Shapiro, “A Philopoetic Engagement: Deleuze and *The Element of Crime*,” in Honig and Marso – along with Cesare Casarino, “Philopoesis: A Theoretico-Methodological Preface,” in *Modernity at Sea: Melville, Marx, Conrad in Crisis* (available in our Laulima site) and Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, Chapter 7.

The rest of the schedule TBA