

## **Finitude and Plenitude – CTCS 9325**

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Office: UC 2422

Office hours: W 2:30-3:30, Thu 2:30-3:30, or by appointment (online)

Room: Stevenson 3165

Course hours: Wednesday 3:30-6:30

Course delivery: in person

**Description:** What sort of thought is it that starts not with the beginning but with the end? Instead of first philosophy, is there something like last philosophy? How is it possible for there to be both finitude and plenitude as conditions for existence and the real? How might finitude lead to a theory of plenitude and care rather than nothingness or apocalypticism? This course will examine the different meanings of finitude and the finiteness of thought, and in the second half turn to theorizations of plenitude.

### **Grading**

55% final essay

20% oral presentation

15% class participation

10% book review (750 words)

**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 November 16.

**Oral presentation:** The presentation is a 15 minute overview of the key issues of a chosen text. I want you to generally structure your presentation by highlighting **three** important concepts or terms from the reading and explicating these terms one by one. Please point to **specific quotes in the text**. 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.

**Book Review:** Please choose a book or essay (either is fine) from a text not in the class (can be by any author) and discuss the role of finitude in the work. To what extent is finitude present or not present in the conceptual system of the text you have chosen? What are the contours, effects, and associations with finitude that you find in the text?

**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](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-related services to help you achieve optimum health and engage in healthy living while pursuing your graduate degree. Information regarding health- and wellness-related services available to students may be found at <http://www.health.uwo.ca/>. Students seeking help regarding mental health concerns are advised to speak to someone they feel comfortable confiding in, such as their faculty supervisor, their program director (graduate chair), or other relevant administrators in their unit. Campus mental health resources may be found at [http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental\\_health/resources.html](http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental_health/resources.html).

**Statement on Student Accessibility Services:** Western is committed to achieving barrier-free accessibility for all its members, including graduate students. As part of this commitment, Western provides a variety of services devoted to promoting, advocating, and accommodating persons with disabilities in their respective graduate program.

Graduate students with disabilities (for example, chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, mobility impairments) are encouraged to register with Student Accessibility Services, a confidential service designed to support graduate and undergraduate students through their academic program. With the appropriate documentation, the student will work with both SAS and their graduate programs (normally their Graduate Chair and/or Course instructor) to ensure that appropriate academic accommodations to program requirements are arranged. These accommodations include individual counseling, alternative formatted literature, accessible campus transportation, learning strategy instruction, writing exams and assistive technology instruction. For more information, see <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd/>

**Western University Land Acknowledgment:** We acknowledge that Western University is located on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak and Chonnonton Nations, on lands connected with the London Township and Sombra Treaties of 1796 and the Dish with One Spoon Covenant Wampum. With this, we respect the longstanding relationships that Indigenous Nations have to this land, as they are the original caretakers. We acknowledge historical and ongoing injustices that Indigenous Peoples (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) endure in Canada, and we accept responsibility as a public institution to contribute toward revealing and correcting miseducation as well as renewing respectful relationships with Indigenous communities through our teaching, research and community service.

**Required Texts:**

Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency* (Continuum, 2008)

Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Creation of the World, or, Globalization* (SUNY Press, 2007)

September 14 – Françoise Dastur, *Death: An Essay on Finitude*, “Introduction,” “Chapter II: The Metaphysics of Death”; Jean-François Lyotard, “Can Thought Go On Without A Body?”

September 21 – Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, “Preface (to first edition),” Logic, ch. III; Immanuel Kant, “The End of All Things”; A.W. Moore, in *The Kantian Catastrophe*, interview “Finitude”; Hegel, *Science of Logic*, Ch. 2, “Finitude” and “Infinity”

September 28 – Martin Heidegger, excerpts from *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, Part IV (144-173); “Davos Disputation Between Ernst Cassirer and Martin Heidegger” (193-207); Martin Heidegger “Letter on Humanism”; Joseph Schear, in *The Kantian Catastrophe*, interview “The Fragility of Finitude”

October 5 – **no class** – read Michael Haworth, *Neurotechnology and the End of Finitude*, “Intellectual Intuition and Finite Creativity”

October 12 – Françoise Dastur, *Death: An Essay on Finitude*, Ch III, IV, Conclusion; Jacques Derrida, *Aporias*, “Finis”; Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, “The analytic of finitude,” “The form of the human sciences,” “Psychoanalysis and ethnology,” “In Conclusion”; Recommended: Beatrice Han-Pile, in *The Kantian Catastrophe*, interview, “The Analytic of Finitude”

October 19 – Jean-Luc Nancy, “Finite Thought,” Jean-Luc Nancy, “Scandalous Death”; Marie-Eve Morin, in *The Kantian Catastrophe*, interview, “The Task of a Finite Thinking,” Marie-Eve Morin, “Jean-Luc Nancy’s Ethics of Finitude”; Alain Badiou, “Existence and Death”

October 26 – Week 6 – Fred Moten “Blackness and Nothingness”; Calvin L. Warren, *Ontological Terror*, Introduction, Ch. 1, Coda  
**Due: book review**

November 2 – **fall break**

November 9 – Week 8 – Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude*

November 16 – Week 9 – Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Ch. 1 “The Human Condition”; Joan Roughgarden, from *Evolution’s Rainbow*, “Introduction,” “Sex and Diversity,” “Sex versus Gender”; Luce Irigaray “What the Vegetal World Says to Us”; Catherine Malabou, in *The Kantian Catastrophe*, interview “Transcendental Epigenesis”

November 23 – Lori Gruen “Facing Death and Practicing Grief”; Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving Address; Robin Wall Kimmerer, “Allegiance to Gratitude”; Leanne Betasamosake Simpson “Nishnaabeg Brilliance as Radical Resurgence Theory”

November 30 – Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Creation of the World*; Jean-Luc Nancy and Roberto Esposito “Dialogue on the Philosophy to Come”

December 7 – Gilles Deleuze “Whitman”; Deleuze and Guattari “Geophilosophy”; Walt Whitman poems; Will Alexander poems

**Final essay due: Dec. 14**