

The Science, Politics, and Poetics of Intelligence
Instructor: Zakir Paul

Office Hours: Tues. 3-5 pm and by Appointment

We live in a world in which competing notions of intelligence are implicitly being tested and displayed. From IQ tests to artificial intelligence, the intellectual faculty seems to dominate and administer vast aspects of the modern world. But what does it mean to be intelligent? Who or what constitutes intelligence and who decides? Are all humans equally intelligent? Is intelligence uniquely human? Such questions have received many conflicting and contradictory responses in the history of ideas. Indeed, the very lack of consensus about 'intelligence' makes the study of faculty such an intriguing topic today.

We will track these effects in works by Henry James, Marcel Proust, Joseph Conrad, Samuel Beckett, and a few others. Reevaluating modernism's insights will allow us to address a larger series of vexed questions: What role does intelligence play in the genesis of the literary work of art? How did modernist authors reconcile their creative vocation with fears that conscious intelligence might be an inimical force that kept them from writing such works? Should a literary intelligentsia work in the service of a national agenda? The wager of the course is that one cannot understand how modernism conceptualizes literary creation and its social situation if one fails to grasp the innovative role and radical limits it lent to intelligence.

This course examines leading discourses and representations of intelligence in various fields—from philosophy, psychology, and the history of science, to political theory, literature and cinema. These classic and contemporary texts will present us with evolutionary, anthropological, political, national, linguistic, and metaphorical definitions of intelligence, allowing us to explore the nature and the limits of the faculty both for individual subjects and political communities across history.

Prerequisites: The course requires no prior training in literary or philosophical study.

Requirements: One 3-5 page paper, one longer research paper (10-15 pages) and one in-class presentation.

Learning outcomes:

- An understanding of competing theories of intelligence and their representation in literary and philosophical works.
- Critical understanding of various questions essential for becoming a responsible citizen in a liberal society.
- Skills in close reading and expository writing.
- The ability to carry out research and express original theses while engaging with secondary sources.
- Knowledge of European socio-political changes, especially in the 19th and early 20th century.

Required Texts: Selected texts from primary and secondary literature will be posted online. Students should acquire the following volumes available at the campus bookstore:
 Paul Valéry, *Monsieur Teste* (1896—Princeton University Press, 1989).
 Henry James, *The Sacred Fount* (1901—New Directions Publishing, 1995).
 Joseph Conrad, *The Secret Agent* (1907—Penguin, 2007).
 Marcel Proust, *Time Regained* (1927—Penguin, 1999).
 Samuel Beckett, *Murphy* (1938—Grove, 2011).
 Other readings available in the course packet or online as PDFs.

Optional Resources: You are invited to explore the modernist archives available at the following websites:

- www.ubu.com
- <http://modernism.research.yale.edu/>

A suggested reading list in classics of psychology and philosophy to bolster your familiarity with intellectual history is available here:

- <http://psychclassics.yorku.ca/>

Course Requirements and Guidelines: Regular attendance and participation |Grades: One 3-4-page paper and one longer 6-8 page paper (30% each) |Online postings (10%) |Active and Informed Class participation (30%) |Papers: Provisional due dates are indicated below. Late papers will be penalized by a third of a letter grade per day. No extensions are granted. Papers must follow the general principles of academic honesty as set out by in the University Policy.

Reading Schedule

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| Week 1 | | The Birth of Modern Minds |
| Jan 17 | Tu | Historical views of intelligence (Handout). |
| Jan 19 | Th | René Descartes, <i>The Passions of the Soul</i> , p. 332-351; <i>Discourse on Method</i> (introduction); Locke, Ch. 27 of the <i>Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i> (“Of Identity and Diversity”). |
| Week 2 | | Intelligence Testing |
| Jan 24 | Tu | Classics of Pyschology (Galton, Binet et. al). |
| Jan 26 | Th | Stephen Gay Gould, <i>Mismeasure of Man</i> (excerpts). |
| Week 3 | | Republics of Intelligence |
| Jan 31 | Tu | Carson, <i>The Measure of Merit</i> (excerpts). |
| Feb 01 | Th | Rancière, <i>The Ignorant Schoolmaster</i> (excerpts). |
| Week 4 | | Stupidity |
| Feb 07 | Tu | Valéry, <i>Monsieur Teste</i> . |
| Feb 09 | Th | Valéry, “The Outlook for Intelligence,” “The Crisis of Intelligence.” |

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| Week 5 | | Hysteria |
| Feb 14 | Tu | Charcot, <i>The Tuesday Lessons; Augustine</i> (Winocour, Dir., 2013). |
| Feb 16 | Th | Georges Didi-Huberman, <i>Invention of Hysteria</i> (Introduction). |
| Week 6 | | Other Minds |
| Feb 21 | Tu | <i>The Sacred Fount</i> |
| Feb 23 | Th | <i>The Sacred Fount</i> |
| Week 7 | | The Life of the Mind |
| Feb 28 | Tu | Bergson, <i>Creative Evolution</i> (excerpt). |
| Mar 02 | Th | Bergson, <i>Creative Evolution</i> (excerpt). |
| Week 8 | | Intelligence and Secrecy |
| Mar 07 | Tu | Conrad, <i>The Secret Agent: A Simple Tale</i> . |
| Mar 09 | Th | Conrad, <i>The Secret Agent: A Simple Tale</i> . |
| Week 9 | | |
| Mar 14 | Tu | Conrad, <i>The Secret Agent: A Simple Tale</i> . |
| Mar 16 | Th | <i>Sabotage</i> (Hitchcock, Dir. 1936). |
| Spring Recess: March 18-26 | | |
| Week 10 | | Cinema and Intelligence |
| Mar 21 | Tu | Epstein, <i>Intelligence of a Machine</i> . |
| Mar 23 | Th | <i>Ex Machina</i> (Alex Garland, Dir. 2015). |
| Week 11 | | Novel Intelligence |
| Mar 28 | Tu | Proust, <i>Time Regained; Time Regained</i> (Ruiz, Dir., 2000). |
| Mar 30 | Th | Proust, <i>Time Regained</i> . |
| Week 12 | | Novel Intelligence |
| Apr 04 | Tu | Proust, <i>Time Regained</i> . |
| Apr 06 | Th | Proust, <i>Time Regained</i> . |
| Week 13 | | Child Intelligence |
| Apr 11 | Tu | Piaget, Selections from <i>Origin of Intelligence in the Child; Psychology of Intelligence</i> . |
| Apr 13 | Th | Winnicott, Selections from <i>Playing and Reality</i> . |
| Week 14 | | The Absurdity of Intelligence |
| Apr 18 | Tu | Beckett, <i>Murphy</i> . |
| Apr 20 | Th | Beckett, <i>Murphy</i> . |

Week 15

Apr 25

Tu

A Contemporary Cognitive PerspectiveAlva Noë, *Out of Our Heads* (excerpts).

Apr 27

Th

C. Malabou, *What Should We Do with Our Brain* (excerpts).**Week 16**

May 02

Tu

Futures of Intelligence

Aristotle/H. Landemore, Reading on collective intelligence and democracy.

May 04

Th

Reading about AI; Final discussion.