Fall 2018

COM 325-001: Women/Writing/Cinema

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Description

In this hybrid creative writing/film studies course, we will be guided by mostly female artists, both contemporary and historical, whose work exists at the crossroads of writing and moving images. Our range of inspirations will include Julie Dash, Mona Hatoum, Agnes Varda, Kathleen Collins, Jamaica Kincaid, Chick Strand, Rea Tajiri, and many others. As we read creative literary texts that feed on filmic sources, screen cinematic forms that function as scenes of writing, and consider the model of a hybrid creative practice, we will explore the ways gender and sexuality are imagined at the spaces where disparate media establish dialogue, overlap, and trade places.

The course will provide an opportunity for students interested in a variety of disciplines -- literature, creative writing, film studies, visual art, and gender and sexuality studies -- to investigate the means by which creative experimentation can generate original theoretical and critical perspectives.

Requirements

The course will combine discussions of assigned readings and moving image works with weekly workshopping of student writing. Students will produce and workshop a range of short writings at the fluid boundary between text and screen; instigating prompts for these assignments (including cine-essays, filmic fictions, performative scripts, and visionary diaries) will spring from the wide range of techniques and formal experiments we encounter in our assigned readings and films/videos.

I expect every student to attend every class and to be on time, to complete the assigned reading and screening and to be prepared for active group discussion and thoughtful workshop participation. To en-
sure that students are doing the readings and screenings, there will sometimes be brief unannounced quizzes or responses.

All writing assignments are due in class on the designated day in hard copy. When it is your turn to work-shop your writing, you must email your essay to me and your classmates no later than noon on the Sunday before we meet. Please bring the assigned reading and your classmates’ to-be-workshopped essays in hard copy. The latter should be marked with your comments; you will submit these marked-texts to your classmates each week. When you hand in your portfolio of essays at the end of the semester, please include your classmates’ responses attached to the workshopped essay.

Participation - 30%
Short Essays - 40%
Final Project - 30%

PARTICIPATION: 30%
Thorough reading/screening of the selected texts/films is essential for engaged classroom discussion and workshopping. Please come to class ready to share insights, ideas and questions.

SHORT ESSAYS: 40%
Each student will produce four two-page texts; one will be revised.

FINAL PROJECTS: 30%
Students will produce final essays/projects. Each student will submit a detailed project proposal that we will discuss; final projects may take one of three forms: a scholarly essay, a creative writing project, or a multi-media/moving image project.

Grading

Evaluation will follow the university’s grading scale:

A = 100-90 (superior)       B = 86-80 (very good)       C = 76-70 (acceptable)       F = 59-0 (inadequate)
B+ = 89-87 (excellent)       C+ = 79-77 (good)              D = 69-60 (minimum)

Attendance Policy

If you miss a class, you are responsible for catching up and getting any assignments or readings that were handed out as well as for submitting assignments due on the missed day (before our class meeting time); missed in-class group exercises cannot be made up.

Every unexcused absence after the second one will reduce your participation grade. More than six unexcused absences can result in the automatic failure of the course. According to university policy, students who expect to miss classes or exams because of religious observance must submit to their instructors, by the end of the second week of classes, a written list of dates that will be missed. Similarly, athletes should submit a list of events. If you can’t make a class—due to illness, an academic commitment, an interview, or a major extracurricular event—and you wish to have the absence excused, ask the Dean of Students to review the request.
Late Work

If you know in advance that you are having trouble completing a project, please see me as soon as possible. Extensions need 24 hours’ notice. Technology difficulties are not an excuse for late work: please back up your work frequently: save copies in email, on flash drives, on networks, etc.

Technology

Please silence your cell phone completely, and don’t have it out in class. Please open your laptop only when needed for class work.

Plagiarism and Cheating

The NJIT University Code on Academic Integrity defines plagiarism as using or attempting to use written, oral, or graphic work which was authored or prepared by another and submitting it as one’s own. The full Code can be found at https://www5.njit.edu/policies/sites/policies/files/academic-integrity-code.pdf.

If your work uses the idea or language of any other person, make that use clear to your reader by citing clearly and thoroughly. If I find plagiarized work, even if it seems to stem from carelessness, I’m required to report it to the Dean of Students.

Documented Disabilities

If you are a student with a documented disability, please see me at the beginning of the semester to discuss accommodations. You can also contact Student Disability Services at (973) 596-3420.

Schedule

Please note: the syllabus is subject to change. Any email or in-class announcements take precedence. MOVING IMAGE WORKS INDICATED BY M BELOW

Sept. 11      Introduction
              Agnes Varda, Ydessa, the Bears and etc. M

Sept. 18      Ciné-écriture/Féminine-écriture
              The Gleaners and I, Agnes Varda M
              The Laugh of the Medusa, Helene Cixous
Sept. 25  **Unsentimental Desire**

Kathleen Collins, *Losing Ground*  
Kathleen Collins, from *Whatever Happened to Interracial Love?*

W1___________________________  
W2___________________________

Oct. 2  **Chronicles of Performance**

Jennie Livingston, *Paris is Burning*  
Anna Deavere Smith, from *Let Me Down Easy*  
>>>assignment 1 due

W1___________________________  
W2___________________________

Oct. 9  **How Not to Be Seen**

Alfred Hitchcock, *Rear Window*  
Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”  
>>>assignment 2 due

W1___________________________  
W2___________________________

Oct. 16  **The Female Gaze**

Elisabeth Subrin, *A Woman, A Part*  
Jill Soloway, “The Female Gaze”  
>>>assignment 2 due

W1___________________________  
W2___________________________

Oct. 23  **Prison Complexes**

Brett Story, *The Prison in Twelve Landscapes*  
Ava duVernay, *13th*  
Brett Story, “Prisons without Crime”

W1___________________________  
W2___________________________
Oct. 30  Forms of Correspondence

Sarah J. Christman, *Dear Bill Gates* M
Sarah J. Christman, *As Above, So Below* M
Mona Hatoum, *Measures of Distance* M
James Baldwin, *A Letter to My Nephew*

>>> assignment 3 due

W1

W2

Nov. 6  Fragmentary Remains

Raoul Peck, *I Am Not Your Negro* M
Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, from *Dictée*

W1

W2

Nov. 13  Trauma & Recovery

Chick Strand, *Soft Fiction* M
Jo Spence, *Putting Myself in the Picture*

>>> assignment 4 due

W1

W2

Nov. 20  Life & Debt

Stephanie Black, *Life and Debt* M
Jamaica Kincaid, “A Small Place”

W1

W2
Nov. 27  Visionary Passage & Afterlife Art
Leonor Caraballo, *Icaros: A Vision*  
Leonor Caraballo and Abou Farman, “Object Breast Cancer”  
Abou Farman, “Towards a Post-Secular Aesthetics”  
>>> final project proposals due

W1 ________________________________
W2 ________________________________

Dec. 4  History/Memory
Rea Tajiri, *History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*  
Monica Sone, from *Nisei Daughter*  
>>> revisions due with portfolio (including peer responses)

W1 ________________________________
W2 ________________________________

Dec. 11  Between the Mythic & the Everyday
Julie Dash, *Daughters of the Dust*  
Julie Dash, from *Daughters of the Dust: The Making of an African American Woman’s Film*

W1 ________________________________
W2 ________________________________

**FINAL PROJECTS DUE DECEMBER 15**