

## Fall 2019 Graduate Course Descriptions

Figure, Example, Schema

Rodolphe Gasché

COL 717

A: 018446/23912

B: 018445/23911

Tuesdays 12:30-3:10

640 Clemens

In this seminar we will explore different forms of representing in discourse, or in literary texts, things both real and purely ideal, in other words, how to illustrate, render sensibly apprehensible, or turn into examples in either a theoretical or moral sense, matters of another order such as things merely intelligible. Starting with an analysis of Erich Auerbach's famous essay "Figura," we will examine the status of the example defined by Kant as "the go-cart (Gängelwagen) of reason," in theoretical and practical reason, as well as the always "merely" exemplary function of pure aesthetic judgments. Finally, we will devote the last part of the seminar to a detailed discussion of the conditions and requirements under which alone figuration, illustration, exemplification, and so forth, are possible by centering on the notoriously difficult problematic of the schematism in Kant's Critique of Pure Reason. Texts by Heidegger, Adorno, and Derrida, among others, on these issues will help orient our discussion.

Heidegger, Derrida, (the end of) the World

David E. Johnson

COL 716

Tuesdays 3:30-6:10

640 Clemens

This seminar reads sections of Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1926) and *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* (1929) in order to understand what's at stake for Heidegger in the concept of the world, that is, of the world "as such." From here we turn to Jacques Derrida's last seminar, *The Beast and Sovereign*, vol. 2, which offers Derrida's most sustained engagement with the concept of the world--what Derrida calls "the word 'world'"--and with Heidegger's "as such." We will try to understand Heidegger's claim that "the stone has no world, the animal is poor in world, Dasein is world-forming," on the one hand, and Derrida's remark that the death of the other is "each time unique, the end of the world." In a certain way, the seminar concerns the sustainability of the world, how to survive (at) the end of the world?

On Time: Promise, Prediction, Utopia

Ewa Ziarek

COL 715

A: 007959/23915

B: 018441/23916

Wednesdays 12:30-3:10

640 Clemens

From Kristeva and Grosz to Halberstam and Mignolo, diverse feminist, decolonial and queer

theorists' engagement with temporality has provided robust critiques of linear visions of history and the future. Most of these thinkers have contested the Western notion of progress and examined its complicity with gendered, racial, and colonial power. However these critiques of our visions of the future have not confronted in the same detailed way the new rapidly spreading technologies of time, namely, predictive analytics and its wide ranging applications in law, education, finance, medicine, market, and science. Is predictive analytics a new disciplinary technology of neoliberal capitalism? How is it implicated in new forms of surveillance and domination? And conversely, what kind of temporalities are at stake in political struggles for liberation and artistic practices?

To answer these questions, we will discuss different approaches to temporality, with a particular focus on promise, utopia, and prediction. We will examine these intersections of gender, race, and temporality vis-à-vis disciplinary technologies of power. Our readings will include, among others, Arendt, Foucault, Freeman, Grosz, Halberstam, Mignolo, and Wynter. We will also discuss these thinkers in the context of the most controversial cases of predictive analytics, such as the use algorithms to predict future criminal behavior, teenage pregnancy, or the time of death. Requirements: participation in class discussion, class presentations, and a conference format research paper.

Genocide, Witness, Représentation: Specters of Rwanda

Shaun Irlam

COL 714

A: 018440/23934

B: 007958/23944

Thursdays 12:30-3:10

640 Clemens

Genocide is a crime of magnitudes: a crime of mathematical magnitude and moral magnitude. Given the sheer enormity of this crime, the challenge is how to bear witness to it and represent it to posterity. As Rwanda marks the 25th anniversary of the genocide, this course will explore the aporias posed by genocide through a selection from the accumulating literature of testimonies, memoirs, histories, fiction, documentaries and feature films about the Rwandan genocide.

On April 6, 1994, a plane crashed into the grounds of the Presidential palace in Kigali, the capital of Rwanda, as it approached the airport. The plane had been shot out of the sky by assailants whose identity still remains unknown. On board was the President of Rwanda, Juvénal Habyarimana; he died in his own garden. This assassination was the decisive event that pulled the trigger on the Rwandan genocide -- 100 frenzied days of slaughter that engulfed the nation and left an estimated 800 000 to 1 000 000 Tutsi citizens and Hutu moderates dead. It was the swiftest and deadliest collapse of any postcolonial state in Africa, but the genesis of this small nation's troubles begin with Genesis and the tribe of Ham....

This course seeks to understand this dark heart of Africa's colonial history: the ancient ghosts that curse it and the grim lessons it yields that ought to haunt us still. The demons of ethnicity and the revenants of genocide teach us unforgettable lessons about the challenges and pitfalls facing the postcolonial state. We shall also explore the politics of representation and veracity raised by discourses of witness and testimony and analyze the broader challenges of comprehending and representing histories of trauma through various forms of cultural, aesthetic and creative expression associated with the Rwandan genocide of 1994. Texts will include

survivor narratives, memoirs, works of fiction and several films.

Bible in the 20th Century

Sergey Dolgopolski

COL 703

Wednesdays 6:30-9:10 PM

640 Clemens

The course will explore how the Bible emerged as a site of intersection between Jewish, Christian, and allegedly non-theological but rather literary-theoretical and political theoretical interpretation in the major theoretical frameworks of the XX century literary, critical, and political Jewish and Christian thought.

#### Spring 2020 Graduate Course Descriptions

Derrida's Imagination

David Johnson

COL 720

A: 018452/23847

B: 018451/23846

Tuesdays 3:30-6:10

640 Clemens

Virtually no one writing on Derrida takes up his relation to the imagination and, to be sure, Derrida himself never wrote a book or even very many articles on the imagination. Yet, the imagination figures throughout his work, from the very early "Force and Signification" to the very late seminars on the death penalty. In this seminar we will try to "systematize" what the imagination does or threatens to do, how it works in Derrida. We will read, at the very least, the following texts: "Force and Signification" (in *Writing and Difference*), *Voice and Phenomena* (selections), *Of Grammatology* (selections), *Margins of Philosophy* (selections), "Economimesis" (in *Diacritics*), and *Truth in Painting* (selections). There may be others. We will want to understand the place of the imagination in Derrida's understanding of life death, of time, of truth. In what way does the imagination, in all its duplicity, provide a resource for Derrida's thinking? The seminar may begin with a brief (one session, perhaps two) review of the imagination in Aristotle and Kant.

Requirements: attendance, participation, one research paper (15-20 pages).

Race, Sex & Gender in Artificial Intelligence Regime

Ewa Ziarek

COL 719

A: 018450/23820

B: 018449/23821

Wednesdays 12:30-3:10

640 Clemens

More and more scholars, public policy organizations, political organizers and journalists argue that we are witnessing a computational turn as every day human activities, from dating, driving, shopping, labor, entertainment, news watching, judiciary decisions to profiling, ranking and hiring practices are organized by big data and algorithms. And as everyone also admits, the far-reaching implications of this turn political, ethical, and epistemological are hard to foresee. Despite its claims to objectivity and

impartiality, algorithmic decisions replacing human judgments not only reproduce but in fact produce new forms of cultural, social, and political inequalities and domination. As Arvind Narayanan, a computer scientist at the Center for Information Technology Policy at Princeton, argues, the worry is that if machine learning is replicating human biases, it is also reflecting that back at us. And since the curatorial practices of big data and the so-called governing algorithms constitute what have been called the black boxes (Pasquale), they are not open to political contestation. In this context, this course asks several fundamental questions: what are the new forms of economic, gender and race domination emerging with the computational turn and the so-called datafication of power and knowledge? Are we witnessing new forms of governmentality and neocolonialism that further dispossess minoritarian subjects? How can feminist and race theories help us to diagnose and contest these new forms of domination? This course does not presuppose any prior knowledge either in algorithmic culture or feminist/critical race theory. On the contrary, beginners willing to confront new intellectual, cultural, and political shifts are most welcome. I imagine this course is a collaboratory, which, building on the syllabus, will create new archives of knowledge and new modes of critical reflection. Our readings will include, among others, Crenshaw, Deleuze, Foucault, Mignolo, Safiya Umoja Noble, Sylvia Wynter, and Joseph Weizenbaum, a brilliant computer scientist, who already in the seventies was writing against the imperialism of computational power. Requirements: participation in class discussion, class presentations, and a conference format research paper, or an innovative alternative developed in consultation with the instructor.

Poetry, Technology & Avant Gardes

Krzysztof Ziarek

COL 721

A: 018454/23886

B: 018453/23887

Mondays 3:30-6:10

640 Clemens

While discourses about globalization focus predominantly on social, economic, and political issues, we will try to understand the significance of avant-garde art and literature for thinking critically about arts, technology, and the meaning of “world” in the age of globalization. We will interrogate the label “avant-garde” and the role of “the poetic” in its radicalism. To help us examine these issues, we will look at the continuing relevance of several radical artistic practices in the 20th and 21st centuries and discuss them side by side with theoretical material. Futurist texts will serve as the first example of a globally understood avant-garde. In the context of the early 20th century avant-gardes, we will examine the Dadaist work of Schwitters and Tzara, and the writings of Mina Loy, while more contemporary art and literature will likely include Arte Povera, Eduardo Kac, Bill Viola, as well as poetry (Erin Mouré, Myung Mi Kim, Paul Celan). The reading list will also comprise texts by Heidegger and Nancy, as well as essays on aesthetics, information arts and new media.

Walter Benjamin and the Origin of the German Trauerspiel

(Listed as Jewish Identity)

Noam Pines

COL 718

A: 018448/24287

B: 018447/24286

Wednesdays 5:00-7:40

708 Clemens

The course will explore the various aspects of Benjamin’s thought as they emerge from his celebrated Trauerspiel essay: constellation, melancholy and allegory, natural history, creature and sovereign, and

more. We will conduct close readings of Benjamin's text in conjunction with other thinkers such as Freud, Agamben, Kristeva, Gadamer, Schmitt, Scholem, and Taubes.