

English Department – Spring 2017 Graduate Course Descriptions

Professor James Tobias

English 275: The audiovisual essay

This seminar will explore audiovisual works which are composed as argument, exposition, or essay, paying special attention to works in which sound, music, and listening practices or technologies contribute significantly to the visual register of the audiovisual essay presented. We will consider a range of essay films, videos, or interactive works across audiovisual media which point to transformations in media production, distribution, and reception, paying close attention to the ways in which sound and image are synchronized or held apart in support of the work's exposition or argument. We will be considered not simply with authorial or formal concerns presented in these works, but also, the ways in which they raise key questions about history, media theory, social, political, or technological apparatus, and the futures of media theory and practice. We will review concerns with narrative or narratology in audiovisual media, as well, considering the ways in which argument, commentary, or exposition may be found to work implicitly or explicitly as an essayistic dimension audiovisual media. Seminar discussions audiovisual essays screened will thus map the contours of the audiovisual essay in both "fiction" and "non-fiction" works.

Professor Steven Gould Axelrod

English 270: Writing in Dark Times

This seminar will look closely at—and try to interpret and theorize—the relationship between writing and dark times. Do eyes grow adjusted to the dark, as Emily Dickinson thought, or can they find other coping skills or oppositional strategies?

From the mid- to late-twentieth century, we will look at poetry by Robert Lowell (*Selected Poems*), Sylvia Plath (*Collected Poems*), and Frank Bidart (*In the Western Night*); memoir and meditation by Theresa Hak Kyung Cha (*Dictée*); fiction by Kathy Acker (*Empire of the Senseless*); and political theory by Hannah Arendt (*Men in Dark Times*). From the twenty-first century, we will look at poetry by Harryette Mullen (*Sleeping with the Dictionary*), and Claudia Rankine (*Citizen*); fiction by Yiyun Li (*Gold Boy, Emerald Girl*); and cultural theory by Jane Jacobs (*Dark Age Ahead*) and Slavoj Žižek (*Refugees, Terror and Other Troubles with the Neighbors*).

We will explore, through the medium of writing, the dread and the resistances that dark times generate. Requirements: one or two brief oral presentations, and a seminar paper.

Professor George Haggerty
English 277: All About Eve

A seminar in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's work and its relation to Queer Theory, Performance Studies and other critical formations. We will read all of Sedgwick's publications, and we will look at what she was reading to inspire her work. We will concentrate on her place in Queer Theory: looking at what she says about other theorists and what other theorists say about her. This should lead us to consider where the field is today. Students will write short articles and participate in a one-day conference centered on Eve and her work. Wednesday 12:10-3:00. Professors Doyle and Haggerty

Readings will include: *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions* (1986); *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985); *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990); *Tendencies* (1993); *Fat Art, Thin Art* (1994) *A Dialogue of Love* (2002); *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (2002); *The Weather in Proust* (2011); and other key publications and performances TBA.

Professor V. Nunley
English 279: Rhetorical Studies

Repurposing Pedagogy, Rhetoric, and Composition for a Neoliberal Age

Energized by feminism's praxis of repurposing "neutral" values, seminar will examine theories and methods of pedagogy in their public, quasi-public, and classroom iterations. "Pedagogy is political, all politics pedagogical" informs the seminar. Seminar participants will address rhetoric beyond erroneous notions of it mere argument or style to embody its "ontological weight" through images, persuasion, and affective intensities. We will scrutinize and attempt to repurpose concepts and practices such as visceral and visual theory and rhetoric, image and affect, assessment, multi-modality (composition as an act of communication that can be expressed through any number of media), excessive thoughts and bodies as pedagogical, parrhesia and pedagogy, awareness/consciousness and pedagogy, critical and reactionary pedagogy, neoliberalism and the limits of identity politics, inessential solidarities, and discomforting civility. Seminar is theory based investigation of pedagogical and rhetorical theory concerned with teaching, politics, "impractical application," and composition, but not limited to composition or to the writing classroom.

Friday, 9am-12pm.

Texts:

Repurposing Composition: Feminist Interventions for a Neoliberal Age, Shari J Stenberg (1st Edition)

Non-Discursive Rhetoric: Image and Affect in Multimodal Composition, Joddy Murray
Problematizing Public Pedagogy Jake Burdick, Jennifer A. Sandlin, Michael P. O'Malley (Eds.)
America at War with Itself (City Lights Books), Henry A. Giroux and Robin D.G. Kelley.

Professor Jayna Brown

English 251: Erotics of Blackness

We will be reading the most recent critical works on race and sexuality in the contexts of African American and African Diasporan literature, culture and politics. Our analytical approach will be a combination of queer of color critique, black feminism, and literary studies. One of our central lines of inquiry concerns the relationship between Black Feminism and Queer Studies/Theory. We will be looking for the ways these approaches intersect, how they inform each other, and the ways they may conflict in the works we are reading. What happens after we have let go of a politics of respectability? How are contemporary scholars opening new theoretical space to explore black desire and sexual pleasure? The concept of agency is central to this conversation, considering how black bodies are sexualized, surveilled, regulated, disciplined, fetishized and commoditized. Most of these scholars argue for some form of self-volition, though they may define it differently. How do they see black subjects navigating forms of subjugation?