FROM RUBBISH OF CULTURE TO CULTURE OF RUBBISH
SLAV-P365 / SLAV-P565 / HON-H303
Spring 2016

Instructor: Lukasz Sicinski
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Meeting Time: T 5:30-8:15 pm
Meeting Place: BH 138
Office Hours: M 11:30-12:30 / R 1:00-2:00
or by appointment

Course Description

What is rubbish? Taken in its common-sense meaning, the term “rubbish” refers to something we discard or repudiate because it is worthless or undesirable. Understood in this way, this term is not only used in regard to physical objects but also functions as a cultural category: the label “rubbish” may, for instance, apply to both a bad poem and the piece of paper on which this poem is written. More importantly, however, this definition of rubbish points to the fact that rubbish always functions within the framework of inclusion and exclusion – that is, that a designation of an object as rubbish results from differentiation between things which belong and those which do not.

This course is designed to examine the category of rubbish in both its material and figurative incarnations. We will explore a broad applicability of this category to unravel its various dimensions (aesthetic, social, moral, and epistemological), and investigate the conceptual contexts within which this category operates (ordering, exclusion, otherness, transgression, and excess). As we go through the semester, the question “What is rubbish?” will open up a space for a series of discussions, during which we will explore the margins of culture and civilization, the margins of society, and the margins of reality. At the same time, we will critically examine a set of concepts and distinctions that guide our understanding of rubbish, including the distinctions between center and periphery, order and lawlessness, the pure and the tainted, the useful and the useless, and the meaningful and the meaningless.

We will examine all of these issues through a close reading of a number of selected works, with a special focus on twentieth and twenty-first century Polish literature and culture. Our course materials will include literary texts, films, recorded theatrical performances and reproductions of visual artworks. We will also read a range of theoretical texts which will serve as a springboard for our discussions.

This is a student-centered course in which active participation is crucial for a productive classroom atmosphere. You will be expected to critically engage in the material and share your ideas with the rest of the class through class discussions and presentations. The course is designed to encourage you to take advantage of your previous knowledge, to explore the material from your own perspectives, and to actively engage in your own learning. You will have the opportunity to be creative, to ask provocative questions, and to play with ideas.
Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Submission of questions</td>
<td>15 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion leading</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>15 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essay outline</td>
<td>10 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essay</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extracurricular activities</td>
<td>3% (extra credit)</td>
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Classwork

This is a student-centered course in which active participation is crucial for a successful and productive classroom atmosphere. It is therefore essential that you attend class regularly and prepare for class discussions.

Participation will be graded according to the following formula:

4 points: present, on time, prepared (material read and viewed; active participation in discussions)
3 points: present, late and/or partially prepared (material read and viewed; sporadic participation)
2 points: present, late more than 20 minutes and/or completely unprepared (material not read or viewed and thus no participation)
0 points: absent

If you must miss class due to illness or some other legitimate reason, notify me in advance (when possible). These absences might be excused and therefore would not affect your grade.

Submission of Questions

Every week before class, you will be required to email two questions to me. These should be questions that you would like discussed in class. They should not be factual questions that have a single answer; rather, they should provoke critical thinking and stimulate discussion. I will be incorporating your questions into our discussions.

Your questions will be due on Saturdays.
Discussion Leading

In the first two weeks of the semester, you will be asked to divide into teams consisting of 2-3 members. Each team will be responsible for leading one discussion session over the course of the semester.

Generally, during discussion leading you will be expected to briefly present issues or ideas you find compelling in the text, raise questions, and facilitate class discussion. Remember that your assignment is to lead the discussion, not to lecture on the topic. This is not a test of your knowledge: you do not need to know the answers to the questions you ask.

Prior to class:
1. Read/watch the material very carefully, preferably more than once.
2. Discuss the material with your teammates.
3. Choose the issues you want to discuss in class. Do not try to cover the entire text/film! Focus on what you find interesting.
4. Plan out your discussion. Your discussion should lead somewhere. Make sure you know what you want to accomplish and have a general sense of the points you want to be sure to cover. You may also want to sketch out a general map of how you think the discussion might go, but do not expect it to follow your map exactly.

Presentation

You will be expected to give one 15-minute presentation. Ideally, your presentation should be on the topic on which you will write your paper (or on a related topic), and should present the issue you will be dealing with, ways you plan to tackle it, as well as an expected outcome of your research. You do not have to cover every single detail; rather, treat your presentation as an opportunity to share your ideas with the class and to receive some feedback.

At the beginning of the semester, you will choose a date on which you will present.

Essay Outline

Prior to submission of your paper, you will be asked to submit an outline of your project. Your outline should be 1-2 pages long and should provide a thesis statement as well as a summary of the argumentative structure of your paper (main points you will be making in support of your thesis).

The outline is due on April 10.
**Essay**

You will write a paper on a topic chosen in consultation with the instructor. Your paper is expected to show evidence of secondary reading. Be sure to pick a topic that interests you and with which you feel comfortable.

Length of the final paper:

Undergraduate students: 8 pages
Honors students: 12 pages
Graduate students: 15 pages

The paper is due on April 24.

**Grading Scale**

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<tr>
<th>Score Range</th>
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<tr>
<td>97-100</td>
<td>A+</td>
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<tr>
<td>93-96</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>90-92</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<tr>
<td>87-89</td>
<td>B+</td>
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**Extracurricular Activities**

To enrich your learning experience, the Polish Program offers a variety of extracurricular activities. Take advantage of these activities and events to interact with other students and learn more about Polish culture. You will hear more about these events as the semester proceeds.

**Feedback**

My goal is to create an atmosphere and opportunities for successful learning for all students in this course. Please feel free to ask for extra help. It is essential that you let me know if you are having problems, feel overwhelmed, or need more of a challenge. It is better to deal with these situations early in the semester, rather than wait until it may be too late.

**Academic Misconduct**

As a student at IU, you are expected to adhere to the standards and policies of the code of academic conduct. Any suspected infractions of this Code will be handled by official rules and policies of the University. For more information see the Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct ([http://www.iu.edu/~code/code/responsibilities/academic/index.shtml](http://www.iu.edu/~code/code/responsibilities/academic/index.shtml)).
Disability Statement

Any student who feels he/she may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability must register with Disability Services for Students first. According to DSS guidelines, only students who have registered their disabilities with DSS are officially eligible for accommodations. When the disability has been registered, the student will receive a letter describing any accommodations necessary which must be presented to the instructor. More information is available from Disability Services for Students at 812-855-7578 and on the DSS web site (http://disabilityservices.indiana.edu).

Disclaimer

All information in this syllabus, including course requirements, is subject to change and should not be considered a substitute for attending class or for any information that is provided to you by your instructor.

Schedule of Classes

RECONNAISSANCE

WEEK 1 (Jan. 12)   Introduction

WEEK 2 (Jan. 19)   Theories of Rubbish

Readings:

Viewing in class:
- Artworks by: HA Schult; Tim Noble and Sue Webster

MARGINS OF REALITY

WEEK 3 (Jan. 26)   Tracing Reality

Readings:

Recommended:
WEEK 4 (Feb. 2)  Metaphysics of Junk

Readings:

Viewing (on your own):
- *Lost Childhood - the Cruel Fate of Bruno Schulz*:
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j5sygyRyzic](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j5sygyRyzic)

WEEK 5 (Feb. 9)  Reality of the Lowest Rank

Viewing (on your own):
- Tadeusz Kantor, *Wielopole, Wielopole* [On reserve: Wells Learning Commons Service Desk – 1st Floor, West Tower]

Readings:
- Noel Witts, *Tadeusz Kantor*, pp. 68-78.

Viewing in class:
- Tadeusz Kantor’s art

Recommended:

WEEK 6 (Feb. 16)  Rubbish and the Sacred

Viewing (on your own):
- Andrei Tarkovsky, *Stalker* [On reserve: Wells Learning Commons Service Desk – 1st Floor, West Tower]
  Also available online: [http://purl.dlib.indiana.edu/iudl/general/video/VAC2080](http://purl.dlib.indiana.edu/iudl/general/video/VAC2080)
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Readings:
WEEK 7 (Feb. 23)  The Ash Heap of History

Viewing (on your own):
- Andrzej Wajda, *Ashes and Diamonds* [On reserve: Wells Learning Commons Service Desk – 1st Floor, West Tower]
  Also available online: [https://indiana-kanopystreaming-com.proxyiub.uits.iu.edu/video/ashes-and-diamonds-0](https://indiana-kanopystreaming-com.proxyiub.uits.iu.edu/video/ashes-and-diamonds-0)

Readings:
- Piotr Wrobel, “The Devil’s Playground: Poland in World War II”

Recommended:

WEEK 8 (Mar. 1)  Debris of Reality: Trauma and the Holocaust

Viewing (on your own):
- Józef Szajna, *Replika*

Readings:

Viewing in class:
- Józef Szajna’s art

Recommended:

WEEK 9 (Mar. 8)  Depths of Existential Shallowness

Readings:
- Tadeusz Różewcz’s poetry
• Halina Filipowicz, *A Laboratory of Impure Forms: The Plays of Tadeusz Różewicz*, pp. 100-106.

Recommended:

WEEK 10 (Mar. 22)  Anatomy of Decay

Viewing (on your own):
• Piotr Szulkin, *Ga-Ga: Glory to the Heroes* [On reserve: Wells Learning Commons Service Desk – 1st Floor, West Tower]

Readings:

Viewing in class:
• Piotr Szulkin, *Everything*  

Recommended:

MARGINS OF SOCIETY

WEEK 11 (Mar. 29)  Poetics of Despair

Viewing (on your own):
• Agnieszka Holland, *A Lonely Woman* [On reserve: Wells Learning Commons Service Desk – 1st Floor, West Tower]

Readings:

Recommended:
• Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, pp. 80-84.

WEEK 12 (Apr. 5)  Non-positive Affirmations

Viewing (on your own):
• Krzysztof Kieślowski, *A Short Film about Killing* [On reserve: Wells Learning Commons Service Desk – 1st Floor, West Tower]  
Also available online: [http://purl.dlib.indiana.edu/iudl/general/video/VAD5486](http://purl.dlib.indiana.edu/iudl/general/video/VAD5486)  
[Password: rubbish]

Readings:

**Recommended:**

**WEEK 13 (Apr. 12) Prison Routine**

**Viewing (on your own):**
• Konrad Niewolski, *Symetria* [On reserve: Wells Learning Commons Service Desk – 1st Floor, West Tower]

**Recommended:**
• Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, pp. 3-31.

**WEEK 14 (Apr. 19) Forgotten Worlds**

**Readings:**
• Andrzej Stasiuk, *Tales of Galicia*, pp. 9-24; 51-56; 64-105.

**WEEK 15 (Apr. 26) Dignity and Victimization**

**Viewing (on your own):**
• Grzegorz Królikiewicz, *The Case of Pekosiński*

**Readings:**

**Viewing in class:**

**Recommended:**