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University of Washington

Winter 2007: English 556 / Comparative Literature 535

Monday/Wednesday 1:30-3:20

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Office Hours (Simpson Center for the Humanities, Communications 206): By Appointment

The Cultural Politics and Poetics of the Emotions Theories, Practices, Rhetorics

This seminar proceeds from the assumption that studying the theorization, rhetorics, and expression of the emotions is itself a study in the politics and values of a culture. In the West, for instance, the emotions have been figured predominantly as feminine and in opposition to reason, with reason (or rationality) accorded the higher value. “The Cultural Politics and Poetics of the Emotions” will examine this implicit ideology of the emotions and explore emotions themselves as a source of knowledge. That the emotions do not only vary from culture to culture but also have histories within cultures are guiding suppositions.

The first half of the course will be devoted to material on the emotions from anthropology, social and cultural theory, philosophy, sociology, history, psychoanalysis, and cultural studies that will serve as a crossdisciplinary introduction to the study of the emotions as well as to the methodology of a phenomenology of the emotions. We will read work from anthropologists Catherine Lutz and Emily Martin; philosophers Alison Jaggar and Elizabeth Spellman; historian Peter Stearns; sociologist Arlie Hochschild; and social and cultural theorists Raymond Williams and Fredric Jameson. We will also read some key work on the emotions from psychoanalysis, including Freud, Melanie Klein, and Christopher Bollas as well as work on trauma and teaching by Shoshana Felman, Megan Boler, and Michalinos Zembylas.

The second half of the course will be dedicated to specific emotions (or affects and sensations): **shame** (with a focus on raciality); **sentimentality** and **compassion** in literary studies; **grief** as a diasporic emotion; and structures of affect in modernity and postmodernity, with a focus on **nostalgia** and **panic**.

Texts include Toni Morrison’s novel *The Bluest Eye* (1970); excerpts from Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852); Milan Kundera’s novel *Ignorance* (2002); Korean-born Deann Borshay’s film *First Person Plural* (2000), about her adoption by an American family; and Yvonne Rainer’s film (and its transcription) *MURDER and murder* (1997), about the power of statistics in our everyday lives. We will read work by literary and cultural critics Jane Tompkins, Lauren Berlant, June Howard, Cindy Weinstein, Svetlana Boym, Saidiya Hartman, David Eng, Judith Halberstam, Ann Cvetkovich, and Jackie Orr. The introduction and epilogue to my book in progress on the cultural politics and poetics of the emotions are also included in the course packet along with my essay on “Statistical Panic.”

In addition to contributing fully in terms of reading and engaged discussion, I will be asking everyone to:

- participate in a small group project that will focus on a particular emotion and result in a collective bibliography of both critical texts and expressive texts to be presented to the class in mid-February
- present an example of rhetorics of the emotions as they appear in an issue of the *New York Times*

- write a fifteen-page essay, due at the end of the quarter
- attend at least two of the lectures scheduled outside of class.

Due Dates:

- Wednesday, February 21: group project
- Wednesday, March 14: final papers due

Some Distinctions:

For analytical and heuristic reasons we will want to make distinctions among the passions, emotions, sensations, and moods.

We can distinguish families of emotions, organized according to different structuring principles: rage, anger, and irritation; terror, panic, fear, anxiety, depression, and indifference; gratitude and envy, compassion and resentment; nostalgia and hope; aesthetic emotions, such as the sublime; nationalist emotions, such as patriotism; humiliation, shame, guilt, embarrassment, and self-disgust; happiness, joy, and ecstasy; grief, sorrow, and regret; religious emotions, including piety; what I have called the bureaucratic emotions, including bureaucratic depression and bureaucratic paranoia; and what I have called postmodern affects, such as statistical panic.

We will also want to pay attention to the sequencing of emotions, or what might be called narratives of emotions.

Note: Several other faculty members in literary and cultural studies at the University of Washington are also working on the emotions, including Carolyn Allen (English), Eric Ames (Germanics), and Eva Cherniavsky (English).

Books for Purchase:

- Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*
- Milun Kundera, *Ignorance*

Course Packet:

Avenue Copy Center
4141 University Way NE
Seattle, WA 98105
(206) 633-1837

Screenings:

We will try to find times for screenings outside of class.

No Class:

- Monday, January 15 (Martin Luther King Day)
- Wednesday, February 14 (work on group projects)
- Monday, February 19 (President's Day)
- Wednesday, March 7 (time for papers)

Associated Lectures:

- **Sandra Gilbert** (English, University of California, Davis)
“Modern Death, Millennial Mourning: The Challenge of 21st Century Grief.”
Thursday, January 18, 7:00 pm, Communications 120

Sandra Gilbert is the co-author of *The Madwomen in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (1979) and the co-editor of *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women*. Her most recent book is *Death's Door: Modern Dying and the Ways We Grieve* (2006).

- **Evelyne Ender** (French, Hunter College and City University of New York)
“Déjà vu Revisited: Time and the Mind in a Literary Framework”
Monday, January 22, 3:30 pm, Communications 202

Ender's most recent book, *Architexts of Memory: Literature, Science, and Autobiography* (2005), received the Modern Language Association's 2006 “Aldo and Jeanne Scaglione Prize for Comparative Literary Studies.” She is also the author of *Sexing the Mind: Nineteenth-Century Fictions of Hysteria* (1995).

- **Niklaus Largier** (German, University of California, Berkeley)
“Theaters of Arousal: The Animation of the Senses & the Phenomenology of Rhetorical Effects.”
Wednesday, January 24, 4:30 pm, Art 317

An internationally recognized expert on mystical traditions in German literature and thought, Largier is currently working on the history of fantasy and the emotions from the Middle Ages to the Baroque era, and the history of the senses, of sense experience, and of the stimulation of the senses—especially taste and touch—in medieval, early modern, and modern cultures. His book *In Praise of the Whip: A Cultural History of Arousal* is forthcoming in 2007.

- **Odai Johnson** (Drama, University of Washington)
“Buried Rage: History and Genocidal Memory”
Friday, February 23, 11:00 am, Walker-Ames Room, Kane Hall

Odai Johnson is the author of *Absence and Memory on the Colonial American Stage* (2005), *The Colonial American Stage* (2001), and *Rehearsing the Revolution* (2000) and heads the Ph.D. program at the University of Washington's School of Drama. His talk is part of the February 22-23 conference entitled “Performance and History: *What History*” (see www.simpsoncenter.org for information about the conference).

- **Cynthia Breazeal** (Media Arts & Sciences, MIT)
“The Art and Science of Social Robots”
Thursday, March 1, 7:00 pm, Kane Hall 120

Breazeal, director of the Robotic Life Group at the MIT Media Lab, is internationally known for seamlessly blending scientific theories, artistic insights, and engineering principles to create compelling robotic creatures that have a lively social presence to those who interact with them, including the upper torso humanoid robot, Cog, and the sociable robot, Kismet.

Schedule

PART I: THEORETICAL AND CROSSDISCIPLINARY READINGS

Wed Jan 3

Introduction

Mon Jan 8

Anthropological and Philosophical Perspectives

- Catherine A. Lutz, “The Cultural Construction of the Emotions,” “Emotion, Thought, and Estrangement: Western Discourses on Feeling,” *Unnatural Emotions: Everyday Sentiments on a Micronesian Atoll and Their Challenge to Western Theory* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1988), 3-13, 53-80.
- Alison M. Jaggar, “Love and Knowledge: Emotions in Feminist Epistemology,” *Gender/Body/Knowledge: Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing*, ed. Alison M. Jaggar and Susan R. Bordo (New Brunswick: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1989) 145-71.
- Emily Martin, “The Rationality of Mania,” *Doing Science + Culture*, ed. Roddy Reid and Sharon Traweek (New York: Routledge, 2000) 177-96.

Wed Jan 10

Structures of Feeling and Literary Studies of the 18th and 19th Centuries

- Raymond Williams, “Structures of Feeling,” *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1977) 128-35.
- Adela Pinch, “Introduction: Emotional Extravagance and the Epistemology of Feeling,” *Strange Fits of Passion: Epistemologies of Emotion, Hume to Austen* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1996) 1-16.
- Glenn Hendler, *Public Sentiments: Structures of Feeling in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2001) 1-26.

Wed Jan 17

Historical Perspectives with a Focus on the 20th Century

- Peter N. Stearns, “‘Impersonal, but Friendly’: Causes of the New Emotional Style,” *American Cool: Constructing a Twentieth Century America* (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1994) 193-28.
- Arlie Hochschild, “Exploring the Managed Heart,” *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1983) 3-23.
- Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1991) 1-54 (excerpts).

Mon Jan 22

Psychoanalytic Theory and the Emotions

- Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917), *SE* 14: 239-58.
- Melanie Klein, "A Study of Envy and Gratitude" (1956), *The Selected Melanie Klein*, ed. Juliet Mitchell (New York: The Free Press, 1986) 211-29.
- Christopher Bollas, "Moods and the Conservative Process," *The Shadow of the Object: Psychoanalysis of the Unthought Known* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1987) 99-116.
- Evelyne Ender, "The Remember's Task," *Architexts of Memory: Literature, Science, and Autobiography* (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 2005) 179-89.

Wed Jan 24

Trauma, Testimony, and Education

- Shoshana Felman, "Education and Crisis, Or the Vicissitudes of Teaching," *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, by Felman and Dori Laub (New York: Routledge, 1992) 1-56.
- Megan Boler, "A Pedagogy of Discomfort: Witnessing and the Politics of Anger and Fear," *Feeling Power: Emotions and Education* (New York: Routledge, 1999) 175-203.
- Michalinos Zembylas, "Witnessing in the Classroom: The Ethics and Politics of Affect," *Educational Theory* 56.3 (2006): 305-24.

PART II: SPECIFIC EMOTIONS AND CULTURAL OBJECTS

Mon Jan 29

A Literary Anatomy of Shame, Humiliation, and Embarrassment

- Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* (New York: Penguin, 2000).

Wed Jan 31

Theorizing Shame

- William Ian Miller, "Historicizing Humiliation," *Humiliation* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1993) 175-201.
- Berenice Fisher, "Guilt and Shame in the Women's Movement: The Radical Ideal of Action and Its Meaning for Feminist Intellectuals," *Feminist Studies* 10.2 (Summer 1984): 185-212.
- Judith Halberstam, "Shame and White Gay Masculinity," *Social Text* 23.3-4 (2005): 119-233.

Mon Feb 5

Suffering, Sentimentality, and Compassion (1)

- Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin or, Life among the Lowly* (1852), ed. Ann Douglas (New York: Penguin, 1981), xi-xix, 378-456.

- Jane Tompkins, "Introduction: the Cultural Work of American Fiction," "Sentimental Power: *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the Politics of Literary History," *Sentimental Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction 1790-1860* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1985), xi-xix, 122-45.
- Lauren Berlant, "Poor Eliza," *American Literature* 70.3 (September 1998): 635-68.

Wed Feb 7

Suffering, Sentimentality, and Compassion (2)

- Elizabeth V. Spelman, "The Heady Political Life of Compassion," *Fruits of Sorrow: Framing Our Attention to Suffering* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997) 59-89.
- June Howard, "What Is Sentimentality?" *American Literary History* 11.1 (1999): 63-81.
- Cindy Weinstein, "Thinking through Sympathy," *Family, Kinship, and Sympathy in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2004) 66-94.

Mon Feb 12

Nostalgia

- Milan Kundera, *Ignorance* (2000), trans. Linda Asher (New York: Perennial, 2002).
- Svetlana Boym, "From Cured Soldiers to Incurable Romantics: Nostalgia and Progress," *The Future of Nostalgia* (NY: Basic Books, 2001) 3-18.

Wed Feb 14 and Wed Feb 21

Group Work and Presentations on Specific Emotions

Mon Feb 26

Trauma and Grief (1)

- Deann Borshay Liem, *First Person Plural*, dir. Deann Borshay Liem (2000), 56 min. Sundance Film Festival Official Selection in 2000.

Wed Feb 28

Trauma and Grief (2)

- Saidya Hartman, "The Time of Slavery," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 101.4 (Fall 2002): 757-77.
- David L. Eng and Shinhee Han, "A Dialogue on Racial Melancholia," *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, ed. David L. Eng and David Kazanjian (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2003) 343-71.
- Ann Cvetkovich, "Legacies of Trauma, Legacies of Activism," *An Archive of Feelings* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 2003) 205-38.

Mon, Mar 5

Panic

- Yvonne Rainer, *MURDER and murder: A Filmscript*, *Performing Arts Journal* 55 (1997): 76-117.
- Kathleen Woodward, "Statistical Panic," *differences* 11.2 (1999): 177-203.
- Jackie Orr, "Panic Xanax," *Panic Diaries: A Genealogy of Panic Disorder* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 2006) 213-33.

Wed Mar 14

Short Presentations on Papers

Some Recent Work on the Emotions

(culled largely from the press ads in the December 2006 MLA Convention Program):

- Kurt Fosso, *Buried Communities: Wordsworth and the Bonds of Mourning* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2004).
- Elizabeth S. Goodstein, *Experience without Qualities: Boredom and Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Press, 2005).
- Victoria Kahn, ed., *Politics and the Passions, 1500-1850* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2006).
- Peter Kalliney, *Cities of Affluence and Anger: A Literary Geography of Modern Englishness* (Univ. of Virginia Press, 2006).
- Suzanne Keen, *Empathy and the Novel* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, forthcoming).
- Christopher Lane, *Hatred and Civility: The Antisocial Life in Victorian England* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2004).
- Jonathan Lear, *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 2006).
- Thomas Pfau, *Romantic Moods: Paranoia, Trauma, and Melancholy, 1790-1840* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2005).
- Patricia Rae, ed., *Modernism and Mourning* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell Univ. Press, 2006).
- R. Clifton Spargo, *The Ethics of Mourning: Grief and Responsibility in Elegiac Literature* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2004).
- A Special Issue on "Envy," ed. Jane Gallop, *Women's Studies Quarterly* 34.3-4 (2006).
- John Su, *Ethics and Nostalgia in the Contemporary Novel* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2005).
- Olga Taxidou, *Tragedy, Modernity and Mourning* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 2005).
- Robert Thurman, *Anger* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2005).
- Steven Wagschal, *The Literature of Jealousy in the Age of Cervantes* (Columbia, MO: Univ. of Missouri Press, 2006).
- Cindy Weinstein, *Family, Kinship, and Sympathy in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2004).

Recent Work on the Emotions at the December 2006 Convention of the Modern Language Association (phrases from paper titles and titles of sessions):

- masculinity and mourning
- nostalgia and American modernity
- political emotions: Aristotle and the symphony of reason
- on mourning
- affective and erotic bonds
- “queer” beyond nostalgia
- literature and terror
- from sympathy to romanticism
- feminine melancholic thinking
- sympathy for the other
- the agony of “mediated feeling”
- figure and affect in the novel
- the grief market
- orphan of sadness
- subjectivity and love in contemporary German literature
- emigres’ nostalgia
- war, poetry, and mourning
- queer subjects of the nostalgic metropolises
- feeling robot
- Latina performativity and affect
- Dickens and affect
- mountain envy
- poetic anger and interracial drama
- Hume, sensation, sympathy, and the history of criticism
- apprehending anxiety
- the affects of innocence
- politics of feeling: affect and Asian-American literature
- medical science, melancholy, and the objects of sublime poetry
- traumatic shock and World War I
- memory in *Nostalgia*
- Wordsworth’s emotives
- the feeling of the opposite
- love’s descent into melancholy