

Exploring Posthumanism

BTP2NA_T_20

Instructor: Bülgözdi Imola bulgozdi.imola@gmail.com	Office hours: Tue 12.30 – 13.30 and Wed 2 - 3
	Rm: 116/1
Wed 4 – 5.40	Rm XVI/1 (subject to change)

“A reader lives a thousand lives before he dies.”

G.R.R. Martin

The course provides an introduction for doctoral students to the critical posthumanities, conceptualized by Rosi Braidotti as a supra/disciplinary, rhizomic field of contemporary knowledge production, and to explore in more detail the possibilities of research that result in the actualization of minority-driven knowledges. As an entryway to this burgeoning field two recent articles by Braidotti will be discussed, the first of which, “A Theoretical Framework for the Critical Posthumanities” (2018), not only explores the key conceptual and methodological perspectives, but explicitly sets out to tackle “the implications of the critical posthumanities for practices in the contemporary ‘research’ university.” What I find illuminating in Braidotti’s proposal and believe to be helpful for PhD students is how familiar critical approaches (gender, queer, feminist, postcolonial, cultural, media, race, migration, disability, film and television, trauma, memory, etc. studies) combine in a supra-disciplinary framework, creating new discursive practices within the context of the Anthropocene.

The course endeavors to foster active engagement with the theoretical texts via close reading and annotation of texts as part of the preparation for classes, as well as relying on in-class discussions dedicated to the analysis of creative works to put theory into practice. By taking a workshop-like approach, I invite students to engage on both a theoretical and practical level and to actively contribute to the content of the course: recommending texts for classroom discussion will ensure the integration of their specific research areas. The course will also produce the tangible result of a draft presentation on the students’ topic of choice, which can be easily developed into a conference presentation.

The course is based on an approach that regards social responsibility as a core principle which not only restructures subjectivity as “a collective assemblage that encompasses human and nonhuman actors, technological mediation, animals, plants, and the planet as a whole,” but also proposes an affirmative, inclusive ethics. The course will focus on the nature-culture and media-nature-cultural continua, on alternative knowing subject formations, and the possible frameworks that oppose unsustainable advanced capitalism that may contribute to a collective construction of hope for the future.

Under the current regulations, the course is planned to be a face-to-face, classroom-based course, HOWEVER, if due to the pandemic we have to switch to remote teaching, PLEASE be prepared to use the University of Debrecen E-Learning system at elearning.unideb.hu. In case of such a switch, the course evaluation methods (e.g., for class participation) and grading rules may be subject to change. You will be notified of these changes by the instructor if needed.

It is our shared responsibility to observe effective hygiene rules and follow the relevant government, university and faculty regulations regarding the pandemic. If you become ill or experience any symptoms, please stay home to protect others from infection.

Requirements:

- Due to the workshop-like structure, students are expected to regularly **annotate theoretical texts** as a group (electronically available for all, including the teacher), **formulating questions/comments before class**, which will provide the basis for in-class discussion.
- **Compilation of a list of sources relevant to your research area** (based on the readers, essay collections I ordered + materials accessible via electronic databases see March 2 – workshop session). Narrow down your list to **one (article/chapter-length) for in-class discussion and pair this theoretical text with a creative work of your choice** (literature, film, music video, videogame, etc.) by **March 23**.
- **Student topics:** use your theoretical and creative texts of choice to prepare a **PPT with questions/topics to facilitate group discussion**. Introduce your own research topic through the lens of posthumanism and lead the discussion in part of the class.
Topic of choice: besides the ones already proposed in the syllabus (ecocriticism, technology, race, animal studies) any of the following and more are welcome: indigenous, new media, gender, disability, migration, extinction, game studies – virtually any of these and their combinations can be investigated from a posthumanist perspective.
- Final two classes: a **DRAFT PPT of a 20-min conference presentation** based on the classroom discussion you led. As the group will have read/watched and discussed both the theory and the creative work, students will have the opportunity to **give informed feedback to their peers**.

Course Schedule

Feb 9 – Orientation

Ferrando, Francesca. "Crash Course: The Posthuman." *YouTube*

Feb 16 – Introduction of main tenets, overview of available materials

Ferrando, Francesca. "Posthumanism." *Kilden Journal of Gender Research*, Vol. 2, July 2014, 168-172.

Braidotti, Rosi. "A Theoretical Framework for the Critical Posthumanities." *Theory, Culture & Society*, Special Issue: Transversal Posthumanities, 2018, 1-31.

London, Jack. "To Build a Fire"

Feb 23 – Introduction continued + short works

Braidotti, Rosi. "Posthuman Critical Theory." *Journal of Posthuman Studies*. Vol. 1 no. 1, 2017, 9-25.

Scalzi, John. "When the Yogurt Took Over: A Short Story." *Whatever*. whatever.scalzi.com, Oct 2, 2010.

2-3 short films (5-10 mins) from the series *Love, Death, and Robots*

Mar 2 – Workshop session

Discussion of possible links between the students' own research topics and some aspect(s) of Posthuman Critical Theory. The students are required to check the contents of the following works (available either electronically or purchased for the institute library) and list the five most relevant articles/chapters.

Antennae. The Journal of Nature in Visual Culture. <https://www.antennae.org.uk/>

The Anthropocene: Approaches and Contexts for Literature and the Humanities. Edited by Seth T. Reno. Routledge, 2022.

The Cambridge Companion to Literature and the Posthuman. Edited by Bruce Clarke and Manuela Rossini. Cambridge UP, 2017.

Ethical Futures and Global Science Fiction. Edited by Zachary Kendall et al. Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.

A Feminist Companion to the Posthumanities. Edited by Cecilia Åsberg and Rosi Braidotti. Springer International Publishing, 2018.

Posthumanism in Art and Science: A Reader. Edited by Giovanni Aloisio and Susan McHugh. Columbia UP, 2021. Vermeulen, Pieter. *Literature and the Anthropocene*. Routledge, 2020.

Mar 9 – Posthumanism and technology

Kłosiński, Michał. "Games and Utopia." *Acta Ludologica*, 2018, Vol. 1, No. 1, 4-14.

Owen, David. "Chapter One: Digital Like Me." *Player and Avatar: The Affective Potential of Videogames*. McFarland, 2017. 23-59.

Where the Water Tastes Like Wine. Good Shepherd Entertainment, 2018.

Orwell: Ignorance Is Strength. Osmotic Studios, 2018.

Mar 16 – Ecocritical perspectives with Zsófia Novák

Theoretical text tba

Smith, Sherri L. *Orleans*. Putnam and Sons, 2013.

Mar 23 – Student topic: Posthumanism and companion species László Borbála

Texts tba

Mar 30 – Consultation Week

Apr 6 – Student topic: Posthumanism and race Szendrei Bianka

Texts tba

Apr 13 – Student topic(s)

Apr 20 – Student topic(s)

Apr 27 – Student topic(s)

May 4 – Workshop session: draft presentations, peer feedback

May 11 – Workshop session: draft presentations, peer feedback

Recommended readings:

Braidotti, Rosi. *Posthumanism*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2013.

Braidotti, Rosi. *Posthuman Knowledge*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2019.

Farca, Gerald. *Playing Dystopia: Nightmarish Worlds in Video Games and the Player's Aesthetic Response*. Columbia UP, 2019.

Frissen, Valerie et al. "Homo Ludens 2.0: Play, Media, and Identity." *Playful Identities: The Ludification of Digital Media Cultures*. Edited by Valerie Frissen et al. Amsterdam UP, 2015. 9-50.

Haraway, Donna J. *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Duke UP, 2016.

Heise, Ursula K. "The Posthuman Turn: Rewriting Species in Recent American Literature." *A Companion to American Literary Studies*. Edited by Caroline F. Levander and Robert S. Levine. Wiley-Blackwell, 2011. 454-68.

Herbrechter, Stefan. *Posthumanism: A Critical Analysis*. Bloomsbury, 2013.

Holloway-Attaway, Lissa. "Chapter 8: Embodying the Posthuman Subject: Digital Humanities and Permeable Material Practice." *A Feminist Companion to the Posthumanities*, Edited by Cecilia Åsberg and Rosi Braidotti. Springer International Publishing, 2018.

Roberts, Celia. "Chapter 17: Practising Ambivalence: The Feminist Politics of Engaging with Technoscience." *A Feminist Companion to the Posthumanities*. Edited by Cecilia Åsberg and Rosi Braidotti. Springer International Publishing, 2018.

Vermeulen, Pieter. "Posthuman Affect" *European Journal of English Studies*, 18:2, 2014, 121-134

Wolfe, Cary. Introduction: What is Posthumanism?. *What is Posthumanism?* U of Minnesota P, 2010.