

English 6029 Special Topics in Literature: Terrorism, Spectacle, and Literatures of Subversion

Instructor: Prof. Swope

This course will trace representations of terrorism and violence in literature and film (supplemented by recent theoretical texts) beginning from the 19th century up to the present moment. While the course will be global in scope, recognizing that terrorism has very different meanings in various parts of the world, it will concentrate primarily on the ways in which terrorism has been characterized historically in U.S. and British literature and the ways in which the events of 9/11 may or may not have altered those notions. We will also explore the relationship between the avant-garde or the literary counter-culture (literatures of terror?), violence, and the evolution of global capitalism. Other possible themes include the relationship between terror and spectacle in the digital age, the intellectual history of terrorist activity, how the threat of bio-terrorism or germ warfare impacts our notions of the body, as well as the intellectual Left's ability (or inability) to address the attacks of 9/11.

Readings will be selected from the following (this is not a final list):

Fiction:

Albert Camus, *The Plague*;
Joseph Conrad, *Secret Agent*
Willaim Burroughs, *Naked Lunch*
Don DeLillo, *Mao II*
Ishmael Reed, *Mumbo Jumbo*
Kathy Acker, *Empire of the Senseless*
Selections from *Before and After: Stories from New York*

Film:

The Seige
Independence Day
Bowling for Colimbine or *Fahrenheit 9/11*

Selections from the following Critical/Theoretical Texts:

Jean Baudrillard, *Spirit of Terrorism and Requiem for the Twin Towers*.
Susan Buck-Morss, *Thinking Past Terror: Islamism and Critical Theory on the Left*.
John Gray, *Al Qaeda and What it Means to be Modern*
Alex Houen, *Terrorism and Modern Literature: From Joseph Conrad to Ciaran Carson*.
Margaret Scanlan, *Plotting Terror: Novelists and Terrorists in Contemporary Fiction*.
Paul Virilio, *Ground Zero*
Slavoj Žižek, *Welcome to The Desert of the Real*