

ENGL9004: PhD. Seminar: Periodization
Eric Weiskott
Spring 2018, T 10:00-1:00
Office hours: T 2:00-3:00 (Stokes S407)

Must we divide literary history into periods? This course focuses on the history, politics, and consequences of periodization. Topics include the medieval/modern divide, the concept of renaissance, the relationship between literary periods and national politics, modernity and postmodernity, colonialism and postcolonialism, and alternatives to traditional periodization. As the PhD seminar, this course also functions as a workshop in genres of scholarly writing, such as book reviews and articles.

REQUIRED TEXT (available at the BC Bookstore)

Ted Underwood, *Why Literary Periods Mattered: Historical Contrast and the Prestige of English Studies* (Stanford, 2013)

RECOMMENDED TEXTS (available at the BC Bookstore; also on Canvas as .PDFs)

Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (Columbia University Press, 2004; the 1985 ed. lacks the full translator's introduction)
Kathleen Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty: How Ideas of Feudalism and Secularization Govern the Politics of Time* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008)

SCHEDULE

I. Narratives

Why periodization matters

Jan 15 DeBevoise, "A Note on the Translation," in Le Goff, *Must We Divide History into Periods?*
Le Goff, *Must We Divide History?*, preface, prelude, and chs. 1-2
Underwood, *Why Literary Periods Mattered*, introduction

Genre / before periodization

(Jan 18) *Discussion post 1 due on Canvas
Jan 22 Anderson, review of Underwood, *Why Literary Periods Mattered*
Georgianna, "Periodization and Politics"
Trumpener, "In the Grid"
Underwood, *Why Literary Periods Mattered*, ch. 1

Modernism / modernity / renaissance

(Jan 28) *Discussion post 2 due on Canvas
Jan 29 Tribe, "Translator's Introduction," in Koselleck, *Futures Past*
Koselleck, *Futures Past*, preface and ch. 1
Underwood, *Why Literary Periods Mattered*, ch. 2
(Feb 4) *Discussion post 3 due on Canvas
Feb 5 de Grazia, "The Finite Renaissance"

- Jameson, *A Singular Modernity*, pt. 1, chs. 1-3
 Koselleck, *Futures Past*, ch. 2
 Morrissey, “Milton, Modernity, and the Periodization of Politics”
 (Feb 11) *Discussion post 4 due on Canvas
 Feb 12 Cuddy-Keane, “Crossing the Victorian/Modernist Divide”
 Dinshaw, Lochrie, and Menon, “Queering History” (an exchange)
 Habermas, “Modernity versus Postmodernity,” trans. Ben-Habib
 Le Goff, *Must We Divide History?*, ch. 7 and conclusion

II. Institutions

Profession / discipline

- (Feb 18) *Discussion post 5 due on Canvas
 Feb 19 Gillman, “Oceans of *Longues Durées*”
 Graff, “How Periods Erase History”
 Simpson, “Diachronic History and the Shortcomings of Medieval Studies”
 Underwood, *Why Literary Periods Mattered*, ch. 3
 Feb 26 Gruesz, “What Was Latino Literature?”
 Hayot, *On Literary Worlds*, chs. 10-11
 Jameson, *Singular Modernity*, preface
 Tamen, review of Hayot, *On Literary Worlds*
 Underwood, *Why Literary Periods Mattered*, ch. 4

Language / method

- March 12 Chaganti, “Proleptic Steps”
 DeJean, “A Long Eighteenth Century?”
 Koselleck, *Futures Past*, ch. 5
 Underwood, *Why Literary Periods Mattered*, chs. 5-6
 *Short assignment due on Canvas (topic study / book review / public essay)
 March 19 Blackbourn, “The Horologe of Time”
 Bradway, review of Ohi, *Dead Letters Sent*
 Fuchs, “Golden Ages and Golden Hinds”
 Koselleck, *Futures Past*, ch. 14
 Ohi, *Dead Letters Sent*, chs. 1-2

III. Politics

Sovereignty / feudalism / colonialism

- March 26 Sheridan, “Translator’s Note,” in Foucault, *Discipline & Punish*
 Foucault, *Discipline & Punish*, pt. 3, ch. 3
 Stone, “Translator’s Preface,” in Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*
 Marx, *Contribution to the Critique*, preface and appendix 3
 April 2 Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty*, introduction and ch. 3
 Johnson, review of Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty*
 Koselleck, *Futures Past*, ch. 3

- April 9 Green, “Periodization in European and World History”
 Loomba, “Periodization, Race, and Global Contact”
 Summit and Wallace, “Rethinking Periodization”

Colonialism / space / social power

- April 16 Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty*, ch. 4 and epilogue
 Quayson, “Periods versus Concepts”
 Rabasa, “The Colonial Divide”
 Summit, *Lost Property*, afterword
- April 23 Brooks, “The Primacy of the Present, the Primacy of Place”
 Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, preface and ch. 1
 Göle, “Decentering Europe, Recentering Islam”
- April 30 Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, preface, ch. 1, ch. 4 (excerpt), ch. 8
 (excerpt), and epilogue
 Lochrie, “Provincializing Medieval Europe”
- May 7 *Paper due (15-30 pp.)

GRADING

- Discussion posts 15%
 Oral presentation (to be scheduled), 10-15 min. + handout / Page on Canvas / blog post 15%
 Paper, 15-30 pp. 40%
 Participation 10%
 Short assignment (topic study, 4-8 pp. / book review, 1,000 words / public essay, 800 words)
 20%

ASSIGNMENTS

The Discussion posts, due on Mondays (or the previous Friday when Monday is a university holiday), should reflect your initial reactions to the material from the first third of the semester. They can, but need not, articulate an argument about the material. The short assignment should be any one of the following three options: (1) a topic study: an introductory essay on a problem, topic, or research or teaching question arising from the course material; (2) a book review: a descriptive and evaluative review of a recent (past 1-2 years) scholarly monograph in your field or related to the course material, to be submitted to an academic journal at the end of the semester; (3) a public writing essay: a short article with no jargon, drawing contemporary relevance out of the course material or your area of expertise, to be pitched to trade magazines (*The Atlantic*, *The Conversation*, etc.) or published as a blog post at the end of the semester. The paper is an article-length research project that engages with prior scholarship and argues for its point of view in detail, a revised and expanded version of which is to be submitted to an academic journal over the summer. Each student will also prepare one oral presentation (to be scheduled) of 10-15 minutes, supported by a handout, a dedicated Page on Canvas, and/or a public blog post.

OBJECTIVES

This is a ‘toolkit’ course. In addition to practicing different styles of academic and public writing, you will explore the history and politics of the historical conceptualizations that structure the profession of literary studies. The goal is to become self-reflective about the place

of your work in the field, to try out alternative paths through the field, and to use historical theory to sharpen your readings of individual works of literature. You are invited to relate the theoretical writings on periodization to your own areas of expertise and to primary texts you are familiar with: through Discussion posts, the oral presentation, and class discussion, you supply the primary texts of the course. Finally, this course aims to get you published, whether in the form of a book review, an article, a thinkpiece for a public audience, or a blog post.

PARTICIPATION

Students are expected to attend each class having completed the assigned reading. Students should come to class prepared to actively discuss the arguments, ideas, and expository style of assigned theoretical texts. This is a discussion-based class, and you typically will not need laptops or smart phones.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Boston College places great value on academic integrity (bc.edu/offices/stserv/academic/integrity.html). I have a zero tolerance policy for intentional plagiarism. All quotations or paraphrases of sources must be cited parenthetically or in a footnote (examples: libguides.bc.edu/c.php?g=44446&p=281300).

ACCESSIBILITY

If you are a student with a disability seeking accommodations in this course, please contact Kathy Duggan, (617) 552-8093, at the Connors Family Learning Center regarding learning disabilities, or Paulette Durrett, (617) 552-3470, in the Disability Services Office regarding all other types of disabilities.

TITLE IX REPORTING

Please be aware that as a Boston College faculty member, I am obligated to report to the Student Affairs Title IX Coordinator any case of sexual misconduct that any student discloses to me.