

PDS Seminar
Spring 2019: Mondays and Wednesdays, 8.00–10.30 AM
Prof. Zachary Rawe; zachary.rawe@gmail.com
Office Hours: by appointment

****This syllabus can change, be prepared for switches, digressions, and unforeseen topic****

Theory and art after 1989
(Or Art and Theory at the End of the World)

“I Lost it. I reduced it to
A death canoe
And it still came out
As life.”-Maggie Nelson, *Death Canoe*
From *The Latest Winter*

Some historical backdrops: Around 1839, upon seeing earliest examples of photography, french painter Delaroche claimed 'from today, painting is dead.' In 1913, in his Paris studio, Duchamp toyed with his first readymade which blurred the line between skill and deskilling, in turn troubling notions that artistic making is inherently tethered to objecthood. Also in 1913, a couple of countries east, Russian Constructivism was founded to fantasize about becoming artist-engineers who could collaborate with new technologies to forge (a never realized) utopic future, in part, by dissolving the line between art and life. Painting is dead? Skills aren't necessary? Should art maintain its autonomy or play a more participatory role?

But that was Modernism, this is now.

In 1992, Yoshihiro Francis Fukuyama wrote that history had ended with the fall of the Berlin wall. The world had settled on liberal-democracies and capitalism. Where else are we? What do we have? We are some place with strange weather patterns and global warming. We have never ending wars, ruthless capitalism, drones, and lots of other impasses that feel untouchable, unapproachable, unfathomable. Not to mention we are in the midst of a mass extinction, some estimates suggest that 7% of earth species have already been lost. White Walkers and the dead have destroyed a protective wall to the north, while certain politicians try to build a wall in the south. The weight of urgencies and dread loom with heavy-over-thinking. Everytime you cut one of Hydra's heads, a new one grows back.

Still, the world isn't exactly over, history didn't end, paintings didn't die, and people kept making, albeit with a new sense of what could be available. There are also signs of new life, new forms of protest, new forms of being and becoming have been realized, and their seems an ever expansion of new fantasies of what a better life could be. **In this seminar, we will be staging encounters between recent developments in art on the one hand, and theory on the other.** We will both hold and interrogate tensions, to find strange bedfellows and unlikely comraderies. **Bring something to share: a snack, an idea, a poem, a reading, a passage, a concept, a fantasy, a vision, a new world, an old world through new eyes, a promise, a story, an encounter. Never come empty handed, and always maintain daydreaming. For the most part, we are aiming for new constellations and shifted epistemologies.**

This seminar is staged in four parts. We begin with *When Technology Falls Apart*, which will look at a range of artists and theorists who are excited by the ways that technology isn't only offering new tools, but also radically changing sociality, collective thought, and objecthood. The second section is titled *Turn to Affect*, and here we looks towards seminal texts in Affect Theory which became popularized during the Aughts. The question here is simple, if contemporary art is engaged with emotion, what can be culled from academics who study how emotions circulate, build, and separate bodies of peoples. Our third section, *Wildness and Ghostly Attachments* looks to thinkers that are invested in reworking (destroying?) dualistic binarisms such as nature/culture, life/death, science/mysticism to locate new terrains to, broadly speaking, take creative and future-fantasizing thought. Then, in advance of summer jobs and graduation, we will finish with *Work Work Work Work*, which looks toward labor history, and the ways artists have occupied and embraced the role of *worker* and the term *art/work*.

1. Attendance and active participation for every seminar session is mandatory. Participation means more than just showing up—it also means doing the required reading before you come to class, thinking about the texts, preparing your notes in advance, focusing on the readings, and actively engaging with our shared texts, conversations, criticism, and debates. We have a no-laptop/iPad/tablet/phone policy so that we are all engaged with each other rather than looking at screens.

Seminars run on conversation, and input from each student is crucial. Speak up, speak out, speculate, interrogate, fantasize, discuss: the class is a space for constructive, respectful debate. Don't be afraid to ask "obvious" questions—these can often spark new directions, and we are here to learn together. Solidarity is key.

More than one unexcused absence will result in a lowered grade. Tardiness, likewise, seriously damages the flow and pace of the course; excessive tardiness (coming to class late more than twice) will also result in a lowered grade.

2. Focus Discussions

In groups of two, you will be responsible for preparing discussion for one of our class sessions – this will involve bringing in thoughts and ideas sparked by the assigned readings as well as two or three questions that will aid us further working through the week's topic. You could also think of an exercise for all of us to do, a video to watch, etc. You are expected to work with your partner in advance to come up with a game plan and be creative. Please mostly stick to the texts and material in our required readings — remember, your job is to help us as a class go over what we have read together and elucidate some of the more interesting points.

3. Individual Presentations

A few wednesdays during the semester students will present a fifteen minute slideshow that shares a handful of artists and thinkers that excite you. This does not necessarily have to correspond to the texts, but rather it is an informal sharing of some exciting new materials. **Presentations will be held January 30th, March 20th, April 17th**

4. Weekly Reports

Each week you will turn in summaries of that week's reading, no more than a total of 1.5 single-spaced, about a page in length. for each week's reading, identify:

- a) What is the main question/problem engaged by each text?
- b) What is the main argument of each text (try to keep this to two sentences) and, moreover, what is at stake for the author(s) in this argument?
- c) You should end with a question provoked by the reading that is specific to the reading but that opens out into a discussion topic for the seminar.
- d) Be experimental! Try and take the content of each week somewhere new, and don't limit the form your writing takes.**

5. Final papers

Each student will undergo a final project that utilizes art or a creative practice to debunk a dualism or binarism that you deem problematic. **A one-paragraph prospectus for your final project will be due March 13th. First Draft will be due April 10.** The final papers, which will be due the last day of class, should be about eight to ten double-spaced pages in length.

There will be at least two individual meetings to discuss the prospectus and/or final paper with the instructor. We will arrange meetings throughout the semester, on an ongoing basis.

Schedule

Important: This class will be conducted in two parts: a **Monday** lecture/seminar session and a **Wednesday** workshop session reserved for screenings, writing, reading, and roundtable discussions. We will be meeting *every Wednesday* even if not specified as such on the syllabus below. **Please pay careful attention to in-class and email announcements regarding the weekly schedule.**

Workshops: Workshops (to be held on Wednesdays as announced) will focus on the exchange/discussion of research ideas and their development in writing. True to the topic of this course, much of this labor will be collective in small groups and/or with the instructor. Here as well, the practice of solidarity is key—come prepared to work.

When things fall apart/ when technology falls apart

“We think that the point is to pass the test or overcome the problem, but the truth is that things don't really get solved. They come together and they fall apart. Then they come together again and fall apart again. It's just like that. The healing comes from letting there be room for all of this to happen: room for grief, for relief, for misery, for joy.”-Pema Chödrön, *When Things Fall Apart: Heartfelt Advice for Hard Times*

1. Jack Halberstam, "Revolting Animation, Animating Revolt," *Queer Art of Failure* (Duke Press, 2011) 27-52
2. Maria Hlavajova and Simon Sheikh "Editors Note: Formering The West," *Former West: Art and the Contemporary after 1989* (MIT Press, 2017) 19-28
3. Hito Steyerl, "Defense of the Poor Image" (e-flux Inc. 2012) 31-45
4. Jack Halberstam, "low theory," *Queer Art of Failure* (Duke Press, 2011) 1

Mon, January 28 **Broken World Thinking (temporary repairs, temporary balance)**

1. Robin Adele Greeley, "The Logic of Disorder: The Sculptural Materialism of Abraham Cruzvillegas," *October* (Spring 2015): 78-107
2. Steven Jackson, "Rethinking Repair" (n/a) 221-239
3. Okwui Enwezor, "Place-Making or in the 'wrong place': Contemporary Art and the Postcolonial Condition"

Wed, January 30

Mon, February 4 **Object Oriented Ontology (soft grids, softwares, soft tools)**

1. Jane Bennet, "The Agency of Assemblages," *Vibrant Matter: A political Ecology of Things* (Duke, 2010) 1-39
2. Marisa Olson, "The Rhetoric of Soft Tools," *The Emergence of Video Processing Tools* (Chicago Press: Intellect, 2014) 541-554

Wed, February 6 **Beasts of the Southern Wild**

Wildness & Ghostly Attachments

**"What would the world be, once bereft
Of wet and wildness?
Let them be left,
O let them be left, wildness and wet;
Long live the weeds and the wilderness yet"-George Manley Hopkins**

Mon, February 11 **Wildness (Into the Woods/Into the Weeds)**

1. Bruno Latour, selections from "We Have Never Been Modern" "Crisis" and "relativism" in *We Have Never Modern*, Harvard University Press 1-10 & 91-106
2. Fred Moten, "Seeing Things" *Stolen Life* (Duke Press, 2018) 183-187
3. Fred Moten, "Erotics of Fugitivity" *Stolen Life* (Duke Press, 2018) 241-267
4. Fred Moten and Wu Tsang, "Sudden Rise at a Given Tune" *The South Atlantic Quarterly: Wildness* (Duke, 2018) 649-653

Wed, February 13

Mon, February 18 **Precarity and Public Performance (zombies and vulnerability)**

1. Rebecca Schneider "it seems as if... I am dead: Zombie Capitalism and Theatrical Labor" (*The Drama Review*, Winter 2012) 150-162
2. Judith Butler, "Bodily Vulnerability, coalitional politics" *Notes toward a performative Theory of Assembly* (Harvard, 2015) 123-153

Wed, February 20

Mon, February 25 **Zombie Formalism (what about color)**

1. Jerry Saltz, "Zombies on the Walls: Why Does So Much New Abstraction Look the Same?" (New York Magazine, 2014)
2. "Before Dispossession, or Surviving It" by Angie Morrill, Eve Tuck, and the Super Futures Haunt Quollective (Liminalities: A Journal of Performance Studies, 2016) 1-20
3. Maggie Nelson, "Bluets" (Wave Books, 2009) 1-20

Wed, February 27 Prospectus Due!

March 4 (spring break)

March 6 (spring break)

Turn to Affect

Mon, March 11 **Feelings and Difficulty**

1. Sarah Ahmed, "Feel Your Way" "The Contingency of Pain" (Edinburgh University Press, 2004) 1-42
2. Jennifer Doyle: Theater of Cruelty: Thomas Eakins, The Gross Clinic (1875) in *Hold it Against Me, Difficulty and Emotion in Contemporary Art* (Duke Press, 2013)

Wed, March 13

Mon, March 18 **Radical Pedagogy and Other Ways of Thinkering**

1. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Pedagogy of Buddhism," *Touching Feeling* (Duke Press, 2011) 153-154
 2. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or You're so Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay Is About You," (Duke Press, 2011) 123-151
- Tania Brueggera, *Feel Tank Chicago*, cheapestuniversity.org

Wed, March 20

Mon, March 25 **Minimalism and After (patterning and repatterning)**

1. Anna C. Chave, "Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power" (Arts Magazine, 1990) 44-63
2. Jennifer Doyle and David Getsy, "Queer Formalisms: In Conversation" (Arts Journal, 2014)

Jennie C. Jones, Leslie Hewitt, Gordon Hall

Wed, March 27

Screening: *Rosetta*, by Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne (1999)

ART/WORK/IMPASSE/PRECARIOUS

"To work today is to be asked, more and more, to do without thinking, to feel without emotion, to move without friction, to adapt without question, to translate without pause, to desire without purpose, to connect without interruption. Only a short time ago many of us said work went through the subject to exploit our social capacities, to wring more labor power from our labor." -*Stefano Harney & Fred Moten*

Work Work Work Work Work-Rhianna

Mon, April 1

An Impasse

1. Lauren Berlant, "Nearly Utopian, Nearly Normal" in *Cruel Optimism* 2011 (Duke Press, 2011) 161-189
2. Object Lesson: "Exhaustion and Exuberance" by Jan Verwoert
3. Raymond Williams, "Labour" and "Work," in *Keywords* TK

Wed, April 3

Screening: *Rainbow Coalition: Solidarity in Struggle*

Mon, April 8

Slave Labor, Class Struggle

1. WEB DuBois, "The Black Worker" and "The White Worker" (1935), *In Black Reconstruction in America* (Free Press, 1998), 3-31
2. Huey Copeland, "Lorna Simpson's Fugitive Transitions," in *Bound to Appear* (Chicago, 2013), 65-105

Wed, April 10

Mon, April 15

Art as Socialist Production

Christina Kiaer, "Boris Arvatov's Socialist Object," *October* (Summer 1997): 105-118
"Manifesto of the Working Group of Constructivists" (1922)
Recommended: John Elderfield, "Constructivism and the Objective World," *Studio International* (September 1970): 73-80.

Wed, April 17

Mon, April 22

Wed, April 24

Monday April 29 **Paper Due**