

MAKING SENSE

College Seminars 001

Fall 1997

T & TH: 11:30 - 1:00

Rooms:

large group -- Dalton 204

Dalke -- Guild 101

Ferzacca -- Dalton 204

McCormack -- Park 336

Instructors: Anne Dalke (English)

Steve Ferzacca (Anthropology)

Elizabeth McCormack (Physics)

Offices & telephone:

Dalke -- English House

Ferzacca -- 108 Dalton (526-5033)

McCormack -- 345 Park (526-5356)

“[A]nything we see, hear, feel, smell, or taste requires billions of nerve cells to flash urgent messages along linked pathways and feedback loops in our brains, performing intricate calculations that scientists have only begun to decipher.”

Maya Pines, *Seeing, Hearing, and Smelling the World* (1995)

“I believe in the flesh and the appetites,
Seeing, hearing, feeling, are miracles, and each part and tag of me is a miracle.”

Walt Whitman, *Song of Myself* (1855)

“Tap the copious flows that saturate your authentic identity. We feel because we live, and life saturates our entire body.”

a Javanese mystic, interview (1992)

THE COURSE

Human beings "make sense" of their existence with and through the senses. This course crosses the boundaries of genre, culture, knowledge, and technique in an attempt to make sense of humankind's common sensorial consciousness. We will consider the range of human experience related to the traditional five senses -- taste, touch, smell, sight, sound -- from several vantage points: a human biology perspective that situates sensation within a natural world; sensual mediations of reality in the context of social life from a variety of cultural points of view; and as inspiration for literary convention and expression.

ASSIGNMENTS AND COURSEWORK

College Seminars are designed as writing courses that encourage critical thinking. This course on the *senses* examines sensory experience from various perspectives in order to present various ways to know the senses. As we move through the course, these various ways of knowing the senses, viewed together, provide the basis for our own cultural critique of how different systems of knowledge consider about the senses, and how those considerations are expressed in writing. The assigned readings will both provide content on how human beings know the senses, and function as models of writing styles in the different disciplines. The writing assignments for this course invite you to explore a range of genres in science, social science, and the humanities, as well as engaging you in the genre-blurring cultural critique that has become common in both academic and popular literatures. Writing will take place in and outside of class as responses to assigned readings, experiments, personal experiences and observations, and small-scale fieldwork projects, with a final paper that brings together some configuration of course materials and your interpretations that presents an argued philosophy of sensory experience. Written work is due on the date it is assigned in the syllabus.

CLASSES, SEMINARS, AND CONFERENCES

College seminars meet as a group with the team of professors and all students, and in smaller sections directed by each professor. The large group meetings are intended to provide summary discussions of topics and introductions to up-coming topics, but also opportunities for professors and students to engage in conversations that cross disciplinary boundaries. The smaller sections allow for in-depth discussions of the readings and other assignments, and for writing workshops, presentations, brainstorming paper topics, and in-class writing.

Each of you will meet once every two weeks with your professor for a 20 minute writing conference. You and your professor will discuss your work with attention to writing mechanics, organization of ideas, and content. If there are issues regarding writing mechanics that need to be addressed more closely, the Writing Center is available for additional assistance.

COURSE READINGS (texts are available at Campus Center Bookstore)

Berger, John. *Ways of Seeing*. Penguin Books, 1977.

Calvino, Italo. *Mr. Palomar*. Translated from the Italian by William Weaver. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985.

Howard Hughes Medical Institute. *Seeing, Hearing, and Smelling: New Findings Help Scientists Make Sense of Our Senses*. A Report from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, No. 5, 1995.

Suskind, Patrick. *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer*. Simon & Schuster, 1987.

Assigned articles and excerpts are available as a packet for purchase. Consult syllabus for reading assignments.

COURSE SCHEDULE AND SYLLABUS -- Page 1

9/2 INTRODUCTION: *SENSE-SATION* (large group)

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

write about in-class experience (1 page)

9/4 THE SYNESTHESIA OF EXPERIENCE (small sections)

READING ASSIGNMENTS

Keller, *The World I Live In* (packet)
Maurer, *The World of the Newborn* (packet)
Pines, "Our Common Senses" (Hughes Report)

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

personal account of sensory experience (2 pages)

9/9 PERSPECTIVES ON SENSE AND SENSORIA (small sections)

READING ASSIGNMENTS

Bennett, Introduction (packet)
Classen, "Through the Looking Glass" & "Worlds of Sense" (packet)
Lispector, "Luminescence" (packet)
Winterson, "The Special Senses" (packet)

9/11 THE SCIENCE OF SIGHT (small sections)

READING ASSIGNMENTS

Montgomery, "Breaking the Code of Color"
& "How We See Things that Move" (Hughes Report)
Hancock, "A Primer on Vision" (packet)
Choose one article from the following:
Hubel & Wiesel, "Brain Mechanisms of Vision" (packet)
Rock, "The Perception of Disoriented Figures" (packet)
Gillam, "Geometrical Illusions" (packet)
Finke, "Mental Imagery and the Visual System" (packet)

in-class experiments

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

journaling in-class experiments

9/16 TO SEE (small sections)

READING ASSIGNMENTS

Calvino, "Reading a Wave"
& "The Sword of the Sun"
Sacks, "To See and Not See" (packet)

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

summary of scientific american article (1 page)
summary from in-class journaling (1 page)

COURSE SCHEDULE AND SYLLABUS -- Page 2

9/18 HOW TO SEE (small sections)

READING ASSIGNMENTS

Berger, *Ways of Seeing*
Calvino, "The Naked Bosom"

**** SPECIAL EVENT ****

9/21 SUNDAY NIGHT MOVIE -- "Videodrome" -- 7pm, Dalton 204

9/23 SIGHTS AND SEERS (small sections)

READING ASSIGNMENTS

Gifford, Introduction and
"The Mighty World of Eye" (packet)
Atkinson, Introduction & "Shamans as Seers" (packet)

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

seeing a picture paper (2 pages)

9/25 FROM SOUND TO SIGHT AND BACK AGAIN (small sections)

READING ASSIGNMENTS

Gifford, "The Mighty World of Ear" (packet)
McLuhan, "The Gutenberg Galaxy" (packet)

discuss ethnography paper

9/30 SIGHT, SEEING, THE SEEN (large group)

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

ethnography on sight, seeing, the seen (3 pages)

10/2 SOUNDSCAPES (small sections)

READING ASSIGNMENTS

Calvino, "The Blackbird's Whistle"
Thoreau, "Sounds" (packet)
in-class listening

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

write up what you hear

COURSE SCHEDULE AND SYLLABUS -- Page 3

10/7 SOUND AS SYMBOL (small sections)

READING ASSIGNMENTS

Stoller, "Sounds and Things: Pulsations of Power in Songhay" (packet)

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

workshop listening write-ups

10/9 TO HEAR (small sections)

READING ASSIGNMENTS

Goldberg, "The Quivering Bundles that Let Us Hear"
& "Locating a Mouse by Its Sound" (Hughes Report)

Hancock, "A Primer on Hearing" (packet)

Kern, "Good Vibrations" (packet)

revision of in-class essay on listening (2 pages)

Keiger, "Extending the Orchestra" (packet)

Bennett, "Audition" & "Emitted-Energy Orientation"

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

10/14 FALL BREAK

10/16 ON HEARING AND THE HEARD (large group)

10/21 TOUCH AND FEELINGS (small sections)

READING ASSIGNMENTS

Shakespeare, "Sonnets #18" (packet)

Rich, "Twenty-One Love Poems" (packet)

10/23 TACTILITY AND THE SOCIAL LIFE OF TOUCH (small sections)

READING ASSIGNMENTS

Thayer, "Social Touching" (packet)

Hancock, "A Primer on Touch" (packet)

Shreeve, "Touching the Phantom" (packet)

Bennett, "The Other Senses: Taste, Olfaction, and Somesthesis" (packet)

****SPECIAL EVENT ****

10/26 SUNDAY NIGHT MOVIE -- "The Medium is the Masseur" -- 7pm, Dalton 204

COURSE SCHEDULE AND SYLLABUS -- Page 4

10/28 THE FELT WORLD (large group)

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

paper on touch, or revision of earlier essay (4 pages)

10/30 TO TASTE (small sections)

READING ASSIGNMENTS

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

Neustadt, "The Folkloristics of Licking" (packet)
Stoller, "The Taste of Ethnographic Things" (packet)

discussion

****SPECIAL EVENT ****

11/2 SUNDAY NIGHT MOVIE -- "Babette's Feast" -- 7pm, Dalton 204

11/4 FLAVORS (small sections)

READING ASSIGNMENTS

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

Calvino, "Two Pounds of Goose Fat,"
"The Cheese Museum," & "Marble and Blood"
in-class experiments in tasting

journaling in-class experiments

11/6 TO SMELL AND TO TASTE (small sections)

READING ASSIGNMENTS

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

Pines, "The Mystery of Smell"
& "A Secret Sense in the Human Nose" (Hughes Report)
Hancock, "A Primer on Taste" & "A Primer on Smell" (packet)
Freedman, "In the Realm of the Chemical" (packet)
Bennett, "The Other Senses: Taste, Olfaction, and Somesthesis" (packet)
in-class experiments in smelling

journaling in-class experiments

11/11 SCENTS AND SENTIMENTS (small group)

READING ASSIGNMENTS

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

Classen, "The Odor of the Other"
Howes, "Olfaction and Transition" (packet)

lab report on in-class experiments (4 pages)

COURSE SCHEDULE AND SYLLABUS -- Page 5

11/13 AROMAS AND PASSIONS (small sections)

READING ASSIGNMENTS

Suskind, *Perfume*

11/18 VAPORS AND CARNAGE (small sections)

READING ASSIGNMENTS

Suskind, *Perfume*

11/20 FRAGRANT APPETITES (large group)

11/25 PHILOSOPHEMES: ALLEGORIES AND INTERROGATIONS (small sections)

READING ASSIGNMENTS

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

Plato, "The Allegory of the Cave" (packet)

Locke, "Essay on Human Understanding" (packet)

Foucault, "The Body of the Condemned" and "Panopticism" (packet)

McFague, "The Body of God" (packet)

essay on hearing, touching, smelling, or tasting (4 pages)

11/27 THANKSGIVING BREAK

12/2 PHILOSOPHEMES: THE PROBLEM OF CONSCIOUSNESS (small sections)

READING ASSIGNMENTS

Fischbach, "Mind and Brain" (packet)

Crick & Koch, "The Problem of Consciousness" (packet)

12/4 PHILOSOPHEMES: EMBODIED HISTORIES (small sections)

READING ASSIGNMENTS

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

Casey, "Body Memory" (packet)

The Upanishads, "Prasna" and "Mandukya" (packet)

Ferzacca, "On Tepo Saliro" & "Javanese Bodies, Javanese Selves" (packet)

COURSE SCHEDULE AND SYLLABUS -- Page 6

12/9 **SENSORIAL FEASTS** (large group)

READING ASSIGNMENTS

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

Hughes Report, "The Next Generation"

final paper: your philosophy of the senses (6 pages)

Calvino, "The World Looks at the World,"

"The Universe as Mirror," and "Learning to be Dead"