

EL203 Writers/Artists/Activistas!

Seminar Leader: Ms. Ariane Simard
Course Times: Monday, 14:15-17:00
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Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description

The filmmaker and writer Trinh T. Minh-ha, once described how when she filmed her movie, **Living is Round**, she used a hand held camera and hand cranked the film at twenty-five frames per second. While the difference between twenty-five frames per second and the industry standard of twenty-four frames per second is imperceptible to the viewer, Trinh T. Minh-ha revealed that hand cranking her film at a different speed was her way of subverting the dominant paradigm. In an era of Pussy Hats and memes and mass protests can such a small, deliberate action really make a difference?

This course will explore small acts of consciousness and the nexus where the writer and/or artist might achieve this by the dint of their work alone. What happens when conscientious acts move from being merely a political practice to becoming something that resembles works that are more subtle and personal? What happens when an artist's work veers into the political realm?

Looking at conscientious action, both large and small, we will look for a way to define an Activista! and try to determine the ways some writers and artists are shifting the dominator paradigm. Through the lens of Trinh T. Minh Ha and others who use their art to question existing social structures, we will survey the work of Rebecca Solnit, James Baldwin, Arundathi Roy, bell hooks, Judith Butler, Rajeev Balasubramanyam, Agnes Varda, Lucy Walker, Cathie Opie, Kara Walker, Shepard Fairey, Xandor Katz and Jayna Zweiman among others as a way to engage and share thoughts on bigger questions about social responsibility, economic justice and cultural engagement.

Building on proven pedagogical methods developed by the Bard College Institute for Writing and Thinking, this "Writing to Learn" class will offer students the chance to grapple with the above questions through close reading, focused and private writing, group projects and seminar discussions. The main aim of the course is to improve students' ability to draft successful narrative, descriptive and analytical essays in academic English, as well as to develop skills in verbal argumentation, critical thinking and effective collaborative work needed for success in almost any discipline in the university setting. This class is a blended learning class at Bard College Berlin, made possible through the additional support of the Open Society Foundation, Kiron Open Higher Education and The Carey Institute for Greater Good. This means the class will take place on the Bard College Berlin campus and online simultaneously, bringing together students based in Berlin with students located across the world studying with Kiron Open Higher Education. Through this process, students will engage in global learning and cross-cultural negotiation, as well as sharpen their digital literacy skills.

PLEASE NOTE: There will be an online orientation as well as a web introduction on the first class.

Blended Learning Course

This course is a blended learning project supported by the Open Society Foundation, Kiron Higher Education, The Carey Institute for Global Good and Bard College Berlin. The class will bring together on-site students from Bard College Berlin and online students studying with Kiron Open Higher Education. The class will be synchronous—meaning it is held online and on-site simultaneously—as well as provide an asynchronous web-classroom that students can access anytime they like. Students will have the opportunity to work with colleagues studying in various places as well as have an online classroom to engage and exchange ideas. Students taking the class as ‘online only students’ will be broadcast into the on-site classroom and will view the campus onsite classroom through their screens. All students are expected to bring laptops or phones with a usable camera to class.

Requirements

Please show up on time, ready to write. Readings should be completed before class. This class will be run as an active workshop so be ready to participate in peer reviews and discussions about the work during class time.

You will have a lot of opportunity to discuss their work with me and should feel free to talk about how you are approaching the assignment in one-on-one meetings. In addition, you can arrange to meet with me to discuss any concerns or writing challenges you might be working through.

Online Class Location and Contacting Instructor

You can find the syllabus, handouts, reading material and assignments on the classroom website (link available during first class and orientation)

You can reach me at a.simard@bard.berlin.edu. It’s helpful if you use a subject line that is pertinent.

If the entire class is willing, we can also create a WhatsApp list to keep in contact.

Required Texts

Hope in the Dark Rebecca Solnit

Teaching Community by bell hooks

Public Power in the Age of Empire by Arundathi Roy

Transit Tales workbook (available as a .pdf on the google class site)

Links to essays by Nayeri, Balasubramanyam, Lorde and others will be available online

Attendance

Students should arrive on time, ready to work and participate. Regular class attendance is expected. More than two absences in a semester will significantly affect the participation grade for the course. Students who have missed more than 30% of the classes may risk failure. Any student, on-site or online, who misses more than four classes may be dropped.

Please see the Student Handbook for regulations governing periods of illness or a leave of absence.

Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the staunchest regard for academic integrity and expects good academic practice from students in their studies. This means that students who plagiarize or otherwise pass off work that is not their own will meet with me to discuss the ramifications of plagiarism. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section III Academic Misconduct.

Assignments

In-Class Writing

We open every class with a brief, in-class writing assignment to get our minds attuned with writing.

Reading Questions

We will respond to all assigned reading in the form of observation, questions and comments that will be posted to the website weekly.

Online Posts

The online posts take various forms and can be either response posts to various questions or perhaps a small creative project.

Peer Review Letters

The peer review letter is a letter written to your fellow student assessing a rough draft. The letter discusses what works and what doesn't work in your peer's writing or project. A Peer Review letter is due with every assignment.

Assignment One: Your Silence Will Not Protect You—Narrative Essay

"Your Silence Will Not Protect You" was at one time a pin the group ACT UP passed out as a response to the AIDS crisis and a Barbara Krueger piece. In our first paper—a narrative essay—we will use Lorde's essay, "Transforming Silence into Language and Action" as a way to examine a moment where we might have experienced such a transformation. Looking also to Trinh Minh-ha, we will keep focused on the idea that even so-called 'small' intentions can be transformative

Assignment Two: Podcast

You will have the opportunity to make a podcast based on ideas we will generate in response to the texts we've been examining in class and online. Some examples could include: What it means to save/be saved? [Solnit] or Living Spaces vs. Dominator Culture [Trinh and Butler] or even representations of family [Opie].

Assignment Three: From Description to Analysis

In this paper, we will try to glean some ideas from one of the texts we have worked with and use those ideas to broaden our understanding about an artist's work. We will write at least three drafts beginning with a brief description of a text before moving on to research the text. In the final drafts of the paper, we will look for ways to analyze the text to discover something new.

Final Project

We will be using a version of the Transit Tales Logbook as a way to record our journey. Since much of this class will take place in an in-between space of classroom and online, we will be working with the logbook as a way to share our process within this space. Students will propose a final project that will require both some research and some deeper thinking on the texts we have studied.

Assignment Deadlines

All written assignments are due electronically and should be uploaded to the class website by the date on the class schedule (usually Tuesday at midnight)

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

Essays that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where an instructor agrees to accept a late essay, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline and cannot receive a grade of higher than C.

Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.

Grade Breakdown

Assignments	50%
Peer Review	20%
Online Posts	30%
Participation (including self-assessment)	10%

Week 1 In-Class	January 28, 2019 Class Introduction, learning the platform and methods of inquiry. Transit Tales “Transforming Silence into Language and Action” Audre Lorde
Online	Self-Portraits and Interviews
Week 2 In-Class	February 4th, 2019 What do we think of as Text? Gaza Bowen—Shoes Jayna Zweiman projects “Changing the Imagination of Change” Rebecca Solnit “Democratic Education” bell hooks How to make a ‘Zine from one sheet of paper
Online	Unexpected Activist
Week 3 In-Class	February 11 th , 2019 <u>Hope in the Dark</u> Rebecca Solnit “Living Is Round” Trinh T. Minh-ha Narrative 1 st draft due Tuesday 12.2.2019 midnight
Online	Filming and using the camera to turn silence into language, motion, light and action
Week 4 In-Class	February 18 th , 2019 <u>Hope in the Dark</u> Rebecca Solnit “The Ungrateful Refugee—we have no debt to repay” Dina Nayeri Narrative 2 nd draft due Tuesday 19.2.2019 midnight
Online	Pussy Hats
Week 5 In-Class	February 25 th , 2019 <u>Hope in the Dark</u> Rebecca Solnit Joseph Beuys—“I Like America and America Likes Me” and “Sweeping Up” (Film 30 min) Introduce Pod Cast
Online	Peer Reviews Post one to two links to podcasts you would recommend
<i>SPECIAL EVENT ON CAMPUS</i>	SATURDAY March 2 nd , 2019 An on campus event open to the school and the community giving us a chance to invite the on-line students to campus and meet in person. Film screening <i>Wasteland</i> by Lucy Walker
Week 6	March 4th, 2019

In-Class	<p><u>Public Power in the Age of Empire</u> Arundathi Roy Cathie Opie Judith Butler “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution” Narrative final draft due Tuesday 5.4.2019 midnight</p>
Online	<p>Unexpected Activist pt. 2</p>
Week 7 In-Class	<p>March 11th, 2019 (last week to withdraw) <u>Public Power in the Age of Empire</u> Arundathi Roy Felix Gonzales Torres (Untitled) Death by Gun “Piss Christ” and “Klu Klux Klan” by Andre Serrano Introduce Analytical Paper Podcast proposal due Tuesday 12.3.2019 midnight</p>
Online	<p>Podcast posts Podcast Q&A Podcast Peer Review</p>
Week 8 In-Class	<p>March 18th, 2019 (mid-term) <u>Public Power in the Age of Empire</u> Arundathi Roy Shepard Fairey, Barbara Krueger Final Pod Cast due IN CLASS/Pod Cast listening party</p>
Online	<p>Reflection response to podcast assignment</p>
Week 9 In-Class	<p>March 25th, 2019 <u>Teaching Community</u> bell hooks James Baldwin Rajeev Balasubramanyam Xandor Katz Robert Finely Analytical Paper (description) first draft due Tuesday 25.3.2019 midnight</p>
Online	<p>Yoko Ono MAP assignment</p>
Week 10 In-Class	<p>April 1st, 2019 <u>Teaching Community</u> bell hooks Jungle Eye Collective <i>The Gleaners and I</i> screening Agnes Varda Introduce Creative Project</p>
Online	<p>Use a quote from an author to explain another text</p>

In-Class	<p><u>Teaching Community</u> bell hooks Vik Munoz “Sugar Children” Kara Walker “A Subtlety” and “Sugar Babies” Analytical Paper (sources) second draft Due Tuesday 9.4.2019 midnight</p>
Online	<p>Write an abstract of the paper Peer Review</p> <p>SPRING BREAK April 15th, 2019 – April 22nd 2019</p>
Week 12	<p>April 29th, 2019</p>
In-Class	<p><u>Teaching Community</u> bell hooks Kara Walker “A Subtlety” and “Sugar Babies” Analytical Paper final draft Due Tuesday 30.4.2019 midnight</p>
Online	<p>Post three Creative Project Proposals</p>
Week 13	<p>May 6th, 2019</p>
In-Class	<p>Review Creative Project Paper first draft Due Tuesday 7.5.2019 midnight</p>
Online	<p>Project MOOD BOARD Creative Project Peer Review</p>
Week 14	<p>May 13th, 2019</p>
In-Class	<p>Final Presentations</p>
Online	<p>Reflective response to Creative Project Post venues where Creative Projects could be published/displayed</p>
Week 15	<p>May 20th, 2019</p>
In-Class and/or Online	<p>Final Creative Project and Paper due May 20th, 2019 (Please note, if you are a graduating senior, your project will be due sooner)</p>

STUDENT NOTES: