MHIS3075
Shock and Awe: A History of the Postmodern World
Session 1, Fully online/virtual 2020

Department of Modern History, Politics & International Relations

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff
Unit Convenor
Mark Hearn
mark.hearn@mq.edu.au
Contact via mark.hearn@mq.edu.au
Level 2 Hearing Hub
Thursday 10am-11 am

Credit points
10

Prerequisites
130cp at 1000 level or above OR (20cp in HIST or MHIS or POL or POIR or MHIX or POIX units at 2000 level)

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description
This unit explores the historical shift from modernity to post-modernity underway since the late twentieth century, tracing: the history of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, and the emergence of the neo-liberal culture of enterprise that has characterised the global economy since the 1990s; the tension between notions of progress and their environmental consequences; and the nature of war and terror in the post-modern world. The unit also considers how post-modernity manifests in culture and the historical context of these cultural expressions. Post-modernism is explored as a manifestation of the historical shift to post-modernity, and the unit considers a range of post-modernist historical texts, and texts which challenge these interpretations.

Important Academic Dates
Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at https://www.mq.edu.au/study/calendar-of-dates

Learning Outcomes
On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

ULO1: Develop critical thinking and analytical skills.
ULO2: Identify and apply key historiographical concepts.
ULO3: Build personal and communication skills through participation in seminar
ULO4: Identify socially complex problems, formulate own questions, and work out paths of investigation/creative resolution.

ULO5: Reflect on how you have analysed information and solved problems, and incorporate lessons learned into future work.

ULO6: Treat information in an ethical manner.

Assessment Tasks

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update
Assessment details are no longer provided here as a result of changes due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.
Students should consult iLearn for revised unit information.
Find out more about the Coronavirus (COVID-19) and potential impacts on staff and students

General Assessment Information

Late Submission Penalty: “Unless a Special Consideration request has been submitted and approved, (a) a penalty for lateness will apply – two (2) marks out of 100 will be deducted per day for assignments submitted after the due date – and (b) no assignment will be accepted more than seven (7) days (incl. weekends) after the original submission deadline. No late submissions will be accepted for timed assessments – e.g. quizzes, online tests.”

Delivery and Resources

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update
Any references to on-campus delivery below may no longer be relevant due to COVID-19.
Please check here for updated delivery information: https://ask.mq.edu.au/account/pub/display/unit_status

RESOURCES
MACQUARIE LIBRARY A comprehensive bibliography for this course, covering a range of themes and pertinent to both the research and tutorial essays is included in the list of research essay questions. Copies of these works will be found in the university library. Key books will be found in RESERVE. The reserve area of the library (level 2) holds essential books, videos and DVDs. It also holds items which are in high demand. It is for this reason that it is often the first port-of-call. However, there are restrictions on borrowing these items. Reserve items are only available on a short-term basis. Where an item is held in reserve this will be annotated on the catalogue. E-Reserve E-reserve is the place that you will check for journal articles, book chapters and lecture notes. These are documents which have been scanned and made available
online.

WEBSITE

Interpreting Postmodernity: website created by Unit Convenor Mark Hearn to introduce the course and highlight research and relevant speeches, documents, images and readings.
www.interpretingpostmodernity.net

RESEARCH ESSAY QUESTIONS

Due Date: Friday, 1 May 2020, midnight. Word Length: 3,000 words. Below is a list of essay questions with references for each, and recommended reading relevant to the lectures and the seminar program. Other relevant books or journal articles may be cited in addition to those recommended below. Students are required to cite at least eight books or journal articles relevant to the question in your essay discussion and in the bibliography. Web sites may be cited in addition to this minimum. Please number the pages of your essay and write out the question at the beginning of your essay, precisely as it is described below.

Writing your Essays: Please consult the Department of Modern History’s guidelines for writing essays in history. Pay particular attention to properly footnoting your essays.

Submitting your essay: Please submit your essay via Turnitin.

Topic 1: How have historians assessed the nature of postmodernity?


https://unitguides.mq.edu.au/unit_offerings/123931/unit_guide/print

Topic 2: How have historians assessed the characteristics of modernity in the twentieth century?


Topic 3: Does postmodernism offer a new path for historical analysis, or are the advocates of “pomophobia” justified?

Topic 4: Assess the response by historians to Foucault’s work. Do its weaknesses outweigh its benefits for enhancing our understanding of the past?

Andrew Barry, Foucault and Political Reason, Liberalism, Neo-Liberalism and Rationalitie Ucl
Topic 5: How have historians assessed the opportunities and problems associated with applying the ‘linguistic turn’ to the study of gender history?

**Topic 6: Why did modernity declare war on nature? Assess the historiographical debate.**

Topic 7: Why are ‘risk’ and ‘barbarism’ the paradigms of postmodern warfare? Assess the historiographical debate.


**Topic 8: Is Islamist terrorism a postmodern phenomenon? Assess the historiographical debate.**


Topic 9: Has neo-liberalism defined postmodernity? Assess the historiographical debate.

Topic 10: How effectively does Jameson’s critique of ‘late capitalism’ interpret the historical development of postmodern culture?


Topic 11: How has the fall of the Berlin Wall led historians to rethink the history of modernity?

https://unitguides.mq.edu.au/unit_offerings/123931/unit_guide/print
Unit Schedule

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update
The unit schedule/topics and any references to on-campus delivery below may no longer be

Vaclav Havel, To the castle and back, Vintage London 2008.
David Lyon, Postmodernity, University of Minnesota Press 1999 ch.6.
Charles S. Maier, ‘What Have We Learned since 1989?’ Contemporary European History, Volume 18, Special Issue 03, August 2009, pp.253-269.
Pankaj Mishra, From the Ruins of Empire: The Revolt Against the West and the Remaking of Asia, Allen Lane 2012.
Philipp Ther, Europe Since 1989, Princeton University Press, 2016;

https://unitguides.mq.edu.au/unit_offers/123931/unit_guide/print
relevant due to COVID-19. Please consult iLearn for latest details, and check here for updated delivery information: https://ask.mq.edu.au/account/pub/display/unit_status

MHIS3075 Seminar Program 2020

Week One (24 February)
Introduction and allocation of seminar presentation topics.

Week Two (2 March)
Topic 1: Interpreting Postmodernity

Seminar discussion questions: What are the characteristics of postmodernism? Is postmodernity an historical period, and does it have historical precedents?

Week Three (9 March)
Topic 2: Creative Destruction: Modernity and Modernism

Seminar discussion questions: How does Harvey characterise the project of modernity? Why is Stravinsky’s Rite of Spring ‘barbaric’? How did Bolshevik ‘War Communism’ reflect the modern project? Does the demolition of the Pruitt-Igoe complex represent the moment ‘modern architecture died’?

Week Four (16 March)
Topic 3: Pomophobia? The Critics of Postmodern Interpretation
Beverley Southgate, Postmodernism in History: Fear or Freedom? ch.1; Willie Thompson, Postmodernism and History, ch.1; Richard J. Evans In Defence of History, Introduction; Review of In Defence of History by Professor Antony Easthope, Manchester Metropolitan University, Textual Practice, vol.12, no. 3 (Winter 1998).

Seminar discussion questions: How does Southgate suggest that historians can overcome ‘pomophobia’? Is Thompson right to argue that postmodernism ‘has nothing to offer historians?’
Why did Evans argue that postmodernism generated a 'crisis' for historians? Why does Easthope assert that 'Richard J. Evans did not really write In Defence of History'?

Week Five (23 March)

**Topic 4: Fearless Speech: Michel Foucault's History of the Present**


**Seminar discussion questions:** Why does Said argue that Foucault leaves no reader unchanged? What does Foucault suggest that we can learn from the 'dark legends' of the lives of infamous men? How does O'Farrell suggest historians can benefit from Foucault's methods? Why does Merquior suggest she’s wasting her time?

Week Six (30 March)

**Topic 5: Poststructuralism: the Narrative Subject and the ‘Linguistic Turn’**


**Seminar discussion questions:** Why does Munslow argue that reality and representation work together in the historians’ construction of the past? Why does Joyce argue that the focus on narrative has destabilised the study of history? How does Walkowitz argue that poststructuralism has effected the historical interpretations of power and gender?

Week Seven (6 April)

**Topic 6: Progress and Nature**


**Seminar discussion questions:** Why in modernity did nature stand for ‘the other of humanity’, as Zygmunt Bauman argues? Why does Blackbourn claim that writing about the shaping of the German landscape is to write about how modern Germany was shaped? Has resistance to climate change undermined Rachel Carson’s legacy?

Week Eight (27 April)

**Topic 7: Postmodern War**

Eric Hobsbawm, ‘Barbarism: A User’s Guide’, in *On History*; Red Cross Survey; Christopher

**Seminar discussion questions:** Why are ‘risk’ and ‘barbarism’ the paradigms of postmodern warfare? Can Lockheed help lift ‘the fog of war’ and reduce risk?

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**Week Nine (4 May)**

**Topic 8: Postmodern Terror**


**Seminar discussion questions:** How has the nature of political terror changed in the late twentieth century? Have western nations developed effective strategies to counter it? Is Khan right to argue that terrorism is ‘the most spectacular postmodern manifestation’? Why does Mishra describe Islamic State as a ‘postmodern collage’?

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**Week Ten (11 May)**

**Topic 9: The Enterprising Citizen: Neo-Liberalism**


**Seminar discussion questions:** Does the globalization of organised crime reflect the condition of postmodernity? What are the chief characteristics of advanced or neo-liberalism? Does neo-liberalism create ‘enterprise workers’ or the ‘Precariat’?

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**Week Eleven (18 May)**

**Topic 10: Fitter, Happier? Postmodern Culture**


**Seminar discussion questions:** Why does Jameson argue that postmodern culture reflects the logic of late capitalism? Has the ‘real’ been displaced by digital technology in postmodern
culture? How do works such as Crash, ‘Fitter Happier’ and Blade Runner reflect a response to postmodernity?

**Week Twelve (25 May)**

**Topic 11: Opening the Wall: Postmodern Reflections on Modernity**


**Seminar discussion questions**: What lessons does Snyder suggest should be drawn from the history of twentieth century totalitarianism? Why does Havel argue that we must face the future with ‘a new, post-modern face’? Can the project of modernity adapt to the Anthropocene? How does Todorov suggest that we should take the history of the twentieth century into the twenty-first?

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**Policies and Procedures**

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from Policy Central (https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policy-central). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

- Academic Appeals Policy
- Academic Integrity Policy
- Academic Progression Policy
- Assessment Policy
- Fitness to Practice Procedure
- Grade Appeal Policy
- Complaint Management Procedure for Students and Members of the Public
- **Special Consideration Policy** (Note: The Special Consideration Policy is effective from 4 December 2017 and replaces the Disruption to Studies Policy.)

Students seeking more policy resources can visit the Student Policy Gateway (https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/student-policy-gateway). It is your one-stop-shop for the key policies you need to know about throughout your undergraduate student journey.

If you would like to see all the policies relevant to Learning and Teaching visit Policy Central (https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policy-central).
**Student Code of Conduct**

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: [https://students.mq.edu.au/study/getting-started/student-conduct](https://students.mq.edu.au/study/getting-started/student-conduct)

**Results**

Results published on platform other than eStudent, (eg. iLearn, Coursera etc.) or released directly by your Unit Convenor, are not confirmed as they are subject to final approval by the University. Once approved, final results will be sent to your student email address and will be made available in eStudent. For more information visit [ask.mq.edu.au](http://ask.mq.edu.au) or if you are a Global MBA student contact [globalmba.support@mq.edu.au](mailto:globalmba.support@mq.edu.au)

**Student Support**

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit [http://students.mq.edu.au/support/](http://students.mq.edu.au/support/)

**Learning Skills**

Learning Skills ([mq.edu.au/learningskills](http://mq.edu.au/learningskills)) provides academic writing resources and study strategies to help you improve your marks and take control of your study.

- **Getting help with your assignment**
- **Workshops**
- **StudyWise**
- **Academic Integrity Module**

The Library provides online and face to face support to help you find and use relevant information resources.

- **Subject and Research Guides**
- **Ask a Librarian**

**Student Enquiry Service**

For all student enquiries, visit Student Connect at [ask.mq.edu.au](http://ask.mq.edu.au)

If you are a Global MBA student contact [globalmba.support@mq.edu.au](mailto:globalmba.support@mq.edu.au)

**Equity Support**

Students with a disability are encouraged to contact the Disability Service who can provide appropriate help with any issues that arise during their studies.

**IT Help**

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit [http://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/offices_and_units/information_technology/help/](http://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/offices_and_units/information_technology/help/).

When using the University’s IT, you must adhere to the [Acceptable Use of IT Resources Policy](http://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/offices_and_units/information_technology/help/).
The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.