

MEDIA AND MATERIALITY: FROM MARX TO BARAD

CSPT 500 | Tuesday | 1:30-4:20

Instructor: Jentery Sayers, Department of English

Fall 2016 at UVic

<http://web.uvic.ca/~jentery/500.jpg>

In recent years, artists as well as theorists have engaged in a form of "new materialism," whereby agency is understood as an entanglement of matter, media, and meaning. One effect is a refusal to reduce matter or media to a static state. Like language, materiality is dynamic, even if it is rarely perceived or described as such. Another effect is to rethink where we locate intent or how we think about causality in the first place.

Informed by new materialism, this seminar surveys critical theory from Karl Marx to Karen Barad to identify historical stress points in the articulation of media and materiality since the 1850s. Our survey will account for how these two terms have been situated in various theories of agency, from historical materialism, semiotics, and symptomatic reading to media archaeology and agential realism.

Assignments include a portfolio of brief response papers plus a presentation. No research essay required. Emphasis on concise interpretations of critical theory.

With selections from Karen Barad's *Meeting the Universe Halfway* and Karl Marx's *Grundrisse*, we will read excerpts (20-35 pages each) of work by Hannah Arendt, Roland Barthes, Walter Benjamin, Judith Butler, Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, Hélène Cixous, Régis Debray, Mary Ann Doane, Michel Foucault, Elizabeth Grosz, Donna Haraway, Martin Heidegger, Rosalind E. Krauss, Julia Kristeva, Audre Lorde, Fred Moten, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Viktor Shklovsky, Georg Simmel, and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. Course reader compiled by the instructor.

The instructor will not assume that students have read or written about any of the authors referenced above.