

HIST 125
HISTORY OF THE SENSES
 Santa Clara University
 Winter 2013



This course examines the science of the senses, how this science has evolved over time, and how these changes reveal sensory investigations as endeavors intimately intertwined with the pressures and needs of societies. It also explores some of the philosophical and ethical implications to how we conceive of the senses. Historical context helps explain different sensory uses and meanings and, as this course will suggest, intimately influences how we hear, smell, see, taste and touch the world. At times, discourse on the senses has produced profoundly existential questions. At other times, the senses have been claimed as a starting point for ontological certainty. Many see the relative weight a society places on certain senses over others — such as the preeminence of vision in Western modernity — as a defining factor in the relationship between science and society.

Sensory inputs may or may not change dramatically over time, but the reception of perceptual factors has a definite and intriguing history. This course will examine the ways that the senses themselves, just like the science of sensing, have been historically contingent — or in other words dependent upon historical contestation and negotiation. This class will challenge students to historicize how the natural world has been perceived through bodies, question the forces that make up our sensory perceptions and

accommodations, and critically investigate the interconnections between society/culture and those elements of human experience that we often assume (perhaps incorrectly) to be biologically or genetically fixed.

Important thematic questions will include: To what extent can our sensory experiences be “naturalized” as permanent and unchangeable? To what extent have our physical senses been molded by, expressed within, and predicated upon social expectations and assumptions (which of course change over time)? Discussions about persons with sensory disabilities (the blind and the deaf, but also others) proliferate after the 18th century — does this denote an unusual amount of attention to the “normalization” of sensory faculties in modern Western societies? Can alarming scents, piercing sounds, or alluring tastes emerge as crucial means by which societies govern themselves and unequally distribute power? Is our sensory world ruled by our reactions to and commentaries upon social, cultural, ideological, religious, etc factors that subtly permeate every aspect of life? Do the senses engage in a tenuous politics of attraction and repulsion? Are there any universally-recognized beautiful smells, ugly sights, or pleasing textures? Why is this last question so difficult to answer?

We will learn the basics of contemporary sensory science, including the anatomy and physiology of the ear, nose, eye, and tongue. Readings and discussions will examine the claims of sociobiology, and weigh these against the arguments emerging from recent scholarship in social history, cultural history, anthropology, and psychology. We will make sure to keep “bodies in context.” One thing that should become clear in this investigation is that the historical contextualization of the senses allows for a very rich appreciation of certain aspects of human life that are normally cast as mundanely literal. Our contextualization of the senses in social frameworks illuminates (and actually makes possible) discussions of voice, aroma, visibility, cuisine, and spatiality.

The course will attempt to be as sensorially engaging as possible in its pedagogy, providing opportunities for students to physically explore their senses.

Final Grade Breakdown

Participation	10%
Analytical Essay (x2)	15% each
Mid-Term Paper	20%
Film Analysis	15%
Final Exam	25%

94-	A
90-93	A-
87-89	B+
84-86	B
80-83	B-
77-79	C+
74-76	C
70-73	C-
60-69	D
x- 59	F

Final Grade Scoring**Grade Components:**

10% - Participation. Your participation in class accounts for significant part of the overall grade. Attendance will be taken at each class meeting. Poor attendance will negatively affect your participation grade, and will be definitive in borderline cases. This is the easiest part of your participation grade: just be here and be ready to discuss the readings. I will do my best to elicit discussion during each class period. Each student definitely will be called upon several times during the quarter, so be ready! Everyone should know that suitable participation also includes giving respectful attention to fellow students and helping to create a welcoming and non-threatening environment. And of course, bring the appropriate readings with you to our meetings.

15% Each - Analytical Essay. 3-page analysis of TWO of the following texts, one from each group (see instructions on Camino).

Essay #1

A. James Greenwood, "At a Sugar Baking," in *The Wilds of London* (1874), 264-70.

or

B. George Orwell, *Road to Wigan Pier* (1937), 121-31, 141-53.

Essay #2 (bring with you to the final exam)

A. Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth* (Anchor Books, 1991), 9-19.

or

B. Edward Bellamy "With the Eyes Shut" (1898), 335-65.

20% - Mid-Term Paper. 4-page essay in response to a selection of prompts. Due Feb 14 (see Camino).

10% - Film Analysis. 3-page analysis of ONE of the following films (see instructions on Camino).

Perfume: The Story of a Murderer (2006)

A Film Unfinished (2010)

The King's Speech (2010)

* Additional credit may earned for watching and commenting on all these films. This will consist of a separate paper (see Camino).

30% - Final Exam is cumulative and will touch upon the major themes and lessons of the course. It will consist of take-home essay (5 pages) and a brief in-classroom exam. You will receive the prompt for this essay one week prior to the Final Exam. Bring the essay with you to the Final Exam.

Criteria for assessment:

The following is a *basic* outline for the range of performance levels and corresponding grades. Plus (+) and minus (-) grades would indicate finer levels of distinction within these general criteria.

A = Excellent work that goes above and beyond what is merely "sufficient" or "good." Subtle and deft understanding of the historical material. Strong work ethic, plus a positive contribution to the class meetings. Written work shows close attention to critical and independent thought.

B = Good work that demonstrates a solid understanding and appreciative engagement with the material, but short of mastery. Decent work ethic, occasional positive contributions to class meetings. Written work shows some attention to critical and independent thought.

C = Sufficient but mediocre work that fulfils the minimum requirements, but does not stand out in any way. Just enough to get by. Work ethic is lacking, seldom contributes in a positive way to class discussions. Written work shows inadequate thinking-through and does not rise above superficiality.

D = Insufficient ability to demonstrate an understanding of the material. Poor work ethic, indicated by

inadequate written work expressing little desire to cultivate an adequate understanding of the material. F = Completely deficient work and understanding. Lacking in serious attempts to fulfill assignments or engage with the required instructional material. Persists with manifestly inappropriate or distractive writing or behavior.

Core Curriculum, Science, Technology & Society Objectives:

Learning Objective 1: *Recognize and articulate the complexity of the relationship between science and/or technology and society.*

This course aims to have students critically interrogate the relationship between the bodily senses and social life. They will be exposed to contemporary scientific explanations of how the senses work and will be challenged to pair this information with historical explorations of how sensory perception is nonetheless highly contextualized and contingent upon social expectations and assumptions.

Learning Objective 2: *Comprehend the relevant science and/or technology and explain how science and/or technology advance through the processes of inquiry and experiment.*

The course will trace the development of sensory understanding through ancient natural philosophy and modern anatomy/physiology. Emphasis will be placed on demonstrating that the desire to know, explain and map the senses has a long history, and that it contributes to the uses of the senses —resulting in concepts such as optics, calories and decibels.

Learning Objective 3: *Analyze and evaluate the societal impact of science and/or technology and how science and/or technology are themselves impacted by the needs and demands of society.*

This course will examine the ways that the senses and the science of sensing, have been historically contingent — or in other words dependent upon historical contestation and negotiation. It will challenge students to historicize how the natural world has been perceived through bodies, question the forces that make up our sensory perceptions and accommodations, and critically investigate the interconnections between society/culture and those elements of human experience that we often assume (perhaps incorrectly) to be biologically or genetically fixed.

Disabilities accommodation policy:

To request academic accommodations for disabilities, students must contact Disability Resources (554-4111). Students must provide Disability Resources with documentation before they can receive accommodation.

Laptop and electronic communication device policy:

No “texting” is necessary during class, so please do not get your phone out and play with it. You may bring a laptop to class to take notes and reference the digitized readings, but DO NOT use it to complete other work, or surf the web, or send emails, or engage basically in anything other than what is related to this class. You must sit near the front of the classroom if you are using your laptop, not at the back of the room. Infringement of this rule will result in revoking your right to have an open laptop during class.

Academic Honesty:

Plagiarism is a serious offense and will be reported to the university authorities as a matter of course. Student work that does not meet SCU’s standards for academic integrity will not be graded. This is the language in the SCU Student Handbook:

Both the University Bulletin and the Student Handbook outline the University's expectations that all members of the University community are expected to be honest in their academic endeavors. Engaging in any form of academic dishonesty or other acts generally understood to be dishonest by faculty or students in an academic context subjects a student to academic and judicial action. For the full text of the academic integrity protocol, go to the Provost's website at www.scu.edu/provost and look for the link to Policies and Procedures.

For this course, please note: Dishonest work will receive automatically a failing grade. Students discovered to be engaging in plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Office of Student Life. The instructor has discretion to give an F in the course to someone found guilty of a dishonest act.

For every written piece you submit, you will need to include as a cover page a signed copy of the academic integrity contract (download from Camino).

Camino policy:

Essential readings and other information will be posted online. Be sure to login and make sure you have access. In the event of class cancellation, I will inform the class through the Camino email system. This email will go to your scu.edu accounts. Please make sure you are in the habit of checking your CAMPUS EMAIL regularly (or have it forwarded to the account you regularly check). I have no other way of contacting you.

Access to readings:

You are responsible for getting and reading the assigned readings prior to class time. If you have a problem of any sort accessing the assigned materials, it is your responsibility to inform Dr Newsom Kerr as soon as possible so that he can help resolve the problem.

Required Purchase:

University Readers Course pack. Order from universityreaders.com

DAY-BY-DAY SCHEDULE

*** Assigned texts should be completely studied by class-time on the date indicated ***

[UR] = Printed in the University Readers Course Pack.

[C] = Copies distributed to students.

WEEK 1**Jan 7 – Introduction to the course****Jan 9 – Salt and Spice**

[UR] Margaret Visser, "Salt: The Edible Rock," in *The Taste Culture Reader* (Berg, 2005), 105-109.

[UR] Wolfgang Schivelbusch, "Spices: Tastes of Paradise," in *The Taste Culture Reader* (Berg, 2005), 123-130.

Jan 11 – History of Sweet

[UR] Sideny Mintz, "Sweet Polychrest," *Social Research* 66/1 (Spring 1999), 85-100.

WEEK 2**Jan 14 – Tasting Sweet, Tasting Sweat**

[C] Elizabeth Abbott, *Sugar: A Bittersweet History* (Duckworth Overlook, 2008), 220-228, 231-45.

In-Class watch: "Big Sugar, pt I" (CBC, 2005)

Jan 16 – Artificial Sweet

[C] Carolyn de la Pena, *Empty Pleasures: The Story of Artificial Sweeteners from Saccharin to Splenda* (Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2010), selections.

Jan 18 – Tastes Synthetic

[UR] Eric Schlosser, "The bitter truth about fast food." (2001)

[UR] TBA

WEEK 3**Jan 21 – MLK Day – NO CLASS****Jan 23 – Smells like History**

[UR] Rachel S. Herz, "I Know What I Like: Understanding Odor Preferences," in *The Smell Culture Reader* (Berg, 2006), 190-203.

[UR] Constance Classen, et. al., *Aroma* (Routledge 1994), 51-54, 58-66.

Jan 25 – Historicizing Body Odor

[UR] Constance Classen, et. al., *Aroma* (Routledge 1994), 70-73.

[UR] Alain Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant* (Harvard UP, 1986), 35-47.

WEEK 4**Jan 28 – An Olfactory Revolution**

[UR] Alain Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant* (Harvard UP, 1986), 48-56, 67-70, 89-110.

[UR] Classen et al, *Aroma* (Routledge 1994), 81-84.

Jan 30 – Smells Out of Place, Bodies Out of Place

[C] Katherine Ashenburg, *The Dirt on Clean: An Unsanitized History* (North Point Press, 2007), selections.

[UR] Alan Hyde, "Offensive Bodies," in *The Smell Culture Reader* (Berg, 2006), 53-58.

Jan 31 – Due: Film Review of *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer* (2006) – OPTION

Feb 1 – Scent Commodified: Modern Perfumes the Fragrance Industry

[UR] Classen et al, *Aroma* (Routledge 1994), 180-197.

Watch five perfume ads online before class – See Camino.

WEEK 5**Feb 4 – Spectacle of Power, Gaze of Power**

[C] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (Vintage, 1995).

[UR] Wolfgang Schivelbusch, "The Street," in *Disenchanted Night* (Univ. of California Press, 1988), selections.

Feb 5 – Analytical Essay #1 due

Feb 6 – Modernity's Visual Technologies

[UR] Robert Hirsch, *Seizing the Light: A History of Photography* (McGraw-Hill, 2000), 3-20.

[C] Mary Warner Marien, *Photography: A Cultural History* (Harry N. Abrams, 2002), 61-64.

Feb 8 – Realism and Unreality

[C] Mary Warner Marien, *Photography: A Cultural History*, 23, 28, 30-32, 74, 132-144.

[UR] Robert Hirsch, *Seizing the Light: A History of Photography*, 91-94.

WEEK 6**Feb 11 – Nude, Naked and the Other**

Philippa Levine, "States of Undress: Nakedness and the Colonial Imagination," *Victorian Studies* 50/2 (Winter 2008), 189-219.

Feb 13 – Visual Reproducibility & Mass Media

[UR] Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, *Practices of Looking*, selections.

[UR] Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction."

Feb 14 – Mid-Term Paper due

Feb 15 – Physiognomy & Power

[UR] Jonathan Finn, "Picturing the Criminal," in *Capturing the Criminal Image* (Univ of Minnesota Press, 2009), 1-2, 6-30.

[UR] Sharrona Pearl, "Caricature Physiognomy," in *About Faces: Physiognomy in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Harvard UP, 2010), selections.

WEEK 7**Feb 18 – NO CLASS: Presidents Day**

Feb 19 – Due: Film review of *A Film Unfinished* (2010) – OPTION

Feb 20 – Seeing Race, Changing Race

[UR] Sander Gilman, *Making the Body Beautiful: A Cultural History of Aesthetic Surgery* (Princeton UP, 1999), selections.

Feb 22 – Wanting Beauty, Making Beauty

[UR] Kathy Peiss, *Hope in a Jar: The Making of America's Beauty Culture* (Holt and Co., 1998), selections.

WEEK 8**Feb 25 – Noises and Soundscapes**

[C] Peter Bailey, "Breaking the Sound Barrier: A Historian Listens to Noise," *Body & Society* 2/2 (1996), selections.

[C] David Garrioch, "Sounds of the City: The Soundscape of Early Modern European Towns," *Urban History* 30/1 (2003), selections.

Feb 27 – Noise Abatement

[C] Peter Payer, "The Age of Noise: Early Reactions in Vienna, 1870-1914," *Journal of Urban History* 33 (2007), 773-93.

March 1 – The Phonograph Effect, I

[C] Mark Katz, *Capturing Sound: How Technology has Changed Music* (U of California Press, 2010), selections.

WEEK 9**March 4 – The Phonograph Effect, II**

[C] Mark Katz, *Capturing Sound: How Technology has Changed Music* (U of California Press, 2010), selections.

[UR] Bernard Kraus, *The Great Animal Orchestra* (2012), selections.

March 6 – Elocution and Accent: Disciplining Voice

[C] Joy Damousi, "'Filthy American Twang': Elocution, the Advent of American 'Talkies,' and Australian Cultural Identity," *American Historical Review* 112/2 (2007), selections.

March 8 – Soundless, Voiceless?

[C] Jonathan Ree, *I See a Voice* (Metropolitan Books, 2000), 89-96.
Watch in class: *Through Deaf Eyes* (2007).

WEEK 10**March 11 – Deaf Culture, Sound Culture**

Watch in class: *Through Deaf Eyes* (2007).

Mar 12 – Due: Film Review of *The King's Speech* (2010) – OPTION

March 13 – Sense Illusions, Social Constructions

[C] Mark S. Smith, *How Race is Made* (UNC Press, 2006), selections.
Watch in class: *Race: Power of an Illusion*

March 15 – Segregation through the Senses

[C] Mark S. Smith, *How Race is Made* (UNC Press, 2006), selections.