

EN 4/6353

20th Century Critical Theory

Fall 2013, MW 12:30

Professor: Peter DeGabriele

Cosmopolitan anyone?



This class will look at how contemporary literary theory and philosophy have responded to the questions and problems posed by cosmopolitanism. In particular, it will look at the opportunities and challenges posed by attempts to bring diverse cultures and identities together into one community. What happens to the identity of particular groups when they are brought into a community with other groups who do not share their beliefs? How does a potentially infinitely diverse community define its own identity? How do diverse and tolerant communities deal with violence, both from outside the community, and from within it? To explore these questions we will read philosophy and literary theory by Kant, Freud, Derrida, Foucault, Butler, and others. We will also read three literary texts that address the question of cosmopolitanism.

During the semester, you will write bi-weekly reading responses and sit for two exams. You will also write two essays, one which focuses on the work of one theorist, and one which looks at how the theoretical issues of cosmopolitanism play out in a literary text.