

Course: EN 680: Contemporary Critical Theory

Session: Spring 2025

Professor: C. S Schreiner

Meeting Time: (M 2:00-4:50)

EN 680 Statement of Purpose (On Resistance and Escape)

This is a focused graduate seminar on contemporary critical theory. The theorists to be studied are **Emmanuel Levinas** (French) and his theories of substitution and escape; **Ernst Junger** (German) and his later theories of anti-authoritarianism and resistance to fascism. Related **Marxist** and **Existentialist** issues will arise and be studied as the semester proceeds. The two required novels are Kobo Abe's **Woman in the Dunes** and Ernst Junger's **Eumeswil**.

Structure: The structure of the seminar is a combination of lectures and discussions. The two required papers as follows: (1) "Doing Theory" = Elucidation and explication of above Theories, and (2) "Applying Theory" = Application of Theory in literary criticism of one or more novels studied in class.

READINGS

Primary Theory Texts (required)

- ◆ Emmanuel Levinas, **On Escape** (1935/Stanford UP 2003) [total primary pages = 24]
- ◆ Ernst Junger, **The Forest Passage** (1951/ TELOS Press 2013) [total primary pages = 97]
- ◆ Emmanuel Levinas, "Substitution," 1974 (Chapter IV in **Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence**, pp. 99-129). This chapter was originally published separately and can be found in Emmanuel Levinas, **Collected Philosophical Papers**, trans. Alphonso Lingis [total primary pages = 30]

TOTAL THEORY PAGES = 151

Secondary Theory Texts and platforms

- ◆ <https://www.afterbabel.com/>
- ◆ Nathanael Green, **Fascism: An Anthology** (Harlan Davidson, 1968)
- ◆ Alphonso Lingis, "Translator's Introduction" pp. 11-39 in Emmanuel Levinas, **Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence** (1974)
- ◆ Steven Crowell, Ed., **The Cambridge Companion to Existentialism** (2013)

FICTIONS (required)

- ◆ Kobo Abe, novel, **Woman in the Dunes** (1962) [pages = 239]
- ◆ Ernst Junger, novel, **Eumeswil** (1977/TELOS Press 1993) [pages = 300]

TOTAL FICTION PAGES = 539

Background (and alternate) Fictional Texts (discussed by Professor)

- ◆ Stefan Zweig, **The Post-Office Girl** (1982/NYRB 2008)
- ◆ Henry James, novella, **In the Cage** (1900) [pages = 88]
- ◆ Geoffrey Household, novella, **Rogue Male** (1939; 2007) [total pages = 180]
- ◆ Yuko Tsushima, **Woman Running in the Mountains** (NYRB 2022)
- ◆ Doris Lessing, story, **"To Room Nineteen"** (1980) [pages = 30]; alternate = [275 pages]

Note well about Alternative Texts: If you are familiar with some of the fiction readings from the professor's other courses, that is all to the good, as this course provides the opportunity to apply theory and synthesize and consolidate what you think you know and understand. Substitution is feasible. For example, if you have already read **Woman in the Dunes**, you can read Kobo Abe's **The Ark Sakura** or **The Ruined Map**, or perhaps **The Face of Another**...Here's another place for substitution: Instead of Doris Lessing's story about suicide, "To Room Nineteen," you can study the considerably more upbeat novel by Yuko Tsushima, **Woman Running in the Mountains** (2022). The point is to apply theory to a woman's writing's about substitution, resistance, and escape.

TWO CRITICAL PAPERS

Students will write **two papers**, length TBD

- (1) Doing Theory: Theorizing Levinas and/or Junger's theories (clarification/explication/reflection/analysis)
- (2) Applying Theory: Literary application of theory to novels and stories (your choice)

Official Schedule

Mon. January 27: INTRODUCTIONS; SYLLABUS, etc. Handout = N. Greene, **"Genesis of Fascism"**

Mon. February 3: Levinas, **On Escape** 49-73

Mon. February 10: Ernst Junger, **The Forest Passage** 1-43

Mon. February 17: **The Forest Passage** 43-97

Mon. February 24: Emmanuel Levinas, **"Substitution"**; Kobo Abe, **Woman in the Dunes** 1-83

Mon. March 3: **Woman in the Dunes** 84-155

Mon. March 10: **Woman in the Dunes** 156-239

Mon. March 17: **Spring Break**: Read introduction to Eumeswil: **"The Anarchic Imagination"** (vii-xxi)

Mon. March 24: Ernst Junger, **Eumeswil "The Teachers"** 3-69

Mon. March 31: **Eumeswil "Isolation and Security"** 70-123

Mon. April 7: **Eumeswil "Night Bar Notes"** 124-160

Mon. April 14: **Eumeswil "A Day in the Casbah"** 160-272

Mon. April 21: **Eumeswil "A Day in the City"** 273-287; **"Concerning the Forest"** 288-301;

Mon. April 28: **"Epilogue" 301-303**

Mon. May 5: **Preparation for Formal Presentation**

Mon. May 12: **LAST CLASS: Presentation**

AI Statement:

"The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a research tool is allowed, but it must not replace the student's original ideas, creativity, and critical thinking. AI should be used only as a tool to assist in research, and proper attribution must be given to any AI-generated content. All work submitted for grading must be the sole product of the student's endeavors. Any violation of academic integrity will be dealt with accordingly. Example of attribution language: The author generated this text in part with GPT-3, OpenAI's large-scale language-generation model. Upon generating draft language, the author reviewed, edited, and revised the language to their own liking and takes ultimate responsibility for the content of this publication." https://medium.com/@r Watkins_7167/Updating-your-course-syllabus-for-chatgpt-965f4b57b00

Attendance Policy:

Two absences are the absolute limit. On the third absence your final grade (whatever that is after calculation) will be dropped a full grade. After that, each absence is a drop of one third of a grade from where you stand after the initial drop of a full letter grade. Most importantly, keep in touch by email or phone regarding your absences, emergencies, missed assignments, and so on. Communication is MUCH better than silence when it comes to these official matters.

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), UOG will reasonably accommodate individuals with disabilities. You, the student, must self-disclose the need for an accommodation by contacting the ADA Officer at 735-2244/2971. If you disclose your need to me, the instructor, then I must report it to the ADA Officer. Note that documentation is necessary to establish a disability and the need for an accommodation."

"Plagiarism is the deliberate attempt to deceive the reader through the appropriation and representation as one's own the work and words of others. Academic plagiarism occurs when a writer repeatedly uses more than four words from a printed source without the use of quotation marks and a precise reference to the original source in a work presented as the author's [read plagiarist's] own research and scholarship. Continuous paraphrasing without serious interaction with another person's views, by way or argument or the addition of new material and insights, is a form of plagiarism in academic work."