FYWS: Abundance: Thinking, Writing, and Creating In The Age of Plenty

MW: 4:55-6:10
610 1 Wash Pl

Instructor: Dr. Trevor Laurence Jockims
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Office: 431 1 Wash Pl
Hours: W 6:15-8:15 (by appointment)

Course Description

Every three minutes Americans take more photographs than the entire 19th century produced. We have some 100 000 words of text pass through our eyes and ears each day (that’s ¼ of War and Peace). We live with an abundance of information, choices, opportunities, products, texts, and images. Even the city we live in is bursting at the seams. But what is abundance and how do we navigate it ethically, socially, and artistically? This course investigates the history and changing shape of ideas about abundance, from sonnet writing in the Renaissance to twitter feeds today, from Augmented Reality poems and the Digital Humanities to consumerism, overcrowding, and artistic repurposing. Writers we will consider include Kenneth Goldsmith, David Foster Wallace, Karl Ove Knausgaard, Marjorie Perloff, and Walter Benjamin. Photography projects will include Penelope Umbrico’s Flickr Sunsets, Brandon Stanton’s Humans of New York, and Walker Evans’s Many Were Called; Music by Glenn Gould, Sonic Youth, and Jay-Z; Films by Richard Linklater, Sarah Polly, and Bela Tarr. As we examine these materials we will also consider the changing shape of the traditional college essay and how to navigate abundance in our own writing. Students will write three short papers and a final critical essay.

Course Objectives

A principal aim of this course is to introduce students to the rigors and rewards of college writing. This process will include free writing, drafting, revising, and work shopping of student essays. Our emphasis will be on viewing writing as thought put into action as students learn to write reflective, argumentative, and literary-critical essays. In addition to developing as readers, writers, and thinkers, students will
engage with a specific body of texts, films, photographs, and technologies that bring into relief a variety of aesthetic responses to abundance, in its many forms.

Academic Integrity

As a Gallatin student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Please consult the Gallatin Bulletin or Gallatin website (http://gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/integrity.html)

Required Texts

Karl Ove Knausgaard, My Struggle: Volume 1
Publisher: Farrar, Straus, Giroux

David Shields, Reality Hunger
Publisher: Vintage

Kenneth Goldsmith, Uncreative Writing
Publisher: Columbia UP

Roland Barthes, Camera Lucida
Publisher: Hill and Wang

Additional Readings via NYU Classes:

2. Marjorie Perloff’s Uncreative Genius (excerpt): academic text and the evolving meaning of genius and creativity in the post-modern epoch.
5. Geoffrey Batchen’s Forget Me Not: Photography and Remembrance (excerpt): essays on personal photo albums, their histories and meaning.

*Occasional other essays and websites, as they arise.

**Time permitting, a number of excursions may be included in the course, including exhibition visits, performances, and film screenings.
Grades

Participation/Attendance: 10%
In-class writing/response papers: 10%
Online contribution: 10%
Digital project: 10%

Essay 1: 10% *Due Wednesday October 8
Essay 2: 20% *Due Monday November 24
Essay 3: 30% *Due date TBD (20% for the essay; 10% for your in-class presentation based on it)

September

Part I: Fiction and the Changing Shape of Reality

Wednesday 3rd – Introduction.

Monday 8th – Reading: Reality Hunger (read through first half); Zadie Smith, "Man vs Corpse."
Wednesday 10th – Reading: Reality Hunger (read through second half); Zadie Smith, “Man vs Corpse”

Monday 15th – Karl Ove Knausgaard, My Struggle, Volume I: pp 1-110
Wednesday 17th – Karl Ove Knausgaard, My Struggle, Volume I: pp 110-220

Monday 22nd – Karl Ove Knausgaard, My Struggle, Volume I: pp 220-330
Wednesday 24th – Karl Ove Knausgaard, My Struggle, Volume I: pp 330-448

Monday 29th – Reading: Kenneth Goldsmith’s Uncreative Writing: pp: 1-82

October

Wednesday 1st – Kenneth Goldsmith’s Uncreative Writing: pp: 82-175

Part II: Poetry, Curatorship, and the Digital Humanities

Monday 6th – Kenneth Goldsmith’s Uncreative Writing: pp: 175-227; Marjorie Perloff’s Uncreative Genius (excerpt)
Wednesday 8th – Barbara Johnson’s Persons and Things (excerpt)

Monday 13th – No Class, Fall Recess
Wednesday 15th – Workshop

Monday 20th – Reading: Barbara Johnson’s Persons and Things (excerpt)
Wednesday 22nd – Reading: Workshop
Part III: World, Self, and the Rise of Photography

Monday 27\textsuperscript{th} – \textbf{Reading:} Camera Lucida: pp: 1-50
Wednesday 29\textsuperscript{th} – \textbf{Reading:} Camera Lucida: pp: 50-100

\textbf{November}

Monday 3\textsuperscript{rd} – \textbf{Reading:} Camera Lucida: pp: 100-144
Wednesday 5\textsuperscript{th} – \textbf{Reading:} Geoffrey Batchen’s \textit{Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography} (excerpt)
Monday 10\textsuperscript{th} – \textbf{Reading:} Geoffrey Batchen’s \textit{Forget Me Not: Photography and Remembrance} (excerpt)
Wednesday 12\textsuperscript{th} – \textbf{Reading:} Alan Trachtenberg’s (ed) \textit{Classic Essays on Photography} (excerpt)

Monday 17\textsuperscript{th} – \textbf{Essay Workshop Day}
Wednesday 19\textsuperscript{th} – \textbf{Essay Workshop Day}

Part IV: \textbf{Real Time in the Films of Richard Linklater}

Monday 24\textsuperscript{th} – Discussion of \textit{F for Fake} \hspace{1cm} \textbf{Essay 2 due}
Wednesday 26\textsuperscript{th} – Discussion of \textit{The Stories We Tell}

\textbf{December}

Monday 1\textsuperscript{st} – Discussion of \textit{The Five Obstructions}
Wednesday 3\textsuperscript{rd} – Discussion of \textit{Boyhood}

Monday 8\textsuperscript{th} – Presentations and responses
Wednesday 10\textsuperscript{th} – Presentations and responses