COML 2000 Introduction to Visual Studies – M. Fernandez. (mf252)
Crosslist as: VISST 2000, ENGL 2920, ARTH 2000
4CR Stdnt Opt 2672 LEC 001 MW 02:55PM - 04:10PM

Provides a broad introduction of modes of vision and the historical impact of visual images, visual structures, and visual space on culture, communication, and politics. The question of "how we see" is discussed in terms of (1) procedures of sight (from optical machines to the psychology of vision and the philosophy of aesthetics); (2) spaces of vision (from landscapes to maps to cities); (3) objects of vision (from sacred sites to illuminated books to digital art); and (4) performances of vision (race, sexualities, ethnicities, cultures). Of importance to the course is the practical and conceptual relation of 20th-century visual technologies (photography, cinema, video, and computing) to their historical corollaries in the arts. The course draws on the visual traditions of both Western and non-Western societies and study texts that have defined the premises and analytic vocabularies of the visual. Through viewings, screenings, collaborative writing, and art projects, students develop the critical skills necessary to appreciate how the approaches that define visual studies complicate traditional models of defining and analyzing art objects. Guest lecturers occasionally address the class. Requirements: two objective midterm exams; occasional listserv postings; two five-page papers.

COML 2020 Great Books – A. Banerjee. (ab425)
4CR Stdnt Opt 6346 LEC 001 MWF 11:15AM - 12:05PM

The course traces the evolution of the story of the road as theme, trope, and organizing principle of seminal books from the Renaissance to the postmodern. Through readings of Rabelais, Cervantes, Swift, Sterne, Twain, Gogol, Conrad, Hemingway, Nabokov, and Kerouac, we will explore how literary adventures structure our experience of the world.

COML 2030 Introduction to Comparative Literature – P. Liu. (pyl3)
4CR Stdnt Opt 11672 SEM 101 TR 12:20PM - 02:15PM

The course is intended to answer the question persistently asked by undergraduates: "What is Comparative Literature, anyway?" We will learn about different approaches to Comparative Literature and study the literatures of five different national/historical traditions: (Kafka, Faulkner, Lu Xun, Plautus, and Murakami). We will also read philosophical writings and works of literary criticism and ask three questions: 1) Why do Comparatists want to learn foreign languages and work with texts in the original? 2) How do we compare cultures and texts? 3) Is there such a thing as “world literature”? Writing assignments will include critical essays, short response papers, and creative projects.

COML 2050 Introduction to Poetry – W. J.Kennedy.(wjk3)
4CR Stdnt Opt 14431 SEM 101 MWF 12:20PM – note correct end time of 1:10pm

Surveys early and modern historical periods and poetic genres in Europe, Asia and the Americas, from conventional "strict" genres such as songs, sonnets, and haiku to forms closely associated with our own times: free verse, "the prose poem," etc. Texts are drawn from poetry by such women and me as Sappho, Li Bai, Rumi, Shakespeare, Sor Juana, Basho, Goethe, Keats, Dickinson, Baudelaire, Rilke, Akhmatova, Sowol, Neruda, Sexton, Rich, and others. Poems not in English are read in translation, with texts in the original languages available for comparison. No previous study of poetry required.
COML 2150 Comparative American Literatures – B. Maxwell. (bhm4)
Crosslist as: AMST 2150
4CR Stdnt Opt 14451 SEM 101 MWF 10:10AM - 11:00AM

Twentieth-century writing from Canada, the United States, the Caribbean, and Latin America. A hemispheric American Studies perspective will encourage thinking about and across cultural, linguistic, and national demarcations. This course proposes taking seriously words from Africa, passed on by the novelist Paule Marshall: "Once a great wrong has been done, it never dies. People speak the words of peace, but their hearts do not forgive. Generations perform ceremonies of reconciliation but there is no end." Countering the literature of amnesia and baseless optimism, the works that we will read cannot forget, and decline to forgive, the historical traumas that so bitterly flavor them. Our concern largely will be with understanding the aesthetic strategies and innovations that these writers use to perform ceremonies not bent on reconciliation.

COML 2230 The Comic Theater – J. Rusten. (jrs5)
Crosslist as: CLASS 2651, THETR 2230
3CR Stdnt Opt 13690 LEC 001 MWF 11:15AM - 12:05PM

The origins of comic drama in ancient Greece and Rome, and its subsequent incarnations especially in the Italian renaissance (Commedia erudita and Commedia dell'arte), Elizabethan England, seventeenth-century France, the English Restoration, and Hollywood in the thirties and forties. Chief topics will be: the growth of the comic theatrical tradition and conventions; techniques and themes of comic plots (trickster, parody, farce, caricature); and the role of comedy in society. All readings are in English.

NES 2587 course of interest - Great Books of Islamic Culture – S. Toorawa.

COML 2760 Desire – E. Hanson. (eh36)
Crosslist as: ENGL 2760, FGSS 2760, THETR 2780
4CR Stdnt Opt 13703 LEC 001 MW 07:30PM - 08:45PM

"Language is a skin," the critic Roland Barthes once wrote: "I rub my language against the other. It is as if I had words instead of fingers, or fingers at the tip of my words. My language trembles with desire." Sexual desire has a history, even a literary history, which we will examine through an introductory survey of European dramatic literature from Plato and Aristophanes to Jean Genet and Caryl Churchill, as well as a survey of classic readings in Western sexual theory from the Ancient Greeks through Freud and Foucault to contemporary feminism and queer theory. Topics for discussion will include Greek pederasty, Christian mysticism, hysteria, sadomasochism, pornography, cybersex, and other performative pleasures.

COML 3115 Video and New Media – T. Murray. (tcm1)
Crosslist as: ENGL 3115, FILM 3115, VISST 3115
4CR Graded 14879 SEM 101 M 07:00PM - 10:00PM
Restricted to Undergraduates. Limited to 25 students.

The course will offer an overview of video art, alternative documentary video, and digital installation and networked art over the past 50 years. It will analyze four phases of video and new media: 1) the development of video from its earliest turn away from television; 2) video's relation to art and installation; 3) video's migration into digital art; 4) the relation of video and new media to visual theory and social movements. Screenings will include early political and feminist video (Ant Farm, Rosler, Paper Tiger
TV, Jones), conceptual video of the 80s and 90s (Vasulka, Lucier, Viola, Hill), gay and multicultural video of the 90’s (Muntadas, Riggs, Piper, Fung, Parmar), networked and activist new media of the 21st Century (Critical Art Ensemble, Electronic Disturbance Theater, SubRosa, Preemptive Media). Secondary theoretical readings on postmodernism, video theory, multicultural theory, and digital culture will provide students with a cultural and political context for the discussion of video and new media style, dissemination, and reception.

COML 3260 Christianity and Judaism – C. Carmichael. (cmc13)
Crosslist as: RELST 3260
4CR Stdtnt Opt 6344 SEM 101 TR 08:40AM - 09:55AM


COML 3640 The European Novel – A. Banerjee. (ab425)
4CR Stdtnt Opt 14657 LEC 001 MWF 01:25PM - 02:15PM

From Lafayette to Proust. Topics will include: the interplay between fiction, desire and forms of identity; the intersection between novelistic form and European social and intellectual history; realism, romance, and the novel's political unconscious; the privileging of plots of adultery, surveillance, and policing; the role of gender in defining the genre and, in particular, the concept of “character”; the representation of first-person experience through third-person narration. Authors may include: Madame de Lafayette, Austen, Balzac, Stendhal, Flaubert, Tolstoy, Kafka, Woolf, and Proust. All texts in English translation, but may of course be read in the original by students with command of the pertinent language.

COML 3713 Modern Odysseys – G. Holst-Warharft. (gh3)
Crosslist as: NES 3713, CLASS 3603
4CR Graded 15636 SEM 101 TR 02:55PM - 04:10PM

(Readings available in Greek or translation. May be taken as a Modern Greek reading course for those who know the language well enough or wish to improve their Greek reading skills). As a theme, the Odyssey dominates modern Greek poetry like no other. Few poets have avoided the subject and some, like Nikos Kazantzakis and George Seferis, spent much of their creative life writing their own modern versions of Homer's original. In 20th century Greek literature, as in modern Hebrew, the dominance of a classical text is one that poets faced in creative ways, paying homage on the one hand, but often ironically undermining the original to suit a very different context. The poets we will read, including some lesser-known women writers, have all taken Homer as their starting point, but they have produced a rich variety of responses to his text, including some untraditional readings of Penelope. Nikos Kazantzakis may be better known in the west for his novels Zorba the Greek and Christ Re-crucified, but his The Odyssey: A Modern Sequel, was the work he spent the greater part of his life writing. Longer than the Iliad and Odyssey combined, the poem begins with the slaughter of the suitors, moves to a passionate relationship between Odysseus and Helen, and ends with Odysseus seeking God on an iceberg. Nobel Prize-winner George Seferis, whose family were refugees from Asia Minor, linked the Odyssey to the enforced travels of many modern Greeks, and returned to the theme in a number of his best-known poems. Cavafy only dealt with the Odyssey in a single poem, but his Ithaca is probably the most anthologized poem in the modern Greek corpus. Sailor poet Nikos Kavadias spent his life at sea, living the life of an Elpenor rather than a captain and produced some of the most popular poems in modern Greek. These, and a number of lesser-known poets, will form the basis of the course, for which familiarity with the Odyssey is the only prerequisite.
The medieval Arabic cycle of stories known as The Arabian Nights or The Thousand and One Nights is a classic of world literature. In the first half of the course we will read the Nights and discuss both its dominant themes—deceit, love, sex, revenge, violence, and justice—and its storytelling contexts and antecedents (e.g. the Sanskrit Jataka Tales, and the Middle Persian Tales of Bidpai). And in the second we will explore the ways in which its themes and tales have been adapted and appropriated by authors such as and Jan Potocki in Polish, Edgar Allan Poe and John Barth in English, Jorge Luis Borges in Spanish, and Naguib Mahfouz in Arabic itself.

All material is in English translation. No prerequisites.

This course will consider the essential role of the passions in views of human nature and society primarily in the eighteenth century, and will examine how the priority given to life, the body, and acquisitive and sexual drives subverted traditional ethics and produced “sentimentality” as a reaction. Through readings of novels and some moral and political philosophy (Montaigne, Cavendish, Hobbes, Cleland, LaMettrie, Laclos, Rousseau, Nietzsche), we will discuss such topics as: the “savage” and the “state of nature” in genealogies of moral and political development; the “sexual contract,” civil society, and the family as a political-economic institution; love and sympathy in relation to law and obligation; pornography and sentimental-sexual education; tragedy, suffering, and ethical community. We will also read theoretical work by Althusser, Foucault, Butler, and Zizek to address narrative form (especially fictional autobiography and epistolary novels) and mechanisms of identity formation.

This seminar will examine the role played by photography - historically and in the present - in the complex and layered visual, public, and political spaces of several modern West African polities. We will draw on recent work in art history, visual anthropology, urban sociology, African studies, while also attending to the social, cultural, and political dimensions of aesthetic and philosophical approaches to photography. Historical data will be considered in light of broader theoretical questions, including questions about photography's power to foster investments by non-state actors in official and state-sponsored practices of the image and its power, alternatively, to produce visual publics with non-state investments; the aesthetics of anti-colonial and independence movements; the relationship between popular and state-sponsored practices; questions about cultural and political dimensions, as well as technical or technological dimensions, of memory regimes.

This seminar is a study of the cross-cultural flows between China and the West via literature, translation, and cinema. It focuses on yellowface as racial ventriloquism performed by writers, translators, actors,
directors, and other cultural go-betweens. The most notable yellowface performance is obviously in Hollywood films (Charlie Chan, Fu Manchu, and David Carradine’s "Kung Fu" series), but it is also increasingly evident in the self-representations by contemporary Chinese filmmakers. We will also examine poetic translations, wisdom products (philosophy, aphorisms, and fortune cookies), and other areas of culture, high and low, elite and popular.

COML 4069 Transatlantic Decadence – B. Bosteels. (bb228)

Crosslist as: SHUM 4956, FREN 4956, SPAN 4956
4CR Stdnt Opt 14433 SEM 101 R 12:20PM - 02:15PM

Approaching decadence and dandyism from a global perspective informed by imperial and colonial dynamics, we will read canonical statements from Baudelaire, Barbey d’Aurevilly, Marx, and Nietzsche side by side with essays and novels from across the Atlantic, including the Cuban José Martí, the Colombian José Asunción Silva, the Venezuelan Manual Díaz Rodríguez, and the Uruguayans José Enrique Rodó, Delmira Agustini and Roberto de las Carreras. Theoretical texts informing our underlying framework include Georg Simmel, Carl Schmitt, Fredric Jameson, Angel Rama, Julio Ramos, Sylvia Molloy and Rita Felski.

COML 4200 Independent Study

1-4CR Stdnt Opt Department Consent Required
9714 IND 601 TBA Staff

1-4CR Stdnt Opt Department Consent Required
9715 IND 602TBA Staff

COML 4190 and 4200 may be taken independently of each other. Applications available in 247 Goldwin Smith Hall. Students must prepare a proposal for independent study (proposal forms are available in the Office of Undergraduate Admissions and Advising, 55 and 172 Goldwin Smith Hall).

COML 4260 Biblical Seminar II – C. Carmichael. (cmc13)

Crosslist as: RELST 4260
4CR Stdnt Opt 6342 SEM 101 W 02:30PM - 04:25PM

TOPIC: The Book of Genesis

Discussing attitudes to sexuality in the Bible, we will examine in Old and New Testament texts the clash between ancestral behavior and subsequent laws, as well as the contrast between legal and religious ideas. Topics will include: marriage and divorce, incest, intermarriage, gender discrimination, guilt and shame, homosexuality, women and purity, sexual language and symbols. It should be possible to say something new about the topics and also, because of the perennial nature of the issues, to say something that is relevant to contemporary life.

COML 4520 Renaissance Humanism – W. J. Kennedy. (wjk3)

Crosslist as: ENGL 4200
Co-meeting with: COML 6520, ENGL 6240
4CR Stdnt Opt 14699 SEM 101 M 02:30PM - 04:25PM

A reading and discussion of key texts by Renaissance humanists in Italian, French, English, and other European literature from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries.
COML 4791 SEMINAR IN THE CINEMA II – D. Fredericksen. (dlf10)
Crosslist as: FILM 4760
4CR Graded 12700 SEM 101 WF 10:10AM - 12:35PM

TOPIC: European Cinema/Metropolitan Culture

At least since the formation of the European Union, but possibly much earlier, the very idea of a "European Cinema" (as distinct from the national cinema idea) has been fantasized about and nurtured through transnational funding initiatives. This course establishes the concept of "European cinema" from industrial, social and aesthetic perspectives. It then tracks European cinema by looking at specific European cities. Case studies may include Europe's best-known metropoles—London, Paris, Berlin—but also cities found on the periphery, such as Marseille, Naples, Helsinki, Warsaw or Moscow. Films will be drawn from a range of genres and periods, from the famous "city symphonies" of the 1920s to the Eurothriller and the contemporary banlieue films. Topics may include the changing nature of the old European city, the relationship between built and cinematic form, migration and cosmopolitanism, class and gender, and will be framed by historical and theoretical readings.

COML 4860 Contemporary Poetry and Poetics – J. Monroe. (jbm3)
Crosslist as: SPAN 4880
Co-meeting with: COML 6865, ENGL 6880
4CR Stdnt Opt 14680 SEM 101 W 12:20PM - 02:15PM

What gives contemporary poetry and poetics its resonance and value? What are its dominant features, audiences, and purposes? In an increasingly global, pervasively technological culture, what's become of such familiar distinctions as the "traditional" and the "experimental," the "mainstream" and the "alternative"? How does contemporary poetry situate itself among other genres, disciplines, discourses, and media? How are we to understand its evolving public spheres and its relation to the central cultural and historical developments of our time? This seminar will explore these and related questions in a range of works that open onto the rich interplay of contemporary poetry and poetics with issues concerning personal and collective identity, language, and culture.

COML 4940 Senior Essay
4CR Graded 9716 IND 601 Staff

COML 4930-4940 Senior Essay

Fall and spring. 8 credits.

Times TBA individually in consultation with director of Senior Essay Colloquium. Approximately 50 pages to be written over the course of two semesters in the student's senior year under the direction of the student's advisor. An R grade is assigned on the basis of research and a preliminary draft completed in the first semester. A letter grade is awarded on completion of the second semester.
In this course, we will examine the political stakes of Kant's philosophical revolution. We will compare the political consequences of Kantian epistemology and ethics with Kant's writings that deal explicitly with questions of politics and political theory. The latter are, as is well known, considerably more tentative and less systematic. In addition, they pose some extremely difficult hermeneutic challenges. The main focus of our readings will be (1) Kant's position regarding political revolutions and (2) his theory of cosmopolitanism.

The seminar will examine how space is represented in literary texts and pursue the question whether literary language can be connected to spatial features that are unique to prose, poetry and other poetic discourses. We shall review the tradition of literary representations of space by discussing topics such as "the aesthetics of space," "landscape-and garden architecture," "the sublime," "the relationship between corporeality and external worlds," "space and memory/commemoration," "distinctions between space, place, locale, psychic and physical spaces." Ranging from antiquity to contemporary literary and theoretical texts the seminar will approach "space" as a phenomenon that changes its shape with changing analytical or poetic approaches while simultaneously changing the shape of the inquiring or representing discourse. Other guiding questions will be: does literature take on spatial forms? Is poetic language dependent on spatial orientation? Does literature create space? Literature, Philosophy, Psychoanalysis will be the disciplinary spaces under discussion. Readings include: Aristotle, Plato, Longinus, Kant, Goethe, Hölderlin, Novalis, E. T. A. Hoffmann, Stifter, Nietzsche, Benn, Heidegger, Freud, Rilke, Bernhard, Bachelard, Blanchot.

The question of translation, whether defined as a practice, theory, or metaphor, has assumed increasing significance in contemporary cultural criticism. Uncovering processes of translation, often subsumed under the figure of invisibility, may bring hidden histories and voices into view. Translation may be a practice of power, or a method of its undoing. Translation may consolidate hegemonic structures, or decenter them by destabilizing assumed boundaries, binaries, and authenticities. Because it entails a necessary exposure to a différend—the excess of signification in language—translation has become, for some philosophers, an exemplary ethical practice. Similarly, translation has emerged as a prominent motif in contemporary arts that deal with new interfaces made possible by globalization, new media, and the relationship between art and science. The course will provide an introduction for graduate student to influential contemporary theories of translation that are often situated at the intersection of, for example, post-modern and post-colonial theory, or of visual studies with work on gender, race, and technology. Final projects, depending on students' areas of interest, may be presented as translations of theory and/or considerations of theories of translation.
COML 6200 Independent Study
1-4CR  Stndt Opt Department Consent Required
9717 IND 601 Staff
COML 6200 - Independent Study
1-4CR  Stndt Opt Department Consent Required
9718 IND 602 Staff

COML 6190 and 6200 may be taken independently of each other. Applications available in 247 Goldwin Smith Hall

COML 6445 Early Modern Literature – W. Cohen. (wic1)
Crosslist as: ENGL 6445
4CR  Graded 14884 SEM 101 W 01:25PM - 03:20PM
Limited to 15 students.

An attempt to define a Eurasian-wide literary system in the era prior to European hegemony, from the rise of Islam to the Industrial Revolution. A set of paired readings of European and Asian texts designed to show, through structural parallels and influences across a number of genres, the value of thinking about early modern literature in this expanded fashion. Problems of geography, historiography, periodization, and cultural agency. Readings from epic: Hildebrandslied-Firdowsi; romance: Gorgani-Gottfried von Strasburg; religious lyric: Occitan/Petrarchan tradition-South Asian bhakti; religious epic: Tulsidas-Milton; frame tale: 1001 Nights-Boccaccio; drama: Shakespeare-Chikamatsu; novel: Richardson-Cao Xueqin. Readings available in English.

COML 6520 Renaissance Humanism – W. J. Kennedy. (wjk3)
Crosslist as: ENGL 6240
Co-meeting with: COML 4520, ENGL 4200
4CR  Stndt Opt 14701 SEM 101 M 02:30PM - 04:25PM

A reading and discussion of key texts by Renaissance humanists in Italian, French, English and other European literatures from the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries.

COML 6600 Visual Ideology – G. Waite. (gcw1)
Crosslist as: GERST 6600, VISST 6060, ARTH 6060
4CR  Stndt Opt 13922 SEM 101 W 02:30PM - 04:25PM

Some of the most powerful approaches to visual practices have come from outside or from the peripheries of the institution of art history and criticism. This seminar will analyze the interactions between academically sanctioned disciplines (such as iconography and connoisseurship) and innovations coming from philosophy, psychoanalysis, historiography, sociology, literary theory, mass media criticism, feminism, and Marxism. We will try especially to develop: (1) a general theory of "visual ideology" (the gender, social, racial, and class determinations on the production, consumption, and appropriation of visual artifacts under modern and postmodern conditions); and (2) contemporary theoretical practices that articulate these determinations. Examples will be drawn from the history of oil painting, architecture, city planning, photography, film and other mass media.

COML 6665 Media Theory, Film and Photograph – D. Rubenstein. (dsr27)
Crosslist as: GOVT 6665
4CR  Stndt Opt 14161 SEM 101 R 12:20PM - 02:15PM
This seminar addresses two concerns: the specifically French contribution to visual theory in relation to the media of television, film and photography, and the political stakes of that theory in relation to larger issues of globalization, in which both image and event are subjected to ever increasing pressures. To what extent is French media theory a response to tele-technological imperatives? We begin with a consideration of television and the televisual, framed by Jacques Lacan’s radio address, Television, and Pierre Bourdieu’s On Television. Questions of hegemony, institution, and audience induce further interrogation of the status of the virtual and the “operational fetishism” of television in Baudrillard, Derrida, and Virilio. We next consider differences between the televisual and cinematic image in relation to three canonical texts: Deleuze’s Cinema (I & II), Michel Chion’s The Voice in Cinema, and Christian Metz’s Imaginary Signifier (as well as selections by Debord). We conclude with an examination of canonical writing on photography (Barthes, Bourdieu) and recent writings of Baudrillard that returns to the question of the digital and numeric’s “murder” of the image as well as its political consequences post 9/11.

COML 6723 The Arabian Nights, Then and Now – S. Toorawa. (smt24)
Crosslist as: NES 3723, COML 3723, NES 6723
4CR Stdnt Opt 15713 LEC 001 TR 02:55PM - 04:10PM

The medieval Arabic cycle of stories known as The Arabian Nights or The Thousand and One Nights is a classic of world literature. In the first half of the course we will read the Nights and discuss both its dominant themes-deceit, love, sex, revenge, violence, and justice-and its storytelling contexts and antecedents (e.g. the Sanskrit Jataka Tales, and the Middle Persian Tales of Bidpai). And in the second we will explore the ways in which its themes and tales have been adapted and appropriated by authors such as and Jan Potocki in Polish, Edgar Allan Poe and John Barth in English, Jorge Luis Borges in Spanish, and Naguib Mahfouz in Arabic itself. All material is in English translation. No prerequisites.

COML 6820 Cultural Materialism and Geopolitics – P. Liu. (pyl3)
4CR Stdnt Opt 14656 SEM 101 W 10:10AM - 12:05PM

What is a “materialist” analysis of culture? Are the “material” and the “cultural” mutually exclusive? What are some useful models for the interpretations of culture developed by Marxist and non-Marxist authors, and how do we historicize their differences? How does “culture,” understood as the non-economic sphere of society, relate to the conflict of “cultures” in the anthropological sense?
This course examines the foundational texts in “cultural materialism” (Marx, Lukacs, Gramsci, Althusser, Spivak, Jameson) and the implications of a dualistic construction of material vs. cultural life for contemporary geopolitical thinking. We will be interested in the different ways in which tropes of “matter” and “world” are appropriated to delineate new temporal and spatial relations in postcolonial conversations (Fanon, Said, Lye, Chatterjee, Gilroy). By paying special attention to debates about uneven development, the materiality of race and the body, and alternative modernities, we will seek to understand “materialism” itself as an overdetermined category in twentieth-century political history.

COML 6840 Hopkins and Baudelaire – J. Culler. (jdc9)
Crosslist as: ENGL 6820, FREN 6820
4CR Stdnt Opt 14612 SEM 101 M 01:25PM - 03:20PM
Limited to 15 students.

The study of seductive lyrics by two apparently antithetical poets, priest and satanist. In addition to exploring the lyric techniques of these two masters of poetic craft, the course will raise questions about possibilities of the comparative study of lyric, the grounds of comparison, and, more generally, about how the study of lyric should go beyond the individual poem.
What gives contemporary poetry and poetics its resonance and value? What are its dominant features, audiences, and purposes? In an increasingly global, pervasively technological culture, what's become of such familiar distinctions as the "traditional" and the "experimental," the "mainstream" and the "alternative"? How does contemporary poetry situate itself among other genres, disciplines, discourses, and media? How are we to understand its evolving public spheres and its relation to the central cultural and historical developments of our time? This seminar will explore these and related questions in a range of works that open onto the rich interplay of contemporary poetry and poetics with issues concerning personal and collective identity, language, and culture.

The seminar will focus on the aesthetic theory of Theodor W. Adorno and its appropriation and critique by the next generation of theorists. The point of departure will be Adorno’s seminal essay “Cultural Criticism and Society,” to be followed by selected readings from Adorno’s lectures on aesthetics (1958/59). At the center of the seminar will be a close reading of Adorno’s major posthumous work Aesthetic Theory (1970). The latter part of the seminar will consider theorists such as Albrecht Wellmer, Fredrick Jameson, and Christoph Menke who critically responded to and further developed Adorno’s theory.

“Precariousness” is a key word in contemporary Italian thought. Normally it refers to the economic and social condition of young people who work in temporary jobs (such as call centers) without the kind of social welfare and security enjoyed by previous generations. This course will expand outward from an examination of precarietà in the peculiar Italian context. Does precariousness share an organic tie with literature and literary language? Is it possible or useful to speak of precariousness as a more general existential condition of labor and affect linked to literature? What is the relation between the term and alienated labor, especially from Fascism on? And why does precariousness erupt during the so-called Postfordist era, not only in Italy but in a global context? Readings will be available in English (as well as Italian, French and Spanish). Discussion will be in English, with special meetings for speakers of Italian.