

Hannah Arendt Seminar
PS 420
Fall 2010
Arendt Center—Tuesday 4:40-7:00

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Office Hours:

This course is dedicated to reading some of Hannah Arendt's seminal works with a particular focus on her thinking about science and art as these two human activities relate to the human condition. In addition to close readings of some of Arendt's most important books and essays, we will also explore the challenge that scientific rationality and artificial intelligence pose to the humanity of humans. In conjunction with the 2010 Arendt Center Conference on "Human Being in an Inhuman Age," we will ask how Arendt's work helps us to think about the ways that automation, artificial intelligence, and rational machines are transforming the very nature of what it means to be human. In addition to Bard undergraduates, the participants will include visiting fellows from the Hannah Arendt Center for Ethical and Political Thinking. The course is also open to select students from the Center for Curatorial Studies (CCS). Beyond scheduled class meetings, students are expected to attend lectures and other events sponsored by the Arendt Center and CCS.

A Seminar

This class is an advanced seminar. You are required and expected to attend every class meeting and to be prepared. Reading the texts is only the bare minimum preparation, and is, on its own, not sufficient. For the main text, *The Human Condition*, you are expected to read it in its entirety in the first few weeks of the semester. You are then to re-read it as we go through it. There will be other texts to read during the semester. You need to allot a substantial amount of time to read these texts. This is essential. The seminar format requires that you not only read, but also engage with these texts *before* you come to class.

Lateness

As a matter of respect for your fellow participants, you are to arrive on time.

Assignments

The principal writing exercise in this class will be a short final assignment of about 5 pages. This paper is due on the final day of classes.

In addition to the final paper, you are required to hand in a written assignment every week. You can take 2 free passes on these assignments, but every assignment missed

after that will impact your final evaluation. Either I will assign a topic or you will pick one quotation from the assigned text and, in **two double-spaced pages or less**, briefly state its relevance, importance, and interest to the author's work and the themes of our seminar. These are not informal response papers, but short and thoughtful explorative essays. These weekly papers are to be e-mailed to me in Word .rtf format by **9 pm on Tuesday evening the day before our seminar**. They will serve as a spur to class discussion.

Arendt	The Human Condition	Chicago
Kurzweil, Ray	The Singularity is near	Viking
Turkle, Sherry	Simulation and its Discontents	MIT
Berkowitz, Roger, Tom Keenan, Jeff Katz	Thinking in Dark Times	Fordham
Arendt, Hannah	Men in Dark Times	Mariner Books
Crawford, Matthew	Shop Class as Soulcraft: An Inquiry into the Value of Work (optional)	Penguin
Connolly, William	Neuropolitics: Thinking, Culture, Speed (optional)	Minnesota

Week One, Aug. 31

Prologue

Denktagebuch:

Erde: 39, 59, 104, 130, 144, 168ff, 173, 189ff, 216, 307, 310, 325,
378, 390, 438, 445, 480, 535ff, 555.

Mensch: 22f, 53 f, 87f, 168f, 175f, 323-341, 472f,

Week Two, Sept. 7

Chapter One: The Human Condition

Denktagebuch:

37-38, 15-18 (Was ist Politik?)

Week Three, Sept. 14

Chapter Two: The Public and Private Realm

Week Four, Sept. 21

Ray Kurzweill, *The Singularity is Near*

Jaron Lanier, *You Are Not a Gadget*

Week Five, Sept. 28

Sherry Turkle, *Simulation and Its Discontents.*

William Connolly, *NeuroPolitics: Thinking, Culture, Speed* (chp. 1 & pgs. 22-31)

Week Six, Oct. 5

Rescheduled: Thursday, Oct. 7, 4-7.

Richard Sherwin, *Visualizing Law in the Age of the Neo-Baroque* (excerpts)

Pravna Mistry, *Ghost in the Machine,*

http://www.pranavmistry.com/projects/ghostinthemachine/files/gitm_pranav.pdf

Harold Cohen, Further Exploits of Aaron, Painter

<http://www.kurzweilcyberart.com/aaron/pdf/furtherexploits.pdf>

Oct. 12—Fall Break. No class

Week Seven, Oct. 19

Arendt, *Essays in Understanding; Between Past and Future*

Arendt, *Understanding and Politics* (307-327)

Arendt, *Social Science Techniques and the Study of Concentration Camps*

Arendt, *The Conquest of Space and the Stature of Man*

Oct. 22-23: Human Being in an Inhuman Age

Conference attendance is mandatory.

Week Eight, Oct. 26

Discussion of Conference and Presentations of panels.

Week Nine, Nov. 2

Chapter Three: Labor

Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* (Excerpts)

Denktagebuch: February, 1951, pg. 57

Week Ten, Nov. 9

Chapter Four: Work

Matthew Crawford, *Shop Class as Soulcraft: An Inquiry into the Value of Work*

Week Eleven, Nov. 16

Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude*

Marion von Osten, *Another Criteria... or, What is the Attitude of a Work in the Relations of Production of its Time?*

Week Twelve, Nov. 23

Chapter Five: Action

Plurality in *Denktagebuch*: 65, 66, 70

Week Thirteen, Nov. 30

Chapter VI: The Vita Active and the Modern Age

Denktagebuch 66, 71-72

Roger Berkowitz, *The Gift of Science* (chp. 1: From Geometry to Science)

Week Fourteen, Dec. 7

Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*

Week Fifteen, Dec. 14

Completion Days