

Virtual Worlds (CMLIT 504)
Th 2:30-5:30 (430 Burrowes)

Professor Eric Hayot
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Office hours: By appointment; I'm on campus daily.
<http://www.personal.psu.edu/euh2/>

Texts:

Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Creation of the World, or, Globalization*
Eric Auerbach, *Mimesis*
Silvestris, *Cosmographia* (Columbia UP edition – used for \$4 at Amazon)
Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking*
Koyré, *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe* (Johns Hopkins edition – used at Amazon for \$6)
Ronen, *Possible Worlds in Literary Theory* (recommended, not required)
Abbott, *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions*
Kaku, *Parallel Worlds: A Journey Through Creation, Higher Dimensions, and the Future of the Cosmos*
Dolezel, *Heterocosmica: Fiction and Possible Worlds*
Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future*
Blizzard Entertainment, *World of Warcraft*
Baudrillard, *Simulations*
O'Neill, *Netherland*
Balzac, *Le Père Goriot* (not at bookstore; get Norton Critical Edition if you can)

In addition to these we will cover a wide variety of primary and secondary sources, all of which will be available for download as PDF files from my website, at the following URL: <http://www.personal.psu.edu/euh2/downloads.html>. You will need a username and password to access the readings. You are responsible for obtaining them, printing them out, and bringing them to class with you.

Course information:

World, n.

I. Human existence; a period of this.

1. a. Chiefly *this world, the world*: the earthly state of human existence; this present life. *to (unto, OE. oð) the world's end*: as long as human things shall last, to the end of time (with admixture of senses 7, 9). Similarly in phrases such as *as long as the* or *this world lasts*, and *in this world*.

...

II. The earth or a region of it; the universe or a part of it.

7. a. The earth and all created things upon it; the terraqueous globe and its inhabitants. (See also 21a, 22a.)

This is our subject. How we imagine it; its singularity or multiplicity; its relation to the globe; to the planet; to globalization; to history; its limitations on the possible; its articulations thereof; its self-containment; its arbitration of the boundary between the virtual and the real; its virtuality; its reality, nonetheless; the forms of its representation and its imagination; its conceptual history; its mapping; its status as a limit to the imagination, to philosophy, to thought; that it is a goad to those same. The present moment as one of globalization; as one in which virtual worlds become “real”; how those

interact; their relation to utopia; to history; to law; to literature, to nature. All these toward a theory of modernity.

Work and grading:

To be determined.

Lateness and absences:

There are no excused absences unless you need to represent the university in some official way (as an athlete, for instance) or it is a religious holiday for you. Don't be late to class.

I don't accept late work unless you talk about it with me in advance. Unexcused late work will receive a grade of 0. If you are not in class when something is due (or when we take an exam), you will receive a grade of 0, unless you have an excused absence.

Plagiarism and academic honesty:

If you use someone else's ideas, whether through direct quotation or paraphrase, you need to say so. Use parenthetical references and a works cited list (as explained in the *MLA Style Guide*, available in the library or at the bookstore) to show your reader where your ideas are coming from.

Dishonesty of any other kind will not be tolerated. Dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, fabricating information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students. Acts of dishonesty will result in academic sanctions and will be reported to the University's Judicial Affairs office for possible further disciplinary sanction.

Equal access:

Penn State encourages qualified people with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities and is committed to the policy that all people shall have equal access to programs, facilities, and admissions without regard to personal characteristics not related to ability, performance, or qualifications as determined by University policy or by state or federal authorities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation in this course or have questions about physical access, please tell me as soon as possible.

Daily syllabus. Have everything read before coming to class.

--what is a world?—

Week 1 August 28
Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Creation of the World, or, Globalization*
Nicholas Luhmann, "World Society as Social System," in *Essays on Self-Reference*
Oxford English Dictionary, "world, n." and "world, v."

--mimesis (*Mimesis*)--

Week 2 September 4
Auerbach, *Mimesis*, x-xxxii, 1-284

Week 3 September 11 (boo, scary!)
Auerbach, *Mimesis*, 285-574

--cosmographies (discovery)--

Week 4 September 18
Silvestrus, *Cosmographia*
Vespucci, from *Four Voyages*
Pickles, "Maps and Worlds," from *A History of Spaces*
Kadir, from *Columbus and the Ends of the Earth*
"An Historical Account of the Circumnavigation..." 1-69

Week 5 September 25
Dafoe, from *Robinson Crusoe*
Swift, from *Gulliver's Travels*
More, from *Utopia*

--cosmologies (physics)--

Week 6 October 2
Bruno, from *On the Infinite Universe and Worlds*
Koyré, *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe*

Week 7 October 9
Abbott, *Flatland: A Romance in Multiple Dimensions*
Kaku, *Parallel Worlds*

Week 8 October 16
Buchanan, from *Nexus: Small Worlds and the Groundbreaking Science of Networks*
Balzac, *Le Père Goriot*

--possible worlds (philosophy) and realism (literature)—

Week 9 October 23
Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking*
Ronen, from *Possible Worlds in Literary Theory*

Week 10 October 30
From *The Pillow Book of Sei Shonagon*
Perec, "A Gallery Portrait" and from *Species of Spaces*
Barthes, "The Reality-Effect" (from *The Rustle of Language*)
Iser, from *The Fictive and the Imaginary*

Week 11 November 6
Dolezel, *Heterocosmica: Fiction and Possible Worlds*

--between the virtual (utopia) and the real (9/11)--

- Week 12 November 13 – **will have to be rescheduled**
Bartle, from *Designing Virtual Worlds* (247-346)
Marx, “Theses on Feuerbach”
Anderson, from *Imagined Communities*
World of Warcraft / Second Life
**If you are not at all familiar with the cyberpunk tradition, please see *The Matrix*
and/or read William Gibson’s *Neuromancer*.
- Week 13 November 20
Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future*
World of Warcraft / Second Life

Thanksgiving Break Nov 24-28
- Week 14 December 4
Castronova, from *Synthetic Worlds*, and “The Right to Play”
Bartle, “Virtual Worldliness: What the Imaginary Asks of the Real”
Grimmelman, “Virtual Worlds and Comparative Law”
Heidegger, “The Age of the World Picture”
Pickles, “Cyber-empires and the New Politics of Digital Spaces,” from *A History of Spaces*
- Week 15 December 11
Baudrillard, *Simulations*
O’Neill, *Netherland*
Wilson, “Afterword: Worlding as Future Tactic”