

Existential Risk – Theocrit 9640

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Office: UC 2422

Office hours: Thurs 10:30-1:00, or by appointment

Room: Stevenson-Lawson 3165

Course hours: Wed 1:30-4:30

Description: To be alive is to be at risk. Hegel argued that only by risking one's life, finding a way to live through risk and make it bearable, does one become a self-conscious subject. Today, at the outset of the Anthropocene, risk is now pervasive at species levels. Rising extinction rates are rewriting philosophies of life and views about the longer and larger meaning of being. You are perhaps aware that Cambridge University hosts a *Centre for the Study of Existential Risk*, which has brought together physicists, conservation biologists, and analytic philosophers. Their aim is to study the large-scale risks facing human civilization. But what is existential risk, if all beings must by definition risk their existence at every moment? This class will consider how philosophical ontologies and theories of life come to terms with existential risk.

Grading

60% final essay

15% oral presentation

25% class participation

Essay: The essay is a research paper of 20 pages on a topic pertaining to the course. A one-paragraph abstract will be due on March 18.

Oral Presentation: The presentation is a 15 minute overview of the key issues of a chosen text. The structure of presentations should be as follows: choose **three keywords** from the text and give us definitions and theorizations of these terms. You can discuss the three terms you choose in a variety of contexts, including: how these terms fit overall into our course (in dialogue with previous readings), how the text/term fits overall in the author's oeuvre, and how the text/term fits in its field. In your presentation, you can choose to focus on close reading of passages, or analysis of the important elements of the argument. Throughout the presentation, you should be raising questions for the class and outlining how you think we can get the most out of this reading.

Statement on Academic Offences: Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf

Graduate Course Health and Wellness: As part of a successful graduate student experience at Western, we encourage students to make their health and wellness a priority. Western provides several on campus health

Week 12 – April 1

Rosi Braidotti, *Posthuman Knowledge*

Week 13 – April 8

Hans Jonas, “The Burden and Blessing of Mortality”

Achille Mbembe, “Necropolitics”

Due: Final Essay – April 15