

Course Unit Descriptor

Study Programme: Comparative Literature with Theory of Literature
Course Unit Title: Literature and Capitalism in the 19th and 20th Centuries
Course Unit Code: 21KM003
Name of Lecturer(s): Assoc. Prof. Stevan Bradić, PhD
Type and Level of Studies: Master
Course Status (compulsory/elective): elective
Semester (winter/summer): winter
Language of instruction: English or Serbian
Mode of course unit delivery (face-to-face/distance learning): Face-to-face
Number of ECTS Allocated: 6
Prerequisites: /
Course Aims: The student is expected to adopt the methods of cultural materialism in the study of 19th- and 20th-century literature. Particular attention is given to the relationship between the literary market and literature itself, social and artistic forms, commodification, fetishization, reproduction and distribution of literary texts, as well as the specific status of literary linguistic labor.
Learning Outcomes: The student has mastered the methods of cultural materialism and is capable of independently analyzing specific works from the given period, as well as broader problems faced by literary and artistic production. The student understands the interplay of economic, political, and historical circumstances necessary for the formation of modern literary discourse, as well as the place of literature in the contemporary world.
Syllabus: Lectures Theoretical Perspective. Key concepts include linguistic labor, the commodification of linguistic labor, and the relations of production, reproduction, and distribution of literary texts, as well as the generation of surplus value. The course examines distinctions between productive and unproductive, concrete and abstract linguistic labor; the subsumption of labor under capital; and the fetishization of language. It further considers the figures of literary circulation—author, bookseller, publisher, retailer, buyer, and reader. Historical Perspective. Focus is placed on the social and historical conditions of literary production, including the emergence of capitalism, the formation of the bourgeoisie, and the continual revolutionizing of the means of production. The course includes the analysis of selected passages from <i>The Communist Manifesto</i> and <i>Capital</i> by Karl Marx. It addresses the rise of print culture, the expansion of literacy, the emergence of the literary market, "imagined communities," and print capitalism (as theorized by Benedict Anderson). It explores the interplay between social, historical, and artistic form, and the rise of the novel as a narcissistic, bourgeois genre, drawing on Georg Lukács' analysis of the novel. The advent of Romanticism and Realism is understood as a continuation of the internal contradictions within the social institution of literature. The course analyzes the concepts of art developed by Kant, Schiller, and Hegel from the standpoint of the subsumption of life under capital, as well as Lukács's understanding of Romanticism and Realism. Topics include the development of the mass market for printed books and the conflict between aesthetic

evaluation and the quantification of value; literature's reaction to the market and the emergence of autonomous literature and modernism; the works of Baudelaire, Flaubert, Rimbaud, and Mallarmé; the notions of pure poetry and pure commodity; and the opposition between high and low literature. The course also discusses Adorno's reading of modernism, autonomy, and resistance to capitalism.

The emergence of the avant-garde is examined as a reaction to the autonomous institution of art and its perceived impotence, including analysis of Peter Bürger's theory of the avant-garde. Post-war literature is discussed in the context of the continued revolutionizing of the means of reproduction and distribution of literary texts, the neo-avant-garde, and the failure of the historical avant-garde. The course concludes with the appearance of postmodernism, the collapse of the opposition between high and mass literature, and the implications of this collapse, including Pierre Bourdieu's analysis of the literary field, global markets, global publishing, and the concept of world and global literature.

Seminars

Application of theoretical approaches through the analysis of selected literary texts that correspond to the issues addressed during the theoretical component of the course.

Required Reading:

- Adorno, Theodor. *Aesthetic Theory*. (English translation, ed. Gretel Adorno & Rolf Tiedemann; trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor). University of Minnesota Press / Continuum. [University of Minnesota Press+1](#)
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. (English original). (The Serbian edition you mention was a translation)
- Benjamin, Walter. *Selected Essays*. (English collections; no single standard translation matches your "Eseji" edition)
- Beech, Dave. *Art and Value: Art's Economic Exceptionalism in Classical, Neoclassical and Marxist Economics*. Brill, 2015.
- Bürger, Peter. *Theory of the Avant-Garde*. (English translation of *Theorie der Avantgarde*)
- Brown, Nicholas. *Autonomy*. Duke University Press, 2019.
- Bradić, Stevan. "Mute Speech and the Danger of Writing: Rancière's Understanding of Literature." *Letopis Matice srpske*, Book 495, no. 3 (March 2015), pp. 299–320.
- Brown, Nicholas. "The Work of Art in the Era of its Real Subsumption under Capital." *Letopis Matice srpske*, Vol. 190, no. 4 (2014), pp. 480–501.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*. Translated by Susan Emanuel. Stanford University Press, 1996. [Stanford University Press+2Google Books+2](#)
- Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (original German: *Kritik der Urteilskraft*).
- Lukács, György. *Essays on Realism*. (English translation of *Essays on Realism*)
Lukács, György. *Goethe and His Age*. (Translation of *Goethe und sein Zeitalter*)
Lukács, György. *The Theory of the Novel*. (English version of *The Theory of the Novel*)
- Marx, Karl. *Theories of Surplus Value* (Volume IV of *Capital*).
--. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Vols. 1–3. (Penguin / Vintage editions)
- Rancière, Jacques. *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*. Continuum, 2004.
- Rosi-Landi, Ferruccio. *Language as Work and as Market*. (English translation of *Lingua come lavoro e come mercato*)
- Hegel, G. W. F. *Aesthetics*, Vols. I–III. (English translation of *Ästhetik*)
- Schiller, Friedrich. "Of the Aesthetic Education of Man" from *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*. (English translation of "Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen")

Weekly Contact Hours: 2

Lectures: 2

Practical work:

Teaching Methods: dialogical, multi-medial, textual

Knowledge Assessment (maximum of 100 points):

Pre-exam obligations	points	Final exam	points
Active class participation	10	written exam	
Practical work	/	oral exam	
Preliminary exam(s)	20	course essay	70
Seminar(s)			

The methods of knowledge assessment may differ; the table presents only some of the options: written exam, oral exam, project presentation, seminars, etc.