Carleton University
Institute of Political Economy
PECO 5501A/PSCI 5501A/SOCI 5504A
Room 215 Paterson Hall

Critique of Everyday Life
Summer 2013

Instructor: Mathew Coleman
Email: coleman.373@osu.edu
Office: 1503 Dunton Tower
Telephone: 613 520-2600 ext. 7566
Office hours: Wednesday 11am-1pm

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this seminar we will explore the geo-sociological concept of the everyday, taking our inspiration from sociologist and geographer Henri Lefebvre’s (1901-1991) three volume treatise on the everyday, *Critique of Everyday Life*. Published roughly at the beginning, middle and end of the Cold War, this trilogy offers a rich and persuasive (and oftentimes inconsistent) account of everyday life as simultaneously a sphere of creativity and alienation – a paradoxical medium of revolution and pacification, fragmentation and continuity, repetition and difference.

Our reading of Lefebvre’s work will function as a springboard into myriad other prominent “theories of the everyday”. Our goal in the seminar will be to problematize and think through what this arguably ubiquitous and yet poorly specified word – the everyday – means from various theoretical perspectives, including: Situationism, post-Marxist/feminist theories of social reproduction, autonomist Marxism, non-representational theory, actor network theory, and flat ontology. We will focus specifically on what the everyday means for thinking about the importance of race, class, sexuality, and gender to the social world. Students new to Agamben, Foucault, and Schmitt, as well as those more acquainted with this work, should feel equally welcome to participate in the seminar.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Regular seminar participation and attendance: 25%.

2. Seminar presentation: 25%. You will be responsible for leading discussion during one seminar, along with at least one of your peers. Your goal is to highlight and discuss key arguments from the assigned texts, and which you consider worthy of extended group attention.
3. 3,500 word review essay: 50%. Your essay can be on a topic of your choice, but should draw in detail on at least two major texts from the seminar. We will discuss the review essay in greater detail during the seminar.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

There is a lot of reading for this course. We will talk about how to read efficiently during the first class, so don’t fret.

My baseline expectation is that seminar participants will come every week having read the assigned readings in their entirety. I also expect seminar participants to come prepared with something substantive to say about the week’s readings.

Attendance for all seminars is required. If you miss a seminar, you must complete an essay (minimum 5 pages, double spaced) on the readings for that day. The essay should not be a summary; it should raise substantive issues. Essays for missed classes will be due the following week, at the beginning of seminar. If you do not turn in your essay, I will automatically take 10% off your final grade. If there is some issue in your life that is making attendance (and active participation) difficult, please talk to me as soon as possible so that we can make alternate arrangements.

Lastly, please participate actively in seminar. This will be a fun and rewarding seminar if everyone pitches in.

BOOKS AND ARTICLES

I will provide electronic copies of all the articles listed below, from the Carleton library. I also will be able to provide some of the book sections. However, I do strongly recommend purchasing the following texts:


If you have financial constraints, please come and see me. We’ll work something out in terms of sharing my texts.
SEMINAR SCHEDULE

* Presentations start week 2

Week 1

Seminar 1 (May 7) Introductory remarks
No assigned reading

Seminar 2 (May 9) Approaches to the everyday


Week 2

Seminar 3 (May 14) Volume 1

Seminar 4 (May 16) Social reproduction


Week 3

Seminar 5 (May 21) Theory of moments (Volume 2)
Seminar 6 (May 23) Site ontology


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Week 4

Seminar 7 (May 28) Crisis and generation (Volume 3)


Seminar 8 (May 30) Representation and the everyday


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Week 5

Seminar 9 (June 4) Space I


Seminar 10 (June 6) Space II


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Week 6

Seminar 11 (June 11) Blind fields

Seminar 12 (June 13) State mode of production, autogestion, and anti-productivism


Week 7

Seminar 13 (June 18) State ethnography, studying up


