



## Stupid postmodernism

### Description

According to a search on Google Ngram, the term "postmodernism" reached its apogee in the 1990s. Then there was a sharp decline, at least in books up to 2008, which is the extent of the current Ngram database.



But what was once a term debated, disputed and exhausted in academic circles in the 1980s and 90s has at last gone mainstream, and usually as a term of opprobrium.\*

"Postmodernism" seems to be a term used mostly by the far right in North America to describe what's wrong with college-level (university) education.

### Headline philosophy



truth. So, you can say what you want and what works for you. Postmodernism has provided a climate in which we don't know who or what to believe. As Trump said of the white supremacist march in Charlottesville last year: "there was blame on both sides, many sides." Intellectuals have abandoned the rest of us to the mercies of charismatic demagogues and political snake-oil salesmen.

The word cloud above shows that certain authors/speakers have risen to prominence of late. Here are some videos I viewed recently.

- The "stupid postmodernism" meme came from a short video about the Paul Manafort case by progressive independent news commentator, David Pakman: [Paul Manafort will tell truth: Taken back MINUTES LATER.](#)
- Jordan Peterson is a Canadian defender of conservatism. His Wikipedia site declares he's a philosophical pragmatist (which I'm not so sure about), but also a fan of Ayn Rand, which certainly resonates with his defence of individualism: [Jordan Peterson: Why You Have To Fight Postmodernism.](#)
- A reasoned refutation of Jordan Peterson by a philosophical essayist going by the name of Cuck Philosophy: [Jordan Peterson doesn't understand postmodernism.](#)
- A well reasoned case against Jordan Peterson by Ana Kasparian, an independent news commentator on *The Young Turks*: [Ana Kasparian on Jordan Peterson.](#)
- A surprising account by Noam Chomsky on postmodern obscurantism and his response to critics who accused him of being absolutist in his account of Middle East politics: [Noam Chomsky "Postmodernism I."](#)

## Alternate facts

A New York Times article by William Casey delivers the following reasonable summary of postmodernism's debating points:

"From these premises, philosophers and theorists have derived a number of related insights. One is that facts are socially constructed. People who produce facts — scientists, reporters, witnesses — do so from a particular social position (maybe they're white, male and live in America) that influences how they perceive, interpret and judge the world. They rely on non-neutral methods (microscopes, cameras, eyeballs) and use non-neutral symbols (words, numbers, images) to communicate facts to people who receive, interpret and deploy them from their own social positions."

But Trumpism has corrupted such talking points to "Fact is fiction, and anything goes":

"Call it what you want: relativism, constructivism, deconstruction, postmodernism, critique. The idea is the same: Truth is not found, but made, and making truth means exercising power. The reductive version is simpler and easier to abuse: Fact is fiction, and anything goes. It's this version of critical social theory that the populist right has seized on and that Trump has made into a powerful weapon."

Also see my posts

- [Is post-truth politics a thing?](#)
- [Armchair postmodernism](#)
- [What's wrong with postmodernism](#)
- [All watched over by Ayn Rand](#)
- [Outsiders](#)

## Bibliography

- Coyne, Richard. 1995. *Designing Information Technology in the Postmodern Age: From Method to Metaphor*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press
- Coyne, Richard. 2011. *Derrida for Architects*. Abingdon: Routledge
- Williams, Casey. 2017. Has trump stolen philosophy's critical tools? *The New York Times*, 17 April. Available online: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/17/opinion/has-trump-stolen-philosophys-critical-tools.html> (accessed 28 September, 2018).

## Note

\* opprobrium: disapproval, bringing disgrace.

## Category

1. Media

## Tags

1. Ayn Rand
2. post-truth
3. postmodernism
4. trump

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