

This year's version of the course will take up affect theory directly, in its lineage from phenomenology (Merleau-Ponty) and critical theory (Foucault, Deleuze), and in its political reverberations (feminist, queer and political theories. Assignments are in [BLUE](#).

The introduction session (**Week 1, August 27**) will introduce and frame the key concepts of this class (self, body, transcendence). The seminar will then open with three weeks of reading texts (in French, if you are able) that will elicit, ground, disturb and weave a working set of what Rancière would term "sensibilities," that is, a partially shared matrix of concepts and affects. These include:

1. Vision/Body/Touch (**Week 2, September 3**)
  - a. Merleau-Ponty, "The Chiasm" (*L'entrelacs-le chiasme*) from *The Visible and the Invisible*
  - b. Luce Irigaray, "The Invisible of Flesh" (*L'invisible de la chair*) from *Ethics of Sexual Difference*
2. Sensing the turn to affect (**Week 3, September 10**)
  - a. Michel Foucault, "Technologies of the Self" in *Technologies of the Self* (Lectures delivered in Vermont in English, but I can give you the back-translated French)
  - b. Gilles Deleuze, "Postscript on the Societies of Control" (*Post-scriptum sur les sociétés de contrôle*)
  - c. Jacques Rancière, selection from *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics* (this is a collection of essays that mostly had already been translated, but, again, I can find the original French for anyone interested.)
3. Sensing the turn to affect (**Week 4, September 17**)
  - a. Patricia Clough, "The Affective Turn", in *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*
  - b. Michael Hardt, "What Affects are Good for" (Forward to *The Affective Turn*)
  - c. Judith Butler, Introduction to *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?*
  - c. Elizabeth Wilson, Introduction to *Psychosomatic: Feminism and the Neurological Body*

#### Assignments for weeks 2-4:

1. Bring your [annotated readings](#) to class. Annotations include insights/reactions and questions as well as underlining.
2. In preparation for discussing your insights and questions, write [one sentence](#) for each key seminar word (self, body, transcendence). Each sentence should attempt to synthesize what the readings argue. Ask yourself how you view the 'self' (or the 'body' or 'transcendence') differently after reading these texts. The goal is not comprehensiveness but intensity: what primary theoretical intervention about self/body/transcendence is conveyed by these texts? I will collect your sentences. I will only count them as part of attendance/participation, but I will comment on them.

**By Friday September 20**, compose a [one-page](#) account of *one* concept (self, body, *or* transcendence) as you track it through *one* part of *one* text. Again, the goal here is not to generate a thorough summary of an argument but to practice [explaining](#) how one key concept functions in a text, or part of a text. You must tell me which text you are analyzing in class on September 17. I will only read and comment on the first 250 words. **Email** this to me. It counts **10%** of your final grade, rolled into which is an assessment of your [attendance and participation](#) during these first four weeks.

Starting in Week 5, I have organized the syllabus around three films, each of which will serve as a hub for three different units. The class will parry two works of fiction with and against each other, and with and against various theoretical readings in feminist and queer theory, in order to interrogate a) the dis/conjunctions of subjectivity and body, b) the strategies by which the physiological body and not just a sense of the self is projected into narration, image, and other representations, and c) the modalities of 'religion', 'spirituality', and 'transcendence' that these filmmakers, writers and theorists deploy in order to engage issues of self and body.

#### Week 5, September 24:

- a. **Screen** *Watermelon Woman* (Dunye, 2000)
- b. **Read** selections from Jeannette Winterson's *Oranges are not the Only Fruit*.
- c. **Bring your notes on the film and novel to class. On a separate sheet of paper, write at least three questions or insights that tie the theory and discussions we have already read to these texts. I will collect these.**

#### Week 6, October 1:

- a. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading" from *Touching Feeling*

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- b. Judith Halberstam, "Keeping Time with Lesbians on Ecstasy"
- c. Elizabeth Freeman, "Time Binds, or Erotohistoriography" from *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*
- d. [A good historical frame for this discussion is Hortense Spillers, "Interstices: A Small Drama of Words", available online, but this is optional.]

**Week 7, October 8:**

- a. Lauren Berlant, selections from *Cruel Optimism* (optimally the Introduction, & chapters 1, 2, and 6)

**Week 8, October 15:**

- a. **Screen** *Women without Men* (Neshat, 2009)
- b. **Read** selections from Forugh Farrokhzad's poetry
- c. **Bring questions to class**, but I will not collect them. **Begin reflecting on which concepts, thematic arcs or theoretical assertions from this seminar are most interesting or persistent for you.**

**Week 9, October 22:**

- a. Avery Gordon, "The Other Door," from *Ghostly Matters*
- d. Laura Marks, on haptic visuality from *The Skin of the Film*
- e. Sara Ahmed on "Orientations" from *The New Materialisms*

**Week 10, October 29:**

- f. Ranjana Khanna, "Disposability", *differences: a journal of feminist cultural studies*, 20:1 (2009)
- g. Gayatri Spivak, "How to Read a Culturally Different Book" or "Translation as Culture" from *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization*
- h. Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou, *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political*, 1-96

**Week 11, November 5:**

- a. **Screen** *Black Girl* (Sembene, 1966)
- b. **Read** selections from Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route*
- c. **Bring questions to class**, but I will not collect them. What I will collect is a **short statement** (no more than a few sentences) asserting which film and what theoretical text or concept you will write about for your three-page paper that is due November 21.

**Week 12, November 12:**

- a. Cvetkovich, *Depression: A Public Feeling*, part I.
- b. Eng and Han, "Dialogue on Racial Melancholy" in *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*

**Week 13, November 19:**

- a. Cvetkovich, *Depression*, most of part II.
- b. Butler and Athanasiou, *Dispossession*, 97-197
- c. Avery Gordon, "Not only the footprints" from *Ghostly Matters*

**Due Thursday, November 21:** A three-page paper (limit 800 words) in which you will *explicate and assess* the specific theoretical contribution of one text, one theoretical concept, or one key word (self, body, transcendence) as you see it deployed in one of the three films we have screened and discussed. "Explicate and assess" is what we have been doing these past weeks, but if you need clarification, let me know. This short paper is worth **20%** of your final grade, rolled into which is your attendance for these nine weeks of the semester.

**Week 14, December 3:** Ending words (without finality or conclusions)

**Due December 13 by midnight:** Your final paper for this seminar is not a research paper and should not be long. It should be no more than 3000 words (about 12 pages) and preferably is closer to 2000 words (about 8 pages), that is, the length of the typical AAR conference paper. Its topic, address, and approach should, ideally, fit a typical AAR call for papers (of which there are many different genres). In other words, use this seminar's final paper requirement as an opportunity to 'try out' an AAR submission. How can you take the theoretical and conceptual work of this semester, link it to your own specific research interests and submit it to an AAR Group, Section, or Consultation? **Please** come talk to me about possible topics and approaches. This final paper is worth **70%** of your final grade, rolled into which is your participation during the final nine weeks of the semester.

The Department is training you to teach and to present research publically. For this reason, you will not get an "A" if you do not read thoroughly, prepare carefully, and participate vigorously every week.