



## ATYP YEAR IV LITERATURE, PHILOSOPHY, & MEDIA: ROAMING THE ANTHROPOCENE

**Location:** 4540 Sangren Hall

**Time:** Thursdays 5:00pm-7:30pm

**Instructor:** Laura Citino, [laura.j.citino@wmich.edu](mailto:laura.j.citino@wmich.edu)



“Education as the practice of freedom...denies that [people] are abstract, isolated, independent, and unattached to the world; it also denies that the world exists as a reality apart from people.”

— Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*



### COURSE DESCRIPTION

ATYP Year IV is an interdisciplinary humanities class exploring the *Anthropocene*, a newly-coined word for this current era in which we live, defined by everything from climate change to late capitalism, Big Data to meme culture, artificial intelligence to political division. This class invites students to define this present moment as it unfolds, to pause and unpack the complex questions bombarding us everyday. How do we form our identities in the hypervisible age of social media and cancel culture? How do we find common ground in an increasingly polarized, globalized world? What social, environmental, and personal challenges will we face down in the years to come, and where can we find the tools to solve them?

Through studying a wide variety of philosophical, critical, and creative texts, we will explore what living in the Anthropocene means for all of us. This class is designed to be a “crash course” in humanities, pop culture, and the liberal arts. Throughout the year we will cover a lot of ground, with the intention of giving you a taste of a diverse array of writers, scholars, thinkers, and artists from all kinds of backgrounds and genres. A major component of this class will be your own contributions and input; many assignments are open-ended in subject and theme, and a primary portion of each class will be devoted to rigorous debate and discussion. We will explore not just how we got to “this” moment, but what “this” moment even is.

### REQUIRED MATERIALS AND TEXTS

- Dedicated ATYP notebook
- Folder for organizing handouts, printouts, and readings
- Access to a printer & word processor
- Required texts for fall semester (all other readings will be provided)
  - Philip K. Dick, *The Man in the High Castle* (ISBN: 9780547572482)
  - Tom Stoppard, *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern are Dead* (ISBN: 9780802126214)
  - Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot* (ISBN: 9780802144423)
    - Spring book selections will be announced mid-November

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To develop and demonstrate a foundational understanding of significant philosophical concepts and critical theories
- To identify, appreciate, and practice applying these philosophical concepts to literature, cultural criticism, art, and other forms of media
- To analyze the philosophical implications of aspects of contemporary existence, i.e. to bring awareness to and build a definition of the Anthropocene
- To engage productively with a scholarly community, both in this class and elsewhere
- To write critically, competently, and confidently and evaluate written work for effectiveness, clarity and flow, academic conventions, and cohesive, creative inquiry
- To apply creative approaches toward critical theory through a variety of artistic genres
- To develop a personal scholarly eye and academic focus in service of making you a more engaged, agile, and critical student, colleague, citizen, and human being

## TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Order and/or length of units subject to change. Each unit will culminate in a creative project that almost always will have some presentation element.

Units	Themes	# of Weeks
Unit 1:	Summer Reading/Intro to Pop Culture Studies <i>B-side: Guilty Pleasures</i>	5 weeks
Unit 2:	Theories of (Alt) History <i>B-side: Alt/Afro Futures</i>	6 weeks
Unit 3:	Theater of the Absurd <i>B-side: Notes on Humor &amp; Tragicomedy</i>	6 weeks
Unit 4:	Language & the Simulacra <i>B-side: Frankenfood</i>	6 weeks
Unit 5:	Cyborgs & Luddites <i>B-side: Excursions in Nostalgia</i>	5 weeks
Unit 6:	Unveiling the Apocalypse <i>B-side: Topophiliacs, Unite &amp; Take Over</i>	6 weeks

## EXPECTATIONS, POLICIES, AND REQUIREMENTS

Generally, I refer you to the standard Rules and Responsibilities memo that was mailed to you.

*The following expectations and policies for ATYP Year IV are based on two big assumptions:*

- 1) You have now had three years of rigorous ATYP classes under your belt.
- 2) You are enrolled in a class “above and beyond” a typical high school English curriculum.

Therefore, I assume that you very much want to be here and that by now, you at least sort of know what you’re doing! The less we worry about missing work, not doing the reading, etc., the more we can focus on our robust discussions and unique, thought-provoking projects.

In other words, the good stuff!

**Digital Organization:** You should use Google Drive or another file folder organization system of your choosing. Create folders for each week of class, organize by semester, and keep your files properly labeled. You have access to Google apps through WMU: [wmich.edu/google](http://wmich.edu/google).

**Homework:** Due twice!

- **First**, via the Dropbox on eLearning by 10:00pm the night before class meets, unless otherwise specified.
- **Second**, you will also turn in printed copies of all homework at the beginning of each class period (again, unless otherwise specified). Graded work will then be returned to you within reasonable timeframes.
- **Bonus Third Point**, a reminder to keep all your graded homework organized! Putting it right into a binder or folder once you get it back is a great way to ensure this. More specifics on homework below.

**Late/missing work:** Should be avoided at all costs! I will contact you and copy your adults (nooooo) when you miss a due date. I reserve the right to cap chronically/egregiously late work at a check (i.e., chronically late work may not be eligible for a check-plus) or not accept it at all. I am more likely to be amenable to extensions if you let me know beforehand about potential conflicts.

**Missing all/part of class, arriving late, or leaving early:** Requires an email from you OR an adult in your life (but ideally, you) explaining the absence. I'll honor your understanding your own schedule best, but repeated absences will require further discussion.

### **Academic Honesty in a Time of AI**

Please be informed that WMU is treating all AI-generated student work—that is, work that is written by a bot at the command of the student—as cheating. Now, wonderfully, the proliferation of AI and other cyborgian concerns will be a subject we'll address directly in this course, so we'll learn and discuss lots more about the ins and outs of this touchy, trendy business. (You might even be asked to write some AI-generated work!) But unless otherwise requested, know that above all else, I will be extremely disappointed should I find that you are using AI to write your papers for you. It is deeply and absurdly besides the point of taking this or any course. Don't do it. It's boring and unimaginative—two things we hate to be.

### **STUDENT EXPECTATIONS**

A major component of this class will be your own brilliant and unique contributions. I believe deeply in the idea that you, as intelligent and passionate minds, will co-create this class with me. **Your success in this class is your primary responsibility, with me providing collaborative support.** Specifically, I expect the following from each of you:

- Thoughtful, thorough, and timely completion of all assignments and close, careful reading of all material
- Energetic participation and respectful attentiveness during class
- Professionalism, i.e. willingness to participate, keep notes, help others, arrive on time, be professional in correspondence, and contribute to our positive, scholarly community

- Frequent, consistent, and reliable communication with me (especially regarding homework difficulties, absences, etc.) and your classmates
- Articulation of ideas, beliefs, and opinions AND demonstrated respect for those of other writers/thinkers we encounter, as well as your fellow classmates

## ASSIGNMENTS

Every week, we will read and write, you can always count on that. All homework will be labeled with Name, Week Number, and Assignment, single-spaced in the upper left- or righthand corner, with a clever and interesting title centered one space above paper body. All file names for Dropbox will follow this format: Student Name - Week # and Assignment Type.

**Readings:** Various levels of difficulty, density, and genre. You will be responsible for notes and annotations on this reading (see below notebook requirements); printing readings out when needed is encouraged. **4-5 hours per week.**

**Weekly Responses:** Critical, reflective, or creative in nature, 1-1.5 pages (unless otherwise specified), single-spaced, Times New Roman, 1" margins, etc. Responses are for experimenting and thinking out loud; I encourage you to take risks and try out ideas. Do not stress about formal essay structure, though quotes and textual evidence will be expected when appropriate (which will be often). Graded on the check system. **1-1.5 hours per week.**

**Unit Projects:** These will take a variety of forms throughout the year, including formal essays, creative writings, and other multimedia projects. Some form of outlining, prewriting, and/or rough drafts will be due preceding the final, as well as peer reviews and workshopping. Expect about 4 per semester. Graded on letter grade system. **4-6 hours each.**

**Notebooks:** Your dedicated ATYP notebook will be a) brought TO and used actively IN class every week, b) used extensively OUTSIDE of class for reading notes, prewriting, etc., and c) used exclusively FOR this class. In addition to weekly annotations, specific prompts will get you thinking outside the box to prepare for class discussion. Notebook work is neither optional nor an afterthought; it precedes and provides scaffolding for your other written assignments. See separate rubric for more specifics. Graded on check system, twice a semester (midterm and final). **About 1 hour per week.**

**Engagement and Professionalism:** See above Student Expectations and separate rubric for more information on expectations and requirements. Graded on check system, twice a semester (midterm and final).

**Reflections and Metacognitives:** For most major assignments, you will turn in a half-to-full page reflecting on your process, challenges, successes, and takeaways. There will also be guided midterm and final reflective assignments. Graded on check system.

**Revision:** Ideally, we are not doing much in the way of revision this year. If your weekly work significantly and consistently misses the mark, I will ask you to redo until it's up to snuff.

## **COURSE EVALUATION**

My grading philosophy is that I expect each and every one of you to excel in this course. An “A” is assumed from the get-go and you’ll prove it’s the grade you deserve. That special ATYP amalgamation of revisions and perseverance, engagement and creativity matter a lot more than individual points on individual assignments. Focus on the work, and the grade will come.

**Each semester, you will receive a letter grade based on the following calculation:**

Unit projects (30%); Reflections and Metacognitives (10%) Weekly response essays (35%); Notebook, Engagement, and Professionalism (25%).

**Grading/Written Comments:** You can expect me to comment on nearly all of your written work. This will include praise as well as critique; kind requests for deciphering my proud lefty handwriting accepted, as well as other clarifications within reason.

### **Grading Scale for Weekly Homework:**

√- = You missed the mark. Potential issues include not answering the prompt or accepting its premise; no/not enough text examples; obvious lack of effort; length.

√ = Solid work. You nailed the analysis but had a mediocre execution, or had fabulous writing and weak analysis, or did pretty good on both. You’re on the right track.

√+ = Great work! You had a strong concept, pursued it with examples, and executed it well. Maybe a weak spot or two, nothing distracting.

### **A Few Final Thoughts, i.e. My Joy, It Overwhelms Me**

I am so excited to embark on ATYP Year IV with you all! I am a firm believer that every class is an experiment, an alchemical process of students + instructor + readings & writings + broader world context = something truly special, each and every time. This iteration of Year IV should prove to be no exception. While this class will naturally be rigorous and challenging in all kinds of ways, my hope is that it also is engaging and energizing—work that doesn’t always feel like work. I believe that in return, you get out of it new ways of thinking about and being in this complex, topsy-turvy, challenging, and utterly fascinating world where we live.



“After everything that's happened, how can the world still be so beautiful? Because it is.”

– Margaret Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*

