

LIT 6856: Georges Bataille & the Accursed Share

Professor Terry Harpold

Fall 2021, Section 26902

Time: Th, pers. 3–5 (9:35 AM–12:35 PM)

Turlington Hall 4112

office hours: TUR 4105, M, 2:30–4:30 PM, F2F and via Zoom (see below)

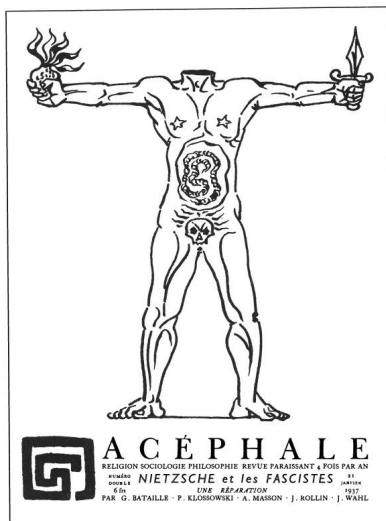
email: tharpold@ufl.edu

home page for Terry Harpold: <https://people.clas.ufl.edu/tharpold/>

e-Learning (Canvas) site for LIT 6856 (*registered students only*): <https://elearning.ufl.edu/>

Course Description

“Exuberance is Beauty” – William Blake¹



André Masson's cover design for *Acéphale*, a journal founded and edited by Georges Bataille from 1936–39. The journal's title derives from the Greek ἀκέφαλος, *akephalos*, “headless.”

A selective survey of the work of French philosopher, sociologist, art historian, and novelist Georges Bataille. We will focus on Bataille's pre-WW II writings on materialism, the sacred and profane, and heterology (the autogenous disruption of self-consistency and utility), and his post-war writings on “general economy” (expenditure, eroticism, and sovereignty). A special focus of the course is the relevance of Bataille's transgressive ideas to post-Anthropocene ecological thought. Course requirements include collaborative moderation of in-class discussions and a long-form research paper, which will be workshopped in class during the closing weeks of the semester.

¹ One of the “Proverbs of Hell” in Blake's *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790–93, pl 10), also the motto of Bataille's book on general economy, *The Accursed Share* (1949).

COVID-19 pandemic protocols for F2F meetings



This course will adhere to the University's expectation that all members of the class will wear approved face coverings at all times during class meetings and within buildings even if they are vaccinated.

Students' concerns for their safety and well-being in the classroom will be respected. Actions or comments that disregard or dismiss others'

concerns regarding risks of infection will not be tolerated and are grounds for being expelled from class.

Masks limit extent the range and nuance of spoken dialogue in the classroom. I will make every effort to speak clearly, deliberately, and with sufficient volume to make myself understood despite my wearing a mask. I ask you to do the same and to be tolerant of difficulties in classroom conversations that masking may create.

If you are not vaccinated, *get vaccinated*. Vaccines are readily available at no cost and have been demonstrated to be safe and effective against the COVID-19 virus. Visit this link for details on where to get your shot, including options that do not require an appointment: <https://coronavirus.ufhealth.org/vaccinations/vaccine-availability/> . Students who receive the first dose of the vaccine somewhere off-campus and/or outside of Gainesville can still receive their second dose on campus.

If you are sick, stay home and self-quarantine. Please visit the UF Health Screen, Test & Protect website (<https://coronavirus.ufhealth.org/screen-test-protect-2/frequently-asked-questions/covid-19-exposure-and-symptoms-who-do-i-call-if/>) about next steps, retake the questionnaire and schedule your test for no sooner than 24 hours after your symptoms began. Please call your primary care provider if you are ill and need immediate care or the UF Student Health Care Center at 352-392-1161 (or email covid@shcc.ufl.edu) to be evaluated for testing and to receive further instructions about returning to campus.

Required Texts to Purchase

These texts are available at the UF Bookstore and from online vendors. Used and electronic versions (Apple Books, Kindle, pdfs, etc.) are permissible – indeed they are encouraged² – so long as the version of the text you read is *otherwise identical to the editions noted below*. I encourage you whenever possible to buy from independent booksellers. If you choose to buy physical texts online, I recommend sources such as [Abebooks.com](https://abebooks.com) and [Alibris.com](https://alibris.com) that serve independent booksellers.

Bataille, Georges. *The Accursed Share: An Essay on General Economy, Vol. I: Consumption*. Translated by Robert Hurley, Zone Books, 1991. ISBN 9780942299113. 200 pp. (print).

———. *The Accursed Share, Vols. II & III: The History of Eroticism and Sovereignty*. Translated by Robert Hurley, Zone Books, 1993. ISBN 9780942299212. 404 pp (print).

———. *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927–1939*. Translated by Carl R. Lovitt Allan Stoekl, and Donald M. Leslie, Jr., University of Minnesota Press, 1985. ISBN 9780816612833. 271 pp. (print).

Mauss, Marcel. *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies, Expanded Edition*. Translated by Jane I. Guyer, HAU Books, 2016. ISBN 9780990505006. 248 pp. (print). Available as an open-access .pdf here: <https://haubooks.org/the-gift/> .

Stoekl, Allan. *Bataille's Peak: Energy, Religion, and Postsustainability*. University of Minnesota Press, 2007. ISBN 978-0816648191. 280 pp. (print).

Other required and recommended texts

These texts and films are available for free via the course's electronic reserves (Ares, <https://ares.uflib.ufl.edu/>), via Canvas, or at the URLs indicated below. All are PDF files with searchable text layers or in comparable formats capable of being parsed by screen readers. As the semester progresses, I may add additional short readings to this list.

Bataille, Georges. "Abjection and Miserable Forms." Translated by Yvonne Shaffir. *More and Less*, edited by Sylvère Lotringer, MIT Press, 1999, pp. 8–13. Ares.

² See my "Policy on environmentally unsustainable activity in the classroom," below.

- . "Definition of Heterology." *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 35, no. 4–5, 2017, pp. 29–40. *Ares*.
- . *Madame Edwarda*. Translated by Austryn Wainhouse. *The Bataille Reader*, edited by Fred Botting and Scott Wilson, Blackwell, 1997, pp. 223–36. *Canvas*.
- . "The Passage from Animal to Man and the Birth of Art." Translated by Michelle Kendall and Stuart Kendall. *The Cradle of Humanity: Prehistoric Art and Culture*, Zone Books, 2005, pp. 57–80; 196–200.
- Fédida, Pierre. "The Movement of the Informe." *Qui parle*, vol. 10, no. 1, 1996, pp. 49–62. *Ares*.
- Galletti, Marina and Boyne, Roy. "Heterology or 'The Science of the Excluded Part': An Introduction." *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 35, no. 4–5, 2017, pp. 3–27. *Ares*.
- Georgelou, Konstantina. "Abjection and Informe." *Performance Research*, vol. 19, no. 1, 2014, pp. 25–32. *Ares*
- Hochroth, Lysa. "The Scientific Imperative: Improductive Expenditure and Energeticism." *Configurations*, vol. 3, no. 1, 1995, pp. 47–77. *Ares*.
- Krauss, Rosalind E. "Informe Without Conclusion." *October*, vol. 78, 1996, pp. 89–105.
- Kristeva, Julia. "Approaching Abjection." Translated by Leon S. Roudiez. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, Columbia University Press, 1982, pp. 1–31, 211. *Ares*.
- Lechte, John. "Georges Bataille." *Fifty Key Contemporary Thinkers: From Structuralism to Post-Humanism*, 2nd ed. Routledge, 2008, pp. 364–72. *Ares*.
- Richman, Michèle. "Bataille's Prehistoric Turn: The Case for Heterology." *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 35, no. 4–5, 2017, pp. 155–73. *Ares*.
- Williams, Richard. "Informe and 'Anti Form'." *The Beast at Heaven's Gate: Georges Bataille and the Art of Transgression*, edited by Andrew Hussey, Éditions Rodopi, 2006, pp. 143–54. *Ares*.

Course Calendar

Deadlines and events outside of normal class meeting times are marked with an asterisk (). Assigned readings should be completed by the start of the class meeting in which they*

are to be discussed. In the case of readings discussed over several class meetings you should have completed a corresponding portion of the reading for each of the meetings in which it is discussed (e.g., 1/2 of the text for the first of two meetings.)

(Texts collected in *Bataille, Visions of Excess*, are indicated with "VOE")

"Something like a spider or spit": Heterology & the formless

- Th, Aug 26 *Course introduction*
Bataille, "Materialism" (VOE)
Bataille, "The Big Toe" (VOE)
Bataille, "The Language of Flowers" (VOE)
Lechte, "Georges Bataille"
Stoekl, "Introduction" (VOE)
- Th, Sept 2 Bataille, "Base Materialism and Gnosticism" (VOE)
Bataille, "Definition of Heterology"
Bataille, "The Solar Anus" (VOE)
Bataille, "The Pineal Eye" (VOE)
Bataille, "Sacrificial Mutilation and the Severed Ear of Vincent van Gogh" (VOE)
Galletti & Boyne, "Heterology... An Introduction"
- Th, Sept 9 Bataille, et al. "Critical Dictionary"
Bataille, "Formless" (VOE)
Georgelou, "Abjection and Informe"
Krauss, "Informes without Conclusion"
Kristeva, "Approaching Abjection"
Williams, "Informes and 'Anti Form'"
TH will summarize Georges Didi-Huberman's critique of Krauss, et al., which has not been translated into English.

Potlatch: The Notion of Expenditure

- Th, Sept 16 Bataille, "The Psychological Structure of Fascism" (VOE)
Bataille, "The Notion of Expenditure" (VOE)
Bataille, "The Use Value of D.A.F. Sade" (VOE)

Th, Sept 23 Mauss, *The Gift, Expanded Edition*
 Bataille, *The Accursed Share, Vol. I*

“...In Time is What the Tiger is in Space”: Eroticism & the Sacred

Th, Sept 30 Bataille, *The Accursed Share, Vol. II*
 Bataille, *Madame Edwarda*

Th, Oct 7 Bataille, “The Passage from Animal to Man”
 Bataille, “The Sacred” (VOE)
 Bataille, “The Sacred Conspiracy” (VOE)
 Richman, “Bataille’s Prehistoric Turn”

Sovereignty

Th, Oct 14 Bataille, *The Accursed Share, Vol. III*
 Bataille, “The Practice of Joy Before Death” (VOE)
 Bataille, “The Sorcerer’s Apprentice” (VOE)

An Energy Which is Not Servile: Heterological Exuberance

Th, Oct 21 *In-class Keywords review – Each participant in the seminar will choose one important concept or term (or pair of concepts/terms) in Bataille’s work. (For example: heterology, formless, sacred/profane, prohibition/transgression, human/animal, eroticism, sovereign/servile, accumulation/expenditure, etc.) We will devote this open class discussion to unpacking the significance and interrelations of these keywords.*

Th, Oct 28 Bagemihl, “A Revolution Under Way”
 Hochroth, “The Scientific Imperative”
 Stoekl, *Bataille’s Peak*

* M, Nov 1 ***Research paper abstracts posted in Canvas***

Th, Nov 4 *Workshopping paper abstracts – come prepared to discuss your colleagues’ prospective final paper projects*

Th, Nov 11 *No class meeting (Veterans Day)*

Th, Nov 18 *No class meeting (TH is attending a conference)*

Th, Nov 25 *No class meeting (Thanksgiving)*

Th, Dec 2 *Final class meeting – course debriefing*

*** Tu, Dec 14 Final research paper due by 5 PM**

Evaluation of Performance, Attendance Requirements & Other Course Policies

Your final grade in this course will be determined by four assignments, each representing a portion of the grade:

Moderation of class discussions × 2	50%
Research paper	50%

Collaborative moderation of class discussion. Beginning with the fourth class meeting, September 16, 2 or 3 students will be responsible each week to moderate the class discussion. Each student will serve as moderator *twice* during the semester. Moderating a discussion means preparing a list of key questions and observations (max. 500 words) concerning that week's readings, and guiding the class's discussion of these questions and observations. The list must be circulated to the class via Canvas no later than 24 hours before the meeting at which the readings are discussed. The list will not limit our conversations about the readings but it should serve as a framework for them.

Before the second class meeting (no later than September 2) you must send me a ranked list of four class meetings that you would prefer to moderate, and any dates during the semester when you know you cannot attend the class. I will collate students' preferences and assign the individual meetings to be moderated and announce the results before the third class meeting, when I will also review best methods for this assignment.

Research paper. This is a scholarly-critical project of 12–18 pp. in length – essentially, a short journal essay – informed by the subjects or methods of the course. It need not take as its principal subject a text by Bataille (though it may), but it should in some important regard take into account or apply some of the Bataillean concepts (sacred, profane, heterology, expenditure, etc.) that we have discussed. It can – and should – reflect your own research interests, the periods, disciplines, and genres in which you primarily work, viewed from or engaging with Bataille.

An abstract of your research paper (max. 750 words) is due in Canvas by November 1.

We will use your abstract as the basis of a collaborative workshopping of your project, in class, during the final weeks of the semester. I will review best methods for this assignment early in the semester.

Reading load. The course reading load can be substantial but it is not onerous; many of the individual texts we will read are quite short. The pace of our discussions will vary according to the complexity of texts we read and the need to focus on selected portions of the texts. The page counts shown above are fair measures of reading load but they may be deceiving. Some of the texts we will read are illustrated, some include extensive scholarly apparatus. (Which of course you *should* also read.) You should always aim to have completed reading each text by the last class period in which it is scheduled to be discussed.

Several of the texts we will read include depictions of class, race, indigeneity, and gender identities that may be offensive. They may also include graphic descriptions of physical violence and human sexuality.

Grading scheme and graded assignments. The evaluation method in this course is consistent with UF's policies on grading (<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>).

Grades are calculated on a numeric scale, as below:

A	90–100	A–	87–89		
B+	84–86	B	80–83	B–	77–79
C+	74–76	C	70–73		

If you do not complete an assignment you will receive a grade of 0. If you feel that you've been unfairly graded on an assignment, you may make a case in writing for a better grade. I will consider no grade changes without this written rationale.

You may make up a missed assignment only if you have a written medical excuse from a doctor, a signed letter from a judge or law enforcement officer (if you are called for jury duty or to testify in court, for example), or if a death or serious illness or injury occurs in your family. You should contact me as soon as possible when you anticipate a delay in the submission of graded work.

Attendance & lateness. The texts we will review are complex and challenging. You cannot reasonably expect to master them if you do not keep up with required reading or do not come to class prepared and on time. Class discussions will often include materials not among the assigned readings. For these reasons, your presence in class is essential and is

required. **I take attendance. After two missed class meetings, I reserve the right to lower your final course grade by five points for each additional class period that you miss.** I treat excused and unexcused absences alike in this regard. It is your responsibility to keep track of your absences and to make sure that you complete all required work. If you must miss class, make sure that you turn in any assignments due for that day, and that you are ready if another assignment is due on the day you return to class. In the event of a prolonged illness or other emergency you should notify me as soon as possible so that we may make provisions to insure that you do not fall behind.

Lateness is disruptive to others in the classroom, and is strongly discouraged. If you are more than 25 minutes late to class, this will be considered an absence.

If you have special requirements because of disability, do not hesitate to bring those to my attention so that I may make appropriate accommodations. Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the UF Disability Resource Center (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>) and provide me with appropriate documentation.

If you are unable to attend any part of a class meeting or work on a course assignment because these coincide with the timing of religious observances you must notify me of this conflict in advance, so that we may make appropriate adjustments to relevant assignment deadlines.

Other course policies

Office hours. *University policy restricts my options with regard to office hours this semester.* I am permitted to offer a virtual (Zoom) option only if its timing coincides with face-to-face hours held in my office on campus. Therefore, I will be offering Zoom access to my office hours *at the same time* as in-person hours and will do my best to manage that hybrid context for our meetings. (I will post the Zoom link for office hours on the course Canvas site.) *I have been given the authority to require that you and I both wear masks within the confines of my office, and I will do so. If you come to see me in person, you must wear a mask when you enter my office.*

Use of computers and other electronic devices in class. The use of personal computers and other electronic devices in class is acceptable for purposes related to class discussion and collaboration. Casual WWW browsing, emailing, chatting, texting, etc., unrelated to class activities will not be tolerated. Apart from those times when I have approved their use in advance, cell phones, pagers, and similar communication devices may not be used during class meetings, and must be set to silent ring at the start of class.

Recordings of class meetings. In response to legislation recently signed by the Florida Governor (HB233), University policy requires me to add the following statement to my syllabus:

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

See this page for the University’s guidelines on recording class lectures:

<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/code-change-faq/> .

Course evaluation. Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or

via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

Policy on academic honesty. The University community's policies and methods regarding academic honesty, your obligations to me and mine to you with regard to academic honesty, are spelled out in the UF Student Honor Code, which is available online at <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>.

Academic dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated in this course. Examples of academic dishonesty include but are not limited to:

- Possessing, using, or exchanging improperly acquired written or oral information in the preparation of graded assignments submitted for this course.
- Substitution of material that is wholly or substantially identical to that created or published by another individual or individuals.
- False claims of performance or work submitted by a student for requirements of this course.

I am obliged to act on any suspected act of academic misconduct. If you are found to have engaged in misconduct penalties may include a reduced or failing grade for the course or other disciplinary proceedings, as per the recommendation of the Dean of Students. If you have any concern that you may not have made appropriate use of the work of others in your research or writing for this course, please confer with me before you submit the assignment. You should retain all graded materials that you receive from me until you receive your final course grade.

Emergency services. **U Matter, We Care** serves as the umbrella program for UF's caring culture and provides students in distress with support and coordination of a wide variety of appropriate resources. Contact umatter@ufl.edu seven days a week for assistance if you are in distress. Call 352-392-1575 for a crisis counselor overnight and during weekends.

Note also these support services:

- The University Counseling Center – 301 Peabody Hall, 352-392-1575; <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu>
- Student Health Care Center – 352-392-1171
- Career Resource Center, Reitz Union – 352-392-1601
- Center for Sexual Assault/Abuse Recovery and Education (CARE), Student Health Care Center – 352-392-1161
- University Police Department – 352-392-1111 (non-emergency); *call 9-1-1 for emergencies*

Policy on environmentally unsustainable activity in the classroom. When possible I will distribute all course materials via paper-sparing digital media. I encourage you to purchase e-book editions of assigned texts when they are available, or used copies of print texts, and to return those to circulation if you choose not to keep them at the end of the course. (Donating your unwanted books to the Alachua County [Friends of the Library](#) annual book sale is a good way to get them into other readers' hands and to help raise a bit of cash for our county's excellent but criminally underfunded public libraries.) If you do elect to keep your books, share them with others after the course is over. And a final appeal to your common sense: bring food and/or beverages to the classroom only in reusable containers. Please, no food or beverages in single-use containers and no single-use, unrecyclable cutlery or straws. *Under conditions of global pandemic, I strongly recommend that you **not** eat in the classroom, and take appropriate precautions when drinking from an open container or while masked.*