

ENGL 653

What Was Postmodernism?

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In the first half of this class, we will explore postmodernism as a “cultural dominant,” to use Fredric Jameson’s term. For our purposes, that dominant is best understood as an often paranoid attempt to articulate and come to terms with the relationships between individuals and the large systems in which those individuals are enmeshed (including, for example, capitalism, patriarchy, white supremacy, the state, information and technological systems). In the second half, we will consider what comes *after* postmodernism. Does it make sense to see early 21st century literary and cultural production as “post-postmodernist”? What do scholars speak about when they speak about the “neoliberal novel,” the “novel of globalization,” the “new realism,” and other categories that have popped up in recent years? We will read a selection of novels for each of the two halves of the class, but our focus will be equally on (meta)accounts of postmodernism and its aftermath.

Theoretical/critical texts might include:

Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (selections)

Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism* (selections)

Andreas Huyssen, “Mapping the Postmodern”

Kwame Anthony Appiah, “Is the Post- in Postmodernism the Post- in Postcolonial?”

Madhu Dubey, *Signs and Cities: Black Literary Postmodernism* (selections)

Jeffrey Nealon, *Post-Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Just-in-Time Capitalism* (selections)

Rachel Greenwald Smith, *Affect and American Literature in the Age of Neoliberalism* (selections)

Jeremy Green, *Late Postmodernism: American Fiction at the Millennium* (selections)

Mark McGurl, *Everything and Less: The Novel in the Age of Amazon* (selections)

Mitchell Huehls and Rachel Greenwald Smith, eds., *Neoliberalism and Contemporary Literary Culture* (selections)

Fictional texts will likely be drawn from this list:

Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49*

Diane Johnson, *The Shadow Knows*

Don DeLillo, *Mao II*

E.L. Doctorow, *The Book of Daniel*

Colson Whitehead, *The Intuitionist*

Jonathan Franzen, *The Corrections*

Zadie Smith, *On Beauty*

Jennifer Egan, *Look at Me*

Gillian Flynn, *Gone Girl*

Ruth Ozeki, *A Tale for the Time Being*

Jessamine Chan, *The School for Good Mothers*