

Syllabus

Title of the Course:	Re-Imagining University	Course Breakdown:	28 teaching hours online, 152 hours independent study
Name of the Instructor:	Bülent Somay	Weekly class time:	Fridays 15:00 - 17:00 (CET)
Language:	English	Credit:	6 ECTS
Hosted by:	Kassel University	Certificate issued by:	Kassel University
min. number of participants:	12	max. number of participants	30

Description of the course

The main purpose of this course is to elaborate the connections between the contemporary devaluation of 'Truth', and the devaluation/disintegration of University Discourse. One of the chief indicators of this decline is the neoliberalisation of Universities, i.e., the degradation of social sciences and humanities as 'useless knowledge', useless to the capitalist establishment, and the servitude of scholars to the for-profit structure of the universities, to 'academic publishing', and to big industry for grants.

Learning Aims

To provide a general understanding about:

- The connections and interdependence of the concept of 'Truth' and the institution of the University
- The usefulness of Knowledge (different from 'Information'), its production, transmission and dissemination (Research, Teaching-Learning, Publication).
- The connections between the University and Populism, Authoritarianism and Neoliberalism.

Upon the successful completion of the course students will be able to:

- Acquire a better perspective of the period we live in, called 'The Age of Post-Truth'
- Develop a critical understanding of the University as well as the economic, political and social networks it belongs to.

- Gain a better insight of themselves not only as passive ‘receivers’ of knowledge but also as active subjects participating in its production.

Course requirements

Course components include:

- Lectures/Discussions
- Readings

The final grade for the course will be based on the following:

- Attendance
- Participation
- Assignments

Evaluation

The final grade for the course will be based on the following:

- Attendance and Participation (30%)
- 3 Response Papers (15% each = 45%)
- Final Paper (25%)

Weekly Outline of the Course Schedule

Week 1	Truth, Knowledge and the University	Introduction
Week 2		
Week 3		
Week 4	University Discourse and the ‘Uses’ of Knowledge	Submission of first Response Paper (about 1500 words)
Week 5		
Week 6		
Week 7	Neoliberalism and the University	Submission of second Response Paper (about 1500 words)
Week 8		
Week 9		

Week 10	The Future of Higher Education	Submission of third Response Paper (about 1500 words)
Week 11		
Week 12		
Week 13	Wrap-Up	Wrap-Up
Week 14	Final Remarks, Discussion on the Final Paper	Final Paper (about 2500 words)

Syllabus / Reading List

Week 1: Introduction

Week 2: Lies, Damn Lies, Post-Truth: To Tell the Truth from a Lie, a Fallacy or a Belief System

Is ‘Post-Truth’ simply an unprecedented increase of ‘lying’ in the public sphere and the media, or is it an expression of a more profound change in the way how ‘knowledge’ is produced and disseminated in our age? Why do we need a reference system to check the ‘truthfulness’ of ‘Truth’? How does it work? Are the Universities the only institutions to provide us with such a reference system?

Reading materials:

- Ball, James (2017). *Post-Truth: How Bullshit Conquered the World*. London: Biteback Publishing.
- Latour, Bruno (2018). ‘Bruno Latour, the Post-Truth Philosopher, Mounts a Defense of Science’ in *The New York Times Magazine*, Oct. 25, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/25/magazine/bruno-latour-post-truth-philosopher-science.html>.

Week 3: Who Authorises the Authorities, who will Educate the Educators?

Was everything ‘all-right’ before the emergence of ‘Post-Truth’, or the production, transmission and dissemination of knowledge in a hierarchical structure already represented irresolvable problems?

Reading materials:

- Busch, Lawrence (2017). *Knowledge for Sale: The Neoliberal Takeover of Higher Education*. Boston: The MIT Press.

Week 4: The ‘Humpty-Dumpty’ Regime of Truth

Do words mean ‘exactly what we want them to mean’? How are signifiers hierarchically positioned in creating ‘meaning’? Is how we think independent from the cultural/ideological structuring of our society?

Reading materials:

- Somay, Bülent (2021). 'The End of Truth as We Know It: The Disintegration of University Discourse'; in *The End of Truth: Five Essays on the Demise of Neoliberalism*. London: Transnational Press.

Week 5: Lacan's Four Discourses: Master's, Hysteric's, University, Analyst's

How does Lacan differentiate between different 'Discourses', and how does this differentiation help us understand the connection between knowledge, desire, and be(com)ing agents/subjects?

Reading materials:

- Salecl Renata (1994). 'Deference to the Great Other: The Discourse of Education'; in *Lacanian Theory of Discourse: Subject, Structure, and Society*, Mark Bracher et.al. (eds). NY & London: New York University Press.

Week 6: The Rise and Fall of the University Discourse

How is the development (and decline) of universities and the professions that derive their credibility from them related to the development (and decline) of capitalism and the nation-states?

Reading materials:

- Busch, Lawrence (2017). *Knowledge for Sale: The Neoliberal Takeover of Higher Education*. Boston: The MIT Press.
- Somay, Bülent (2021). 'The End of Truth as We Know It: The Disintegration of University Discourse'; in *The End of Truth: Five Essays on the Demise of Neoliberalism*. London: Transnational Press.

Week 7: The Neoliberal University Gets Rid of 'Useless' Knowledge

How did the neoliberalisation of universities started as a seemingly innocent move towards a better self-financing of universities, developed into a dog-eat-dog regime and started to sacrifice Humanities and Social-Sciences as 'Useless Knowledge' for 'cost-reduction' purposes?

Reading materials:

- Ordine, Nuccio (2017). *The Usefulness of the Useless*. Tr. Alastair McEwen. Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books.
- '-19 Crisis'. *Journal of Educational Technology Systems*, 2020, Vol. 49(1) 5–22.

Week 8: University Loses the 'Copyright Struggle' on Truth

How does the gradual walling-in of the universities, and the growing inaccessibility of intellectual production lead people to search for the 'Truth' elsewhere, mainly in the social media and more generally throughout the internet?

Reading materials:

- Bell, Kirsten (2017). 'Predatory' Open Access Journals as Parody: Exposing the Limitations of 'Legitimate' Academic Publishing; *tripleC* 15(2): 651-662, 2017, <https://www.triple-c.at/index.php/tripleC/article/view/870>

Week 9: The University vs. Publishing Monopolies

How does the existing Academic Publishing 'industry' stop all kinds of 'maverick' or 'subversive' ideas even before they are born? How do academic journals, their editors and 'referees' (peers) obtain an unprecedented power over 'scholars'? What are the universities doing to challenge this?

Reading materials:

- Hyland, Ken (2015). *Academic Publishing: Issues and Challenges in the Construction of Knowledge*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bal, Mieke (2018). 'Let's Abolish the Peer-Review System' in *Media Theory* 23.

Week 10: Education Goes On-Line (and On-Screen): Hybridity (On- and Off-Line Education)

Is On-Line Education 'good' or 'bad'? How did On-Screen Education, which (still) promises to become an important component of University Education in re-thinking and redesigning future universities, become a threat to Universities and scholars in general at the same time? How can we imagine a hybrid mode of education which will combine the necessary tangible, in-the-flesh socialization with on-line technologies of instruction?

Reading materials:

- Anderson, Terry (ed.) (2004). *The Theory and Practice of Online Learning*. Edmonton: AU Press.
- Dhawan, Shivangi (2021). 'Online Learning: A Panacea in the Time of COVID

Week 11: The 'East' and the 'West': Two Problems or Only One?

Are the problems challenging the scholars from authoritarian/totalitarian regimes and those from the (presumed) liberal/democratic regimes fundamentally different? If not, how they can efficiently cooperate?

Reading materials:

- Lorenz, Chris (2012). 'If You're So Smart, Why Are You under Surveillance? Universities, Neoliberalism, and New Public Management', in *Critical Inquiry* 38 (Spring 2012).

Week 12: Is a New University Possible? What has been Done Up to Now?

How could we rethink and eventually redesign another university without doubling back on the *status quo ante*? Who would the actors of this reimagining and redesigning be? How did scholars react to the dissolution of 'Academia as We Know It' until now? How extensively 'Alternative Loci of Knowledge Production' exist, and how do they function?

Reading materials:

- Staley, David (2019). *Alternative Universities: Speculative Design for Innovation in Higher Education*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Week 13: Wrap-Up

Week 14: General Discussion on the course and the Structure of the Final Paper