

Spring 2019 CFDE University Course

“Progress”: an Interdisciplinary Reflection

GRAD 700 – M 4-7 / Bowden 118

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Office hours:

Atlanta: M 1-3pm and by appointment / Woodruff Library, Suite 216

Oxford: TT 10-11:15am and by appointment / Pierce Hall 215

Description

What does “Progress” mean? What is the history behind this concept? How Emory scholars approach this concept? And how can we apply it to contemporary Atlanta?

This course interrogates the use of “progress” in several intellectual and scientific disciplines (history, religion, philosophy, public health, and music), to decide what to keep and what to forget from the old concept of “progress”—one of the main philosophical ideals of modernity, the basis of political constitutions, scientific paradigms, and even the modern university.

“Progress” morphed during the 20th century into widespread concepts like “modernization” and “development.”¹ In the 21st century, however, as a result of profound global changes, the confidence on our ever-increasing power to analyze, cure, and transform the world coexists with a growing skepticism regarding our common future. “Progress” became a two-faced “myth”—one face optimistic, in the Silicon Valley techno-utopias, the other grim, looking at socioeconomic inequality and the global environmental crisis.

But both the celebration of progress and its critique are *meta-narratives*.² The goal of this seminar is to understand those narratives. Guest lecturers will reflect on how progress is measured in terms of disciplinary advancement (power of analysis,

¹ Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures past: on the semantics of historical time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004); Peter Wagner, *Progress - A Reconstruction* (Cambridge, UK ; Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2016); Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007).

² Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973).

calculation, or prediction) and objective changes (for example, progress in health or social standards).

We will discuss topics such as progress and reversion, linear advancement and discontinuity, and pose some fundamental questions. To what extent has the belief in human *progress*, inherited from the Enlightenment and from Positivism, managed to survive its critiques? To what extent we measure our social, aesthetic, scientific, or moral objects of research in terms of *an intelligible sense of positive change over time*? How short or far have we gone in the elaboration and critique of the most common narratives of human improvement? The course also addresses the call for a *general understanding of causal structures* that can bridge the increasingly specialized modes of knowledge of each discipline.³ And will also address the climate of uncertainty regarding the future experienced by college and graduate students in the US and by people globally.⁴

The final section includes a Roundtable and a **Teach-Out** (a virtual forum developed by the University of Michigan), through which we will share these conversations with a larger—potentially global—audience. The goal of this final section is to interrogate Atlanta’s ongoing urban transformation and to interrogate its “progress” from the perspective of its history, memory, and current projects towards the future.

Requirements: The course demands active participation in and out of class. No prerequisites. Students will arrange the writing goal with the instructor at the beginning of the semester—undergraduate students will produce a short paper, graduate students a dissertation-related paper, and professional schools students policy-oriented papers.

Attendance and use of electronic devices:

Attendance to all meetings is mandatory. Unjustified absences will hinder your grade. Phones must be silent and off view in class. Laptop computers are allowed only in specific circumstances indicated by the instructor (electronic screens diminish the focus of users and people around them, and disrupt classroom interaction.)

Grading: One third of the grade results from class participation, another third from the Teach-Out work, and the final third from your paper (organized in several steps).

³ Robert Frodeman, Julie Thompson Klein, and Roberto Carlos Dos Santos Pacheco, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Interdisciplinarity*, Second Edition, Oxford Handbooks (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

⁴ Harvard Public Opinion Project, The Institute of Politics at Harvard University, December 5, 2017. <http://iop.harvard.edu/youth-poll/fall-2017-poll>; Jacob Poushter, “Worldwide, People Divided on Whether Life Today Is Better Than in the Past,” *Pew Research Center’s Global Attitudes Project* (blog), December 5, 2017 <http://www.pewglobal.org/2017/12/05/worldwide-people-divided-on-whether-life-today-is-better-than-in-the-past/>

Books

Peter Wagner, *Progress - A Reconstruction* (Cambridge, UK ; Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2016).

John Urry, *What Is the Future?* (Cambridge UK; Malden MA: Polity Press, 2016)

Optional:

Nichole R. Phillips, *Patriotism Black and White: The Color of American Exceptionalism* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2018)

Stone Mountain Historical Society, *Stone Mountain*, Images of America (Charleston, North Carolina: Arcadia, 2014)

David N. Wiggins, *Georgia's Confederate Monuments and Cemeteries*, Images of America (Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 2006)

Maurice J Hobson, *The Legend of Black Mecca: Politics and Class in the Making of Modern Atlanta* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018)

Kevin Kruse, *White Flight. Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007)

Office of Accessibility Services (OAS)

If you are a student with a disability, you may receive extra assistance from the Office of Accessibility Services (OAS) located at 110 Administration Building, their phone number is (404) 727-9877. Contact me if you have any type of disability to discuss how it may or may not affect your participation in this class.

Plagiarism

Please read and abide by the Emory University honor code. If you have questions please discuss them with me before handing in your work.

<http://catalog.college.emory.edu/academic/policies-regulations/honor-code.html>

Writing Centers

The Emory Writing Center (Callaway N-212, Atlanta campus) and the Oxford Writing Center (Pierce Hall 117, Oxford campus) offer advise and assistance to any project—from traditional papers to websites—at any stage in your composing process. Tutors help writers of all levels to see their writing with fresh eyes, and can talk with you about your purpose, organization, audience, design choices, or use of sources. They can also work with you on sentence-level concerns (including grammar and word choice), but they will not proofread for you. Visit <https://inside.oxford.emory.edu/academics/centers-institutes-programs/writing-center/> or www.writingcenter.emory.edu for more information and to make appointments.

SCHEDULE

Week 1

M 1/ 28

INTRODUCTION

- Description of the course
- “Progress,” “modernization,” “development,” “future,” “meta-narratives”
- Interdisciplinary research at Emory
- Teach-Out
- Final paper: design, stages, and timeline

Reading: Peter Wagner, *Progress - A Reconstruction* (Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2016), Foreword and Chapters 1 and 2 (p. vi-49)

Week 2

M 2/ 4

PROGRESS

- History of the concept
- Contemporary uses of it in politics and science
- “Reaction” and conservatism

Reading: Peter Wagner, *Progress - A Reconstruction* (Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2016), Chapters 3-6 (p. 50-161)

Week 3

M 2/11

FUTURE

- History of the future
- Contemporary understandings of the future
- Contemporary anxieties: “deep past,” *anthropocene*, and the future

Reading: John Urry, *What Is the Future?* (Cambridge (UK); Malden (MA): Polity Press, 2016) (*selection*)

Workshop I: brainstorming topics for individual or group papers

Week 4

M 2/ 18

GLOBAL HEALTH

Guest lecturer: **Kate Winskell** (Assoc. Prof. of Global Health, Rollins School of Public Health)

Whereas health campaigns were the traditional instrument to eradicate diseases and produce healthy populations within a national territory, a global turn in the understanding of cure and disease made multiple actors to operate at diverse spatial scales, such as global HIV campaigns. What narratives sustain these changing paradigms of diagnosing, curing, and preventing?

Reading: Sridhar Venkatapuram, “What does progress look like in global health?,” PLOS (The Public Library of Science) Blog, June 11, 2018 <http://blogs.plos.org/globalhealth/2018/06/what-does-progress-look-like-in-global-health/>

Workshop II: brainstorming + bibliography and sources; list of Woodruff’s subject librarians

Week 5
M 2/25

MUSIC AND PROGRESS

Guest lecturer: **Kevin Karnes** (Winship Professor of Music History, Emory College)

How do musicians evaluate progress? How do they elaborate programmatic, futuristic sounds? How do they relate to past music? What can we learn from music to re-think “progress” in the humanities and the sciences?

Reading TBD

Workshop III: distinguishing topic, research question, hypothesis, and research

Week 6
M 3/4

ENVIRONMENTAL PHILOSOPHY

Guest lecturer: **Joshua Mousie** (Assist. Prof. of Philosophy, Oxford College)

How do philosophers understand our relationship with the ever-changing built environment? How do they consider the limits and continuities between humans, nature, and infrastructure? What’s “progress” today in our cities?

Reading TBD

Workshop IV: research plan

Week 7
M 3/18

AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM

Guest lecturer: **Nichole Phillips** (Asst. Prof. of Sociology, Religion, and Culture, Candler School of Theology)

Both secular and religious ideologies animated the paradigm of progress in the United States since the 19th century, holding both of them “progressive” and “conservative” forces. How does nationalism

today, as a “civil religion,” understand the United States’ “progress” and “exceptionalism”?

Reading: Nichole R. Phillips, *Patriotism Black and White: The Color of American Exceptionalism* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2018) [Chapters 6 to 9, p. 181-291]

Workshop V: writing strategies

Week 8
M 3/ 25

ATLANTA, I

Assignment: you will visit any of the places mentioned in either *Stone Mountain* or *Georgia’s Confederate Monuments and Cemeteries*, and write a group (any size) reflection. *The instructor will coordinate transportation options and reimburse expenses.*

Atlanta is a laboratory to test our naturalized narratives of “progress” and “modernity,” especially considering the conflicting memories that animate its political and cultural understandings of the city itself and its links with the state of Georgia.

Readings: Stone Mountain Historical Society, *Stone Mountain, Images of America* (Charleston, North Carolina: Arcadia Publishing, 2014) **or** David N. Wiggins, *Georgia’s Confederate Monuments and Cemeteries, Images of America* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2006)

Week 9
M 4/ 1

STUDENT PRESENTATIONS: EARLY DRAFTS

Week 10
M 4/8

ATLANTA, II: A ROUNDTABLE

Assignment: Visit the Atlanta History Center and write a 2-pages essay analyzing the Museum’s narrative of the city’s progress. *The instructor will coordinate transportation options and reimburse expenses.*

Roundtable on Atlanta’s history, memory, and ideas of urban, infrastructural, and social progress, with guest speakers:

- **Calinda Lee** (Vice President, Historical Interpretation and Community Partnerships, Atlanta Historical Center) develops the Atlanta Historical Center’s primary collections, historic houses, historic gardens, and public programs, connecting Atlanta’s communities and individuals with their city’s history.
- **Michael Bradley** (Georgia State University - Perimeter College) conducted research on religious activities at the Stone Mountain park, ranging from Confederate flag rallies and New Age spiritual networks to commercialized Christmas recreational events and

Via Crucis celebrations, as a site where demographic shifts challenge the perceived immutability of the Confederate carving and its associated ideologies.

Readings: Maurice J Hobson, *The Legend of Black Mecca: Politics and Class in the Making of Modern Atlanta* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018) **or** Kevin Kruse, *White Flight. Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007)

Week 11

M 4/ 15

TEACH-OUT, 1

Introduction to the Teach-Out, with **Stephanie Parisi** (Associate Director of Online Education, CFDE)

- “Call to Action” assignment (*due week 13, an individual reflection, shared through a variety of possible formats with a group*)
- How to navigate the Teach-Out and engage in online conversations with interlocutors beyond our course and Emory during one week
- Q & A, individual exploration of the Teach-Out

Workshop VI: findings, obstacles, and strategies towards the final paper

Week 12

M 4/ 22

TEACH-OUT, 2

With **Stephanie Parisi**.

Small Groups: (~30 min)

Students will come to class prepared with an example of dialogue they participated in during the Teach-Out. Discuss in small groups their experience as it relates to “progress.” Each group will bring forward their favorite example to be discussed as a class.

Whole Class: (~45 min)

Discuss examples from small group activity. After discussion, respond anonymously to a live digital survey the following question: *In the Teach-Out, what has been the most difficult part of navigating conversations around progress?* Discuss the results as a group.

(Outside of class, we’ll film Pablo’s responses to a handful of questions and insert them in the Teach-Out that week.)

Q&A on the Call to Action

Week 13

M 4/ 29

CONCLUSION

- Student advanced-draft paper presentations, open to the public.
Location TBD
- Teach-Out and Call to Action lessons and results
- A new view of Atlanta
- *Our* ideas about “progress”