ENGLISH 590S-1-01
SPECIAL TOPICS SEMINAR:
SOUND AND DOUBLE CONSCIOUSNESS
Tuesday 4:40PM – 7:10PM
Tsitsi Jaji

When W.E.B. Du Bois published his influential book, The Souls of Black Folk in 1903 he used extracts from spirituals to begin each chapter. This serves as a template to think through the “problem of the twentieth century…the color line” in sonic terms. We will examine sound not only in music, but in literature, speech, film, and recording technologies across the black world. Our objects of study will be varied, but one question will remain foremost: what does sound help us understand about the lived experience of being black in a predominantly white world, what Du Bois called “double consciousness.”

We’ll consider how the Pulitzer-Prize winning poetry of Tyehimba Jess enlivens lost voices of black musicians after the Civil War; conversely, we’ll listen anew to Longfellow’s poetry in music by Black British composer, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor. We’ll see how the challenge of recording vernacular expression on the page was addressed in South Africa and in the U.S. Recording as a “new” audio technology will bring us to blues singer, Ma Rainey’s, her lyrics, and August Wilson’s play about her in the recording studio. We’ll listen for critiques of law-and-order’s racism in films and novellas from Jamaica and Nigeria, and the experimental in sound and writing shapes works by Jayne Cortez and Nate Mackey. The theorists who will shape
our study may include Shirley Graham Du Bois, Angela Davis, Jennifer Stoever, Zora Neale Hurston, Shana Redmond, Michel Chion, Fred Moten, Jonathan Sterne.

Students will have an opportunity to design the final unit of this seminar, introducing sounds that resonate strongly with them. Advanced undergraduates and graduate students are welcome in this course.

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LIT 620S-01 / ENGLISH 620S-01
SPECIAL TOPICS SEMINAR: FILM-PHILOSOPHERS/FILM-MAKERS
Tuesday 3:05PM – 5:35PM
Markos Hadjioannou

This course is designed for graduate students and advanced undergraduate students interested in the intersections between film, film theory, and continental philosophy.

Over the course of film’s history, we see a number of shifts in how cinema has been theorized by film critics, philosophers, psychologists, critical theorists, etc. Repeatedly, thinkers have asked, and tried to answer, the question: “what is cinema?”. In other words, they have sought to understand how we may interpret a visual culture with such a pervading effect on 20th century society. More recently, this trend has culminated with a subsection of film theory and continental philosophy alike—what has been termed “film-philosophy”. This focus takes as its inspiration the work of Gilles Deleuze, Henri Bergson, Stanley Cavell, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Jacques Rancière amongst others. Cinema, for these writers, confronts us with philosophical and phenomenological questions of being, belonging, identifying, feeling, responding, and participating in reality, the world, our own bodies, and the societies within which we reside. In so doing, film-philosophy sees film-making as an act of thinking about the world, and of (re)presenting the subject’s position within the world. In other words, film-philosophy takes as its premise that films are themselves procedures of thought that are acts of philosophy.

This course will look at how the aforementioned philosophers have discussed cinema, allowing us to understand the development of film-philosophy, and some of the key representatives of this burgeoning field. Beyond these thinkers, our weekly meetings will focus on the film-makers whose works present us with modes of philosophical thinking. Examples include, amongst others, works by Michael Haneke, Chris Marker, Marie Menken, Alfred Hitchcock, David Lynch, Andrei Tarkovsky, Jane Campion, Jean-Luc Godard, and Apichatpong Weerasethakul.

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ENGLISH 890S-01
SPECIAL TOPICS SEMINAR:
PLANETARITIES: WORLD ARTS
Wednesday 11:45AM – 2:15PM
Ranjana Khanna

The term planetarity was used in the humanities in the 1990’s by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak to push against an understanding
of a comparative literature that had been Eurocentric, a notion of world literature that failed to address the problems of translation, and a concept of literature more generally that was bound up in the logic of globalization. This course will address the idea of the world arts in terms of their worldmaking capacity. It will address various notions of the world, the global, internationalism, the universal, pluriversal, ecologies, cosmologies, and the planetary through art works and writing on the arts that push against a narrower geographical understanding. We will address historical notions of world literature (Goethe, Marx, etc.), more recent studies (Cheah, Ganguly, Casanova, etc.) and bring these in conversations with curatorial projects (Enwezor, Maharaj, Nash, Krishnamachari), world cinema (Andrew) dance (Savigliano, Foster) and music (White; Taylor), the geopolitical aesthetic (Jameson) and works of art that we may understand as engendering of and even representing these categories, intersections with postcolonial thought, ecologies of life-worlds imagined through the arts, and with works considering the anthropocene. While the term planetarity was not originally used to conceptualize issues of climate change or geological time, the contemporary arts and criticism asks us to consider the local, global, and planetary together alongside different scales of time and space. In studying art objects, we will consider their world-making capacity, their dispositions, their logic of perspective, world, critical apparatus, temporal and spatial frameworks, alongside the potentialities and foreclosures of the works that study them. This course will be taught in conjunction with an annual theme at the Franklin Humanities Institute on World Arts. In that context, there will be opportunities to work with writers, curators, choreographers, artists, and festival organizers to understand how they conceive the worlds they make.

HISTORY 890S-02 / ENGLISH 890S-02
SPECIAL TOPICS SEMINAR:
FACING THE ANTHROPOCENE
Tuesday 6:30PM – 9:00PM
Norman Wirzba

ENGLISH 890S-03
REDEEMING LOVE: FOUR MEDIEVAL TEXTS
Thursday 12:00PM – 2:30PM
David Aers

Last semester I offered a seminar on “Redeeming Love,” which included Anselm, Abelard, Aquinas and Julian of Norwich. What I call “redeeming love” became known as “the atonement” in the sixteenth century. The Reformation invented a model of the crucifixion in this context which was unknown to medieval theologians, poets and contemplatives. Some Protestants seem to have thought they were following Anselm (Cur Deus Homo) when they made a significant break
from his massively influential theology of redemption. Part of this course will explore change and continuity here.

The approach of this class is text-centered. We will read some very complex texts with careful attention to their particularities. We will abstain from imposing pre-packaged theories/theologies onto the writings we study. Any grand theologizing and grand narratives must emerge from our study of the minute particulars of the texts. A world resides in a grain of sand. What then are the works we shall address?

We will begin with Calvin’s treatment of Christ’s passion and crucifixion in Book Two of the *Institutes* (using the final, 1559 edition). From Calvin to the greatest poet who was nurtured in and remained in the Calvinist Church of England: George Herbert. From Herbert to John Milton who began in this Church but left it, justified the public execution of its Supreme Governor (January 1649) and became a prolific generator of many heresies, some truly great poems and a work of systematic theology that was unpublishable in an England under the governance of king and re-established Church of England. We shall concentrate on some of the poetry while I hope some in the class may also become interested in *De Doctrina Christiana* (his systematic theology). The course ends with a reading of another revolutionary Christian, John Bunyan (*Grace Abounding*) and a glance at those he, but not Milton, opposed: the Quakers and Ranters.


**Note on class format and expectations and grading**

This class is a seminar so attendance and participation are mandatory. Laptops (and other electronic devices) are not to be used in class. A seminar is a dialogic form of learning, very different to a lecture class. In my experience, laptops act as an impediment to the kinds of attention and communication I
consider essential to a flourishing seminar. Also, please refrain from eating during class.

The grade will come from one essay of not more than 25 pages to be handed in during or before the final class.

English 890S-04
SPECIAL TOPICS SEMINAR:
Contemporary Literature, Digital Infrastructure, and Internet Culture
Thursday 1:25PM – 3:55PM
Aarthi Vadde

This will be a course about how 21st century literary culture depends on and reflects upon digital infrastructures of publication, circulation, and storage. Literature is conceived of fairly expansively for our purposes; it includes the popular, visual arts, and genres that test the boundaries of the literary and the serious. We will consider how conceived-for-print literary works engage with and formally incorporate digital writing (for example, the blog, the tweet, the emoji, or the video). In turn, we’ll see how platform-published works vivify the affordances and ideological operations of social media (for example, Twitter fiction and Instagram poetry). We will also explore the niche and mainstream impact of particular genres such as book art and autofiction, whose generic roots precede the internet, and yet cannot be analyzed today without reference to internet cultures of writing, sharing, and storing information. Beyond our focus on contemporary literary culture, we will explore several subfields related to computational culture: platform studies; infrastructuralism; theories of digital media, labor, and literacy; science and technology studies; philosophies of information; history of computation.

Possible Novels to be drawn from: Chimamanda Adichie, Americanah; Lauren Beukes, Zoo City; Tom McCarthy, Satin Island; Zadie Smith, Swing Time; Possible Poetry: Claudia Rankine, Citizen, Conceptual Writing (Kenneth Goldsmith and Craig Dworkin), Flarf; Possible Book Art: Fred Benenson, Emoji Dick; Xu Bing, Book from the Ground; Mark Danielewski, The Familiar; Possible Autofiction: Rachel Cusk, Outline; Jarret Kobek, I Hate the Internet; Possible Platform Fiction: Twitter Fiction by Teju Cole, Jennifer Egan, David Mitchell; Instagram Poetry by Rupi Kaur and Cleo Wade. Perusing Wattpad and Fan Fiction sites.

Exemplary scholars for secondary criticism might include: Ian Bogost and Nick Monfort; Barbara Cassin; Vikram Chandra; Wendy Chun; David Golumbria; John Guillory; N. Katherine Hayles; Henry Jenkins; Lawrence Lessig; Alan Liu; Lydia Liu; Mark McGurl, John Durham Peters; Jessica Pressman; Nicole Starosielski; others.

Writing Assignments: Students will have the option to experiment with different academic forms of writing – be it conference papers for oral presentation, article-length essays
aspiring to peer-review publication, or short/long form writing for digital venues.

ENGLISH 890S-05
SPECIAL TOPICS SEMINAR:
TRANSGRESSION & REDEMPTION
Tuesday/Thursday 10:05AM – 11:20PM
Thomas Ferraro

American literature is distinguished by the number of dangerous and disturbing books in its canon--and American scholarship by its ability to conceal this fact.

--Leslie Fiedler, October 1959

A work of this span goes against the grain of current critical taste, but we haven’t seen the forest for the trees much in recent years, and I think “Transgression & Redemption” will hit a lot of reset buttons, and jumpstart important new works.

--Anonymous ms. reviewer, February 2019

I invite you to a seminar in exposure, if not immersion and participation. The exposure is to an ambitious updating (feminist and queer, Morrisonian and Jamesonian, pansensorial and sacramentally alert) of the greatest account ever given of canonical U.S. storytelling, Leslie Fiedler’s Love & Death in the American Novel. For it was Fiedler who first taught us that American narrative is a compulsive restaging (Protestantly derived, Protestantly directed) of the interplay among sex, violence, and sanctity, and it is one of the unrecognized byproducts of nearly a half-century of canonical revision--under the signs of gender, race, and class--that it re-animates and re-inflects but by no means defangs or escapes Fiedler’s mythography. By immersion I mean the inhabitation (“slow reading,” if you will) of major novels of that neo-canon--in which the reader cultivates her own capture by the text’s knowing, to the point where she is enabled to talk back to the text in its own idiom. I am especially interested in a major trajectory of the tradition’s own idiom, its conjuring of Marian Catholicism--be it explicit, closeted, or allied. To participate, then, is to summon the implications of such immersion and act on the consequent vision of re-emergence, not only my re-emergent vision but yours: ideally, it is to contribute to professional praxis at its real cutting edges, beyond the Puritan pedagogy of U.S. Critical Theory, where the impact of visual, sound, and media studies is now being felt in literary studies proper, and where American mythopoetics—its appetite for radiant beauty, its insinuation of fierce wisdom, and its demand for disciplinary-suspicious courage—take command once again.

Our reading is to be chosen from:

Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter, with “The Minister’s Black Veil”

Herman Melville, Billy Budd

Harold Frederic, The Damnation of Theron Ware
Henry James, In the Cage (or, heaven protect you, the Wings of the Dove)

Kate Chopin, The Awakening, with “At Chênière Caminada”

F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby, with “Absolution”

Willa Cather, The Professor’s House, with “Coming, Aphrodite!”

Ernest Hemingway, The Sun Also Rises, with “God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen”

Nella Larsen, Passing, with Claude McKay, “Jelly Roll”

William Faulkner, Absalom, Absalom! (another monstrous text)

Zora Neale Hurston’s Their Eyes Were Watching God, with “Characteristics”

Nathanael West, The Day of the Locust, with Horace McCoy, “They Shoot Horses”

E.L. Doctorow, The Book of Daniel

Ron Hansen, Mariette in Ecstasy

N.B.: this novel list is my daydream, which means it is too long even for an 800-level course. So if you have preferences among the above, please speak up now.

Complementary readings in theory and criticism, from Fiedler of course, but also from Emerson, Lawrence, Williams, Baym, Sedgwick, Morrison, Benn Michaels, Butler, Orsi, Fessenden, and (should we read Cather or West) a small host of Duke affiliates. Also—in Huck’s unavoidable fashion—yours truly.

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LITERATURE 890S-06 / ENGLISH 890S-06
SPECIAL TOPICS SEMINAR:
THE OBJECT, AFTER THEORY
Thursday 11:45AM – 2:15PM
Robyn Wiegman

This course considers the relationship between cultural objects of study and critical theory’s meteoric twentieth century rise in order to chart the impulses and orientations that now shape the theoretical humanities. The temporal force of “after” in the course title is not meant to echo the fashionable declaration that theory is dead. On the contrary, it situates theory as the habitus in which the critical practices of the humanities and interpretative social sciences are now honed. To speak in theory’s idioms, to marshal its rhetorical forms, to wager one’s relation to any of the debates that circulate in or through it: these are highly valued characteristics of scholarly achievement in any field that takes culture, media, literature, art, language, subjectivity, or textuality as a primary domain of critical import. Throughout the course, we will pose our theoretical readings and deliberations alongside specific cultural objects including the novel (both graphic and traditional); the documentary film;
THEORIES OF CORPOREALITY
Wednesday 10:20AM – 1:20PM
Sarah Wilbur

This graduate seminar explores theoretical frames for articulating the social, political, cultural, phenomenological and economic significance of the body across humanities disciplines. Course literature draws significantly although not exclusively from dance and performance research to consider a wide range of approaches to corporeality studies. Required reading, viewing and analysis of performance texts, guest presentations and workshops draw surgical attention to the body as a site of embodied power, control, and potential resistance. Students contribute knowledge across a range of writing genres. Intermittent movement activities put theoretical concepts “on their feet.” Course culminates in the creation of an original research project. Open to Duke graduate students of all interests and abilities. Zero dance experience required.