



PROGRAMA DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO
EM SOCIOLOGIA E ANTROPOLOGIA
Instituto de Filosofia e Ciências Sociais
Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro

CÓDIGO DA DISCIPLINA:

FCS731/FCS831

DISCIPLINA:

Jud. e Modern.: Primo Levi at the Ends of the World. A Seminar of Thinking with Primo Levi on Unpleasant Subjects

LINHA DE PESQUISA

Arte, Cultura e Pensamento Social

CARGA HORÁRIA:

45

CRÉDITOS:

3

PROFESSOR/A:

Uri Cohen & Michel Gherman

PERÍODO LETIVO:

2026-2

DIA

Quarta-feira

HORÁRIO

14h-17h

EMENTA

Primo Levi stood at the end of his world and bore witness to its end in Auschwitz, annus mundi in his words. He reached the horizon on the last ship of European humanism, pulled through fascism by the endless gravity of the Lager. In this seminar, we trace those meridians across the Atlantic to Rio de Janeiro, where Levi's "evil novelty" meets the speculative futures of the "New World". Levi implored us to consider, dedicating a life to the art of it, to the "Body of Nobody".

Tracing his arcs from the “cruellest circus” of the camp to the “comparative cannibalism” of speculative fiction, we will think with Primo Levi about the remains of the past in the presence of superfluous humanity. To think with Primo Levi at the world’s end where the “dawn command” does not just belong to the past. The “Body of Nobody” becomes a universal figure for those marked as superfluous by machines of modernity. We invite you to this process of “decoding” to see the writing on the walls through a lens forged in the heart of darkness.

PROGRAMA

First Meeting (August 5): *Se questo è un uomo* – The Meridian of Testimony & *La Volta*

- Primary Text: *Se questo è un uomo* (1947/1958).
- Seminar Themes: Establishing the baseline of the Lager universe. We explore the introductory methodology of hesitations, placing the cynical materialism of Tadeusz Borowski against Levi’s humanist friction to interrogate the structural stripping of the human into Haftling. We examine the structural paradigm of *la volta* (the moral and physical act of turning away from the face of the other as the absolute price of survival—and map the syntax of the camp’s ferocious nights and dreams.
- Syllabus Readings:
 - Levi, Primo. *If This Is a Man* (*Se questo è un uomo*). Selections: "Opening" to "Initiation".
 - Borowski, Tadeusz. *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen*.
 - Delbo, Charlotte. *Auschwitz and After* (Opening).
 - Fink, Ida. *A Scrap of Time and Other Stories*. Selections: "A Scrap of Time", "The End".
- Monograph:
 - Chapter: "Hesitations, *La Volta* "
- Theory:
 - Paul Celan, *The Meridian: Final Version—Drafts—Materials* (2011). The complete "Meridian" Speech (pp. 1–12). The topological shape of poetry and memory as an act of returns that circle the globe, connecting opposing historical latitudes.
 - Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1966). Part 3, Chapter 12: "Totalitarianism in Power," Section I: "The Image of Hell" (pp. 437–459). The systemic production of a completely regularized, superfluous humanity.

Second Meeting (August 12): *La tregua* – The Body of Nobody & The Geopolitical Spectacle

- Primary Text: *La tregua* (1963).
- Seminar Themes: The space between prison and home as an unredeemed gift of freedom, a temporary stay that allows for a tale of return to be told, robbed of redemption. We explore connections to Dante’s Purgatory and what comes after the reduction to the Body of Nobody. Written at the time of the Eichman Trial, we link *La Tregua* to the geopolitical axis of Holocaust memory, linking Adolf Eichmann’s capture in Buenos Aires to the courtroom stage in Jerusalem. We analyze how the multi-camera live video broadcast inaugurated a global media spectacle that fundamentally transformed historical testimony into a performative apparatus, contrasting Natan Alterman’s national, sovereign integration of the trial with Levi’s poem "For Adolf Eichmann" and his active refusal of that kind of justice.
- Syllabus Readings:
 - Levi, Primo. *The Truce* (*La tregua*). Chapters: "The Greek," "The Katowice Market," "Cesare," "The Reawakening" alongside his poem "For Adolf Eichmann" (July 20, 1960).
 - Homer, *The Odyssey*, Book 9, Cyclops
 - Alighieri, Dante. *Inferno*, Canto 26.
- Monograph:
 - Chapter: "The Body of Nobody" and the "Cruellest Circus"
- Theory:

- Jean Améry, *At the Mind's Limits: Contemplations by a Survivor on Auschwitz and Its Realities* (1980). Chapter 1: "At the Mind's Limits" (pp. 1–20). The dynamic failure and radical undoing of high culture and aesthetic philosophy when confronted with torture.
- Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989). Chapter 4: "The Uniqueness and Normalization of the Holocaust" (pp. 83–116). How modern engineering, systemic design, and rational frameworks isolate state actors from the physical reality of the destruction they administer.

Third Meeting (August 19): *Storie naturali* & *Il sistema periodico* – Systems, Commerce, and Comparative Cannibalism

- Primary Text: *Storie naturali* (1966), *Vizio di forma* (1971), and *Il sistema periodico* (1975).
- Seminar Themes: A critical pivot from the absolute binary laws of war into the mitigating, horizontal logic of systems and commerce. We explore how Levi opens reality into the speculative futures of science fiction ("moral traps" generated by reason). We interrogate the concept of a system, first through Sergeant Steinlauf's rigid moral machinery, and then through Levi's own fluid, liberating Periodic System, where chemical elements are mapped as substance and metaphor onto human relationships. This structural logic is tracked directly into the comparative cannibalism of modernity, colonial and technological.
- Syllabus Readings:
 - Levi, Primo (Damiano Malabaila). *Natural Histories* (*Storie naturali*) and *Flaw of Form* (*Vizio di forma*). Selected stories: "Angelic Butterfly", "The Mnemagogs," "Heading West," "The Versifier", "Observed from a Distance".
 - Levi, Primo. *The Periodic Table* (*Il sistema periodico*). Chapters: "Iron," "Chromium", "Cerium," "Gold," "Silver," "Vanadium."
 - Andrade, Oswald de. *Manifesto Antropófago* (Anthropophagist Manifesto).
- Monograph:
 - Chapter: "System, Periodic", "Open/Closed".
- Theory:
 - Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *Cannibal Metaphysics* (2014). Chapter 1: "A Remarkable Reversal" and Chapter 2: "Perspectivism" (pp. 39–72). Multinatural alterity and the perspectivist frame, redefining corporate and biological consumption through an indigenous decolonial lens.
 - Roberto Esposito, *Bíos: Biopolitics and Philosophy* (2008). Chapter 4: "The Immunization Paradigm" (pp. 110–145). How a political body protects its biological life by absorbing a measured dose of its own systemic poison.

Fourth Meeting (August 26): *Lilit* & *I sommersi e i salvati* – Dreams of Return, The Gray Zone, and Horizon of Silence

- Primary Text: *Lilit e altri racconti* (1981) and *I sommersi e i salvati* (1986).
- Seminar Themes: The final arc traces the structural impossibility of closure. We analyze return not as a happy ending, but as a recursive loop (*ritornello*) where the Lager continually returns to haunt the domestic present, explored through the pained counter-biographies of Lilit, Lorenzo, Cesare, and Chaim Rumkowski. We map his deep engagement with the absolute linguistic boundaries of Paul Celan's obscure poetry, and evaluate how these narratives turn back toward the absolute baseline of silence, tracking into Kafka's *The Trial* and the inescapable bureaucratic "shame of being a man" before an infinite archive.
- Syllabus Readings:
 - Levi, Primo. *If This Is a Man*. Chapter: "Our Nights".
 - Levi, Primo. *Lilit and Other Stories* (*Lilit e altri racconti*). Selected stories: "Capaneo", "The Return of Lorenzo", "The Return of Cesare", "King of the Jews", "Decoding", "A Tranquil Star", "Cara Mama"

- Levi, Primo. *The Drowned and the Saved* (I sommersi e i salvati). Chapters: "The Gray Zone,"
- Kafka, Franz. *The Trial* (Translated into Italian by Primo Levi, 1983).
- Fink, Ida. *A Scrap of Time and Other Stories*. Story: "The End".
- Monograph:
- Chapter: "Returns and Endings".
- Theory:
- Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive* (1999). Chapter 2: "The Muselmann" (pp. 41–86). A rigorous structural examination of the threshold where the witness, the archive, and the Muselmann meet.
- Emmanuel Levinas, *Alterity and Transcendence* (1999). "Philosophy and the Awakening of the Cosmic" and "Peace and Proximity" (pp. 23–45 & pp. 131–144). Frames the extreme ethical boundary-lines of survival, tracing how corporate and political tribunals reduce personal innocence to absolute bureaucratic shame.

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- LEVI, Primo. *A tabela periódica*. Tradução de Luiz Sérgio Henriques. Rio de Janeiro: Relume-Dumará, 1994.
- LEVI, Primo. *A trégua*. Tradução de Marco Lucchesi. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1997.
- LEVI, Primo. *É isto um homem?* Tradução de Luigi Del Re. Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1988.
- LEVI, Primo. *Os afogados e os sobreviventes: os delitos, os castigos, as penas, as impunidades*. Tradução de Luiz Sérgio Henriques. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1990.
- LEVI, Primo. *71 contos de Primo Levi*. Tradução de Maurício Santana Dias. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2005.

BIBLIOGRAFIA COMPLEMENTAR

- AGAMBEN, Giorgio. *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*. New York: Zone Books, 1999.
- ALIGHIERI, Dante. *Inferno*. Tradução de Robert Hollander e Jean Hollander. New York: Anchor Books, 2002.
- AMÉRY, Jean. *At the Mind's Limits: Contemplations by a Survivor on Auschwitz and Its Realities*. Tradução de Sidney Rosenfeld e Stella P. Rosenfeld. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980.
- ANDRADE, Oswald de. *Manifesto antropófago*. In: ANDRADE, Oswald de. *A utopia antropofágica*. 4. ed. São Paulo: Globo, 2011. p. 27–36.
- ARENDT, Hannah. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1973.
- BAUMAN, Zygmunt. *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989.
- BOROWSKI, Tadeusz. *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen*. Tradução de Barbara Vedder. London: Penguin Books, 1976.
- CELAN, Paul. *The Meridian: Final Version—Drafts—Materials*. Tradução de Pierre Joris. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011.
- DELBO, Charlotte. *Auschwitz and After*. Tradução de Rosette C. Lamont. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995.
- ESPOSITO, Roberto. *Bíos: Biopolitics and Philosophy*. Tradução de Timothy Campbell. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008.
- FINK, Ida. *A Scrap of Time and Other Stories*. Tradução de Madeline G. Levine. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1995.

HOMER. The Odyssey. Tradução de Emily Wilson. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2018.
LEVI, Emmanuel. Alterity and Transcendence. Tradução de Michael B. Smith. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.
LEVI, Primo. Flaw of Form. Tradução de Raymond Rosenthal. London: Abacus, 1990.
LEVI, Primo. Lilith and Other Stories. Tradução de Ruth Feldman. London: Abacus, 1991.
LEVI, Primo. Natural Histories. Tradução de Damian Pettigrew. London: Abacus, 1994.
LEVINAS, Emmanuel. Alterity and Transcendence. Tradução de Michael B. Smith. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.
VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, Eduardo. Cannibal Metaphysics. Tradução de Peter Skafish. Minneapolis: Univocal Publishing, 2014.

AVALIAÇÃO

Graduate Student Assessment Protocol (15 Hours)

To achieve the 3 academic credits mapped out in the institutional framework, graduate students must fulfill the following evaluation requirements:

1. In-Class Presentation: During the final half hour of each intensive session, graduate students will lead a critical panel responding to the module's core monographic concepts (la volta, the meridian, the periodic system, obscure writing), framing them for classroom discussion.
2. Final Research Paper: A formal comparative paper of 3,500–4,000 words to be submitted electronically after the conclusion of the seminar. The paper will choose an internal conceptual arc from Levi's lifework and mobilize it to "decode" a localized text, modern space of exception, or post-dictatorship memory phenomenon within the Latin American context. Formal letter grades will be evaluated and submitted post-course.

OBSERVAÇÕES

4 Intensive Sessions × 4 Hours = 16 In-Person Hours + 16 Guided Reading Hours + 15 Assessment Hours