

Altman Seminar: Sensory Knowledge

SPN 420E/FRE 430B

Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:30-12:50pm

Alumni 201

Professors Charles Victor Ganelin (SPN) and Elisabeth Hodges (FRE)

Course description

Nothing is more essential to human experience than sensation. We see, hear, taste, touch, and feel the world around us. Or do we? Enduring works of philosophy, history, literature, film, and criticism suggest that our sensory engagements are far more complex than they seem. In the current age of growing detachment from the body, devices increasingly mediate sensation. These developments have ignited a scholarly return to the question of the senses across a variety of disciplinary fields from the arts and humanities to the cognitive sciences. This seminar will explore the philosophical and historical foundations of sensory experience and will examine how sensory modes inform literary and artistic expression and how the senses connect, interpret, determine, and sometimes disconnect us from the world of representation. In seminar discussions, we will consider the traditional model of the five senses and contemporary society's altered modalities of sense perception. We will think about what is lost or found in the move inward into technologies and devices and ask what are the broader consequences for humanity as well as literary and artist representation in the changing sensorial landscape? All students enrolled in the seminar are a part of a special year-long Humanities Center interdisciplinary research program called the Altman program. You will have the opportunity to attend public lectures by distinguished artists, intellectuals, and cultural critics and extend our conversation about the senses outside of the classroom. Course readings and viewing will include a broad range of interdisciplinary materials from secondary texts in philosophy and cultural history (Aristotle, Classen, Howes, Jütte, Benjamin, Merleau-Ponty, and Rancière among others) as well as a selection of primary sources that will include novels, plays, short stories, films, animated features, and digital installations (Cervantes, Zayas, Poe, Ocampo, Balzac, Schnabel, Kieslowski, Jonze, Olde Wolbers, etc.). All readings will be available in English translation, however if you have a reading proficiency in Spanish or in French, we encourage you to read the primary text in the original. Course discussion is conducted in English.

Course materials will sometimes deal with the adult themes (including sexuality among others) at times in explicit terms. Students who do not wish to confront such topics should not enroll.

Professors' Contact Information

Professor Charles Victor Ganelin

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Graduate Assistant

Catherine Tetz, Department of English

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Course requirements

Attendance/Participation

- The course meets twice a week, **Tuesday and Thursday from 11:30am-12:50pm in Alumni 201**. This course places a premium on active participation by all students in the class. Attendance is an obvious prerequisite to participation. The Student Handbook states that “*Every student is expected to attend every class session for which the student is duly registered. [...] There are no University-recognized absences except for religious observances that require absence from a class session and other required activities. Students must give written notification to their instructor within the first two weeks of class of the religious event that prohibits class attendance and the date that will be missed, if officially known.*” Any unexcused absence in excess of two will result in the lowering of your participation grade. If you are absent from any class, you are still fully responsible for all of the material discussed and disseminated that day.
- In addition to your attendance, you are expected to have read or viewed in advance all of the assigned materials. Your participation in the seminar will be evaluated based on your willingness to volunteer to participate and your preparedness to engage in thoughtful discussion of the assigned reading during each class meeting.
- No late work will be accepted, nor will there be any make-up examinations except in the case of a University recognized excused absence.

Classroom etiquette

- Cell phones, iPads, smart phones, computers, and use of the Internet impede active participation in class discussion and their use is prohibited in class unless otherwise directed by your professors. If you have special circumstances that require use of a laptop for taking notes, please communicate this to instructors. This is a discussion-driven class and we expect you to be present, not elsewhere! If a student continuously violates this classroom policy, s/he risk being dropped from the course for disruptive conduct.

Academic Honesty

Every assignment turned in must be the result of your own work and in your own words.

- If you use ONE or more words by someone else, put them in quotation marks (“...”) and cite their source.
- Never use someone else’s ideas without properly citing your sources.
- No outside assistance is permitted on work submitted for a grade, except from the Office for Learning Assistance or the Howe Writing Center located in King Library. (This includes help from a friend, instructor, parent, tutor, etc.).
- Use of internet translation services, websites, or programs is not allowed for any graded work.
- If you’re not sure about how to use a source, consult either with the course instructors or the graduate assistant.

For proper referencing techniques, consult the [MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers](#). See also the Miami University Libraries’ website, [Citation Resources and Guidelines](#).

Chapter 5 (Academic Integrity) of the *Miami University Student Handbook* describes different types of academic misconduct, including plagiarism, and the penalties that may be incurred. Any academic misconduct will be prosecuted.

We are here to guide you, so please ask if you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism.

Course Readings: (required)

Books and materials to purchase (required):

- Robert Jütte, *A History of the Senses: From Antiquity to Cyberspace* (Polity, 2004)
- Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida. Reflections on Photography* (Hill & Wang, 2010)
- Honoré de Balzac, *Unknown Masterpiece* (NY Review, 2001)
- Sarah Ruhl, *In the Next Room* (Theater Communication Group, 2010)
- Coursepack of articles at Oxford Copy Shop

Films

- Screenings of films will be held virtually and materials will be made available for streaming through our Canvas course site or they will be on reserve at the IMC in King Library.

Course Evaluation:

Participation:	25%	(includes attendance, active participation in discussion, attending two Altman lectures, and submitting a one-page reaction paper after each lecture to Catherine Tetz, our graduate assistant)
Writing Assignments:	25%	(four two-three page reaction papers due 9/10; 10/1; 10/22; 11/17)
Final Presentation	10%	
Abstract & Bibliography	10%	(polished research proposal 2-3 pages with bibliography)
Final Paper	30%	(final research paper of 12-15 pages, approx. 3600-4500 words)

COURSE SYLLABUS

AUGUST

Tuesday 25	Discussion:	Course introduction
Thursday 27	Discussion: Readings:	Philosophies of the Sensorial Aristotle, <i>On the Senses</i> , Books II-III; <i>Sense and Sensibilia</i>

Section 1: Foundations of Sensory Experience

SEPTEMBER

Tuesday 1	Discussion: Readings:	Foundations of Sensory Experience Robert Jütte, <i>A History of the Senses</i> , chs. 1-3 Daniel Heller-Roazen, <i>The Inner Touch</i> , chs. 1-2
Thursday 3	Discussion: Readings:	Foundations, continued David Howes, “Introduction: Empire of the Senses”; Susan Stewart, “Prologue: From the Museum of Touch”; Constance Classen, “The Witch’s Senses: Sensory Ideologies and Transgressive Femininities from the Renaissance to Modernity”

ALTMAN LECTURE: David Howes “The Evidence of the Senses” 4pm, Marcum Ctr

Tuesday 8	Discussion: Readings:	Early Modern Senses: Spain (and beyond) Miguel de Cervantes, <i>Don Quijote</i> (selections in English) Steven Wagschal, “The Smellscape of <i>Don Quixote</i> : A Cognitive Approach” Charles Ganelin, “Don Quixote as Museum”
Thursday 10	Discussion: Readings:	A (Proto-) Feminist Take on the Early Modern Senses María de Zayas: Tale 5, “Innocence Punished,” from <i>The Disenchantments of Love</i> (Optional) Heather Young, ch. 6 “María de Zayas and the Fragrance of a Woman’s Space” (Optional) Lisa Vollendorf, “Fleshing Out Feminism in Early Modern Spain: María de Zayas’s Corporeal Politics” REACTION PAPER 1 DUE
Tuesday 15	Discussion: Readings:	Early Modern Senses: France (and beyond) Michel de Montaigne “Of Smells” (1580) René Descartes, <i>Dioptrique</i> (1637) Daniel Heller-Roazen, <i>The Inner Touch</i> , “Perception Everywhere”, ch. 3
Thursday 17	Discussion: Readings:	Phenomenology of the Senses Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “Eye and Mind”

Section 2: Sensing Difference: Visual, Fictional, Real

Tuesday 22	Discussion: Readings:	Moving Toward Modernity Sigmund Freud “The Uncanny” Edgar Allen Poe: “The Tell-tale Heart” and “The Pit and the Pendulum”
Thursday 24	Discussion: Readings:	(Wo)men on the Edge Emilia Pardo Bazán, “Torn Lace”; Horacio Quiroga, “The Dead Man”
Tuesday 29	Discussion: Readings: Viewings:	Why Sense? A Fold in the Flesh of the World David Bordwell, Glossary of Film Terms from <i>Film Art</i> Vivian Sobchack, <i>Carnal Thoughts</i> (excerpt, tbd) Spike Jonze “Her” (2013)
Thursday 1	Discussion: Readings:	Jonze’s visual interiority Donald Ihde, “Inner Speech” <i>Listening and Voice</i> REACTION PAPER 2 DUE

OCTOBER

Tuesday 6	Discussion: Readings: Viewing:	The Sound of Others Joseph Kickasola, “Kieslowski’s <i>Musique concrète</i> ” Krzysztof Kieslowski, <i>The Double Life of Veronica</i> (1991)
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Thursday 8	Discussion:	Sound, Image, Sense
	Readings:	Laura Marks, “Thinking Multisensory Culture” (Optional) Georgina Evans, “Imagination and the Senses”
	Viewing:	Krzysztof Kieslowski, <i>Blue</i> (1993)

Section 3:	Theater(s) of the Sensual
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Tuesday 13	Discussion:	Food
	Readings:	Carolyn Korsmeyer, <i>Making Sense of Taste</i> , chs. 1 and 4;
	Viewings:	Gabriel Axel, <i>Babette’s Feast</i> (1987)
Thursday 15	Discussion:	Sense and the Genuine
	Readings:	Carolyn Korsmeyer, “Touch and the Experience of the Genuine”; “The Wreckage of Time and the Persistence of Things: Preserving the Value of Genuineness”

ALTMAN LECTURE: Carolyn Korsmeyer “Tasting the Past” 4pm, MMH Great Room

(Optional) Friday 16 Pouring Tea “In the Next Room”, Patterson Place 4-6pm
**Interactive salon discussion with cast of Miami University’s production of *In the Next Room* about the history of Victorian ideals, scientific innovation, and cultural practice over tea and snacks

Tuesday 20	Discussion:	Touching
	Readings:	Sarah Ruhl, <i>In the Next Room</i> Michel Foucault, “We, ‘Other Victorians’” <i>The History of Sexuality</i> , Vol. 1
Thursday 22	Discussion:	Discussion of the play & Foucault
	Readings:	Michel Foucault, “The Repressive Hypothesis” <i>The History of Sexuality</i> , Vol. 1.

REACTION PAPER 3 DUE

GATES ABEGGLEN THEATER (Miami U), Sarah Ruhl, *In the Next Room*, 7:30pm
**Attend performance of Sarah Ruhl’s play (Theater Dept., Miami) and participate in talkback with dramaturgs

Section 4:	Contemporary Ways to Sense
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Tuesday 27	Discussion:	The Sensory Life of Things
	Readings:	Francis Ponge, <i>The Nature of Things</i> Jane Bennett, “The Force of Things” <i>Vibrant Matter</i>
Thursday 29	Discussion:	Haptic Visuality
	Readings:	Laura Marks “Preface,” <i>The Skin of the Film</i> Tarja Laine, “ <i>The Diving Bell and the Butterfly</i> as Emotional Event”
	Viewings:	Julian Schnabel, “Diving Bell & the Butterfly” (2007)

ALTMAN LECTURE: Margaret Livingstone “What Art Can Tell Us about the Brain” 4pm,
Shriver Dolibois Room

NOVEMBER

- Tuesday 3 Discussion: Post-Sense?
Readings: Silvina Ocampo, “The Velvet Dress,” “Isis” (“Mimoso,” “Lovers,” “The Expiation,” and “Sheets of Earth” included as suggested readings by Ocampo.)
- Thursday 5 Discussion:
Readings: Isabel Allende, “The Judge’s Wife,” “Tosca”

ABSTRACT & BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR FINAL PAPER DUE

- Tuesday 10 Discussion: Knowing and unknowing
Readings: Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, part one
Honoré de Balzac, *Unknown Masterpiece*
- Thursday 12 Discussion: Knowing and unknowing (continu
Readings: Borges, “The Ethnographer”; Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, part two

Friday 13 ALTMAN LECTURE: Steven Matijcio “Making Sense in, and of, Contemporary Art”
5pm, Contemporary Arts Center Black Box Theater (Cincinnati)

- Tuesday 17 Discussion: Seeing, Sensing, Remembering
Readings: Saskia Olde Wolbers, Screenplays for short films (via email attachment)
Viewing: Saskia Olde Wolbers, “Trailer,” “Placebo,” and “Pareidolia”
only available to us via Vimeo for one day by special permission of the artist

REACTION PAPER 4 DUE

- Thursday 19 Meetings with faculty about final projects
- Tuesday 24 Meetings with faculty about final projects
- Thursday 26 NO CLASS THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

DECEMBER

- Tuesday 1 Final Project Presentations (in class)
- Thursday 3 Final Project Presentations (in class)

**FINAL PAPER DUE ON THURSDAY DECEMBER 10 BY NOON
(Hard copy AND by attachment)**