

LS 801 Reason and Passion II
Spring term 2023
Wednesdays (Online)
6:30 – 9:20 pm

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LS 801, Reason and Passion II, picks up chronologically and thematically from LS 800. Starting with several crucial texts that appeared in the decades following Jean-Jacques Rousseau, we will trace the influence of earlier ideas concerning reason and passion on the development of cultural, philosophical, and political ideas into the present. The goal is not to suggest a definitive line of thought from Rousseau to the current age, but to indicate how various streams of thought that resonate with the theme of reason and passion have had a lasting and important influence on modern thought. To this end we will read some classic critiques of reason—Adorno and Horkheimer’s famous analysis of Enlightenment reason, for instance—as well as some modern views of passion as a motivating force in contemporary culture—Philip Larkin’s poetry, for example. Whereas LS 800 focuses on Ancient, Medieval and Early Modern Eurocentric cultures (among others), the aim of LS 801 is to see how some of the central motifs from those times and places continue to influence our thinking.

In keeping with the procedures established in LS 800, I want you to send me each week a one or two page ‘response’ to the readings by the Sunday evening before our Wednesday class. One 10-15-page essay due toward the end of the semester rounds out the written requirements.

Please note that while the semester officially begins on Wednesday, January 4th, we will have our first seminar on January 11th to accommodate a prior commitment on my part. We also have a semester break this term the week of February 20–24, so there will be no class on Wednesday, February 22.

Week One: Jan 11	William Wordsworth, <i>Lyrical Ballads</i> (1798/1802) 9780199601967
Week Two: Jan 18	Søren Kierkegaard, <i>The Present Age</i> and <i>On the Death of Rebellion</i> (1846) 9780061990038
Week Three: Jan 25	Friedrich Nietzsche, <i>On the Genealogy of Morals</i> (1887) 9780141195377
Week Four: Feb 1	Sigmund Freud, <i>Civilization and its Discontents</i> (1930) 978-0393304510
Week Five: Feb 8	Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, <i>Dialectic of Enlightenment</i> (1944) 9780826400932
Week Six: Feb 15	Walter Benjamin, <i>Illuminations</i> [most of the essays] (1968) 9780805202410

Feb 22	READING BREAK, NO SEMINAR
Week Seven: Mar 1	Daphne du Maurier, <i>Rebecca</i> (1940) 978-0349006574 Philip Larkin, <i>Collected Poems</i> (1983) 9780374529208
Week Eight: Mar 6	Jean-Paul Sartre, <i>Existentialism is a humanism</i> (1947) 9780300115468 <i>Anti-Semite and Jew</i> (1948) 805201025
Week Nine Mar 15	Roland Barthes, <i>Mythology</i> [many of the essays] (1957) 9780809071944 <i>Camera Lucida</i> (1980) 9780374532338
Week Ten: Mar 22	Jean Baudrillard, <i>Simulations</i> (1983) 936756020 Terry Eagleton, <i>Humor</i> (2019) 978-0300255027
Week Eleven: Mar 29	Achille Mbembe, <i>Necropolitics</i> (2019) 9781478006510
Week Twelve: Apr 5	Jane Bennett, <i>Vibrant matter: A political ecology of things</i> (2010) 9780822346333
Week Thirteen: Apr 12	Byung-Chul Han, <i>The Disappearance of Rituals: A Topology of the Present</i> (2020) 9781509542765 <i>Infocracy: Digitalization and the Crisis of Democracy</i> (2022) 9871509552986