

Spring 2020
CORE-UA 400 030

Prof. Hannah Freed-Thall
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Office Hours: by appointment

The Arts of Noticing

Can literature, art, and philosophy teach us to read the world differently? To approach spaces and objects with renewed intensity and care? To attend to subtle differences, variations, and nuances—not only on the page, but in everyday life? Inspired by the idea that there is a close relation between ecological and aesthetic ways of being present to the world, this course asks whether it is possible to perform a “close reading” of the forest, the beach, or the city street. It also investigates the special arts of noticing—what W.E.B. Du Bois calls the gift of “second sight”—that stigma and marginalization sometimes enable. From Michel de Montaigne’s philosophy of embodied experience to Rachel Carson’s close reading of marine ecosystems, and from Impressionism’s haystacks to punk style’s safety pins and graffiti, the works we’ll discuss imagine the ordinary as a source of enchantment and surprise.

Texts available for purchase

Lafayette, *The Princess de Clèves* (trans. Terrence Cave, Oxford World Classics, 1992)
Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du mal* (trans. Richard Howard, Godine, 1983)
Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2005)
Larsen, *Passing* (Penguin, 2003)
Crary, *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep* (Verso, 2013)

All additional short readings will be available on the course Classes site (“resources”).

Course Requirements

This course aims to fulfill the general goals of the College Core: to heighten cultural awareness, hone critical thinking skills, and promote creative and logical thinking. As a “Texts and Ideas” course, it emphasizes the importance of humanistic study, acquainting students with literary and philosophical works that have been particularly influential in shaping the contemporary world.

Students will be evaluated on the following:

*Active, thoughtful class participation in weekly recitation sections, and presence in bi-weekly lectures. Participation includes both in-class and online discussion forums. Five short written reflections (1-2 pp) will respond to the readings or to a particular question. Sometimes these reflections will be more creative or free-form, or will report on a particular experience of attentiveness or mindfulness (such as an ethnography of a street

corner, a sound study, a description of a city walk, a personal trash inventory, etc.) They will be graded “check,” “check plus,” or “check minus.”

*In-class midterm exam

*Final exam

*Two formal papers, due 3/8 and 5/15 (4-5 pp)

Recitation Sections

Instructors: Downing Bray Kress

Office Hours: Fri, 2-4 (and by appt)
53 Washington Square South,
King Juan Carlos Center, room 507
db1876@nyu.edu

Zach Rivers

Office Hours:
jzr220@nyu.edu

Grading

Attendance & Participation: 20% (including timeliness of work and short reflections)

Midterm exam: 15%

Final exam: 25%

Papers: 40% (15% for the first, 25% for the second)

Course Policies

Students are welcome to bring laptops and tablets to class but are asked to turn off wifi during lecture. Please download or print class readings in advance. Cell phones should be put away and silenced.

It is crucial that you distinguish between your own ideas and those of other scholars. Both MLA and Chicago citation styles are acceptable. Academic integrity infractions will be reported to the Director of the Foundations of Contemporary Culture.

Accessibility

If you have a disability or other condition that might require some modification of course procedures, please speak with me after class or during office hours. (For more

information, please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at mosecsd@nyu.edu or 212-998-4980.)

Syllabus

Week 1 (Jan 27- 31)

introduction (histories of attention, practices of close reading)

mind and body

Montaigne, “On Practice,” “On Experience”

Descartes, *Meditations* (excerpt)

Weeks 2-3 (Feb 3- Feb 14)

desire, embarrassment, and the rise of the novel

Lafayette, *The Princess de Clèves*

*Reflection #1 due Feb 9

*guest lecture/ meditation training by Howard Thoresen, Village Zendo, February 13

Week 4 (Feb 17-21)

lyric and modernity

Charles Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil* (selections)

Emily Dickinson, selected poems.

*Reflection #2 due Feb 23

Week 5 (Feb 24-28)

Impressions, spectacle, celebrity

paintings by Manet, Seurat, Cézanne (in class)

Sharon Marcus, “Salome!! Sarah Bernhardt, Oscar Wilde, and the Drama of Celebrity”

Joseph Roach, *It* (introduction)

Week 6 (March 2-6)

chance & repetition

Freud, from *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*

Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (selections)

Sophie Calle, *Suite Vénitienne*

*Downing Bray Kress, guest lecture, March 5

PAPER #1 DUE MARCH 8 (4-5 pp)

Week 7 (March 9-13)

Cinematic fantasies

Tim Gunning, "The Cinema of Attractions"

Early silent films by the Lumière brothers and Georges Méliès (in class)

Hitchcock, *Rear Window* (select "Swank digital campus" from this list of databases:

<https://guides.nyu.edu/az.php?a=s&t=10784>, enter your NYU credentials (if off campus) & search for the film by title)

*MIDTERM EXAM (March 12)

Week 8: Spring Break (March 16-22)

Week 9 (March 23-27)

queer aestheticism

Marcel Proust, *Combray I*

*Reflection #3 due Wednesday, March 24 (on a word from "Combray" that crystallizes Proust's vision, or serves as a key nodal point in the text)

Weeks 10-11 (March 30-April 10)

the modernist everyday

Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*

*class trip to MoMA: April 2 (4-5 pm; if you cannot attend then, please go on your own time and email your recitation instructor a selfie of yourself with an artwork of interest. Show your NYU student ID for free admission.)

*Reflection #4 due April 5 (creative response to Woolf)

Week 12 (April 13-17)

stigma and second sight

Nella Larsen, *Passing*

Saidiya Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments* (selections)

Week 13 (April 20-24)

ecologies of close reading

Rachel Carson, *The Edge of the Sea*, Introduction & Chapter 1
Robert McFarlane, “The Word-board”
Hélène Cixous, “Savoir”

*Guest lecture by Zach Rivers, April 23

*Reflection #5 (anthropocene visualizations and/or neologisms) due April 26

Week 14 (April 27-May 1)

crises of attention/ slow violence

Crary, *24/7* (chapters 1-2)

Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (introduction)

Odell, *How To Do Nothing* (excerpt)

*Guest lecture by devynn emory, April 30

Week 15 (May 4-8)

gleaning/poaching

Blanchot, “Everyday Speech”

Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (selections)

Anna Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in
Capitalist Ruins* (selections)

Agnès Varda and JR, *Faces places*

FINAL PAPER DUE 5/12

FINAL EXAM: TBA