

RAMAPO COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY
Salameno School of American & International Studies

LITR 414: Seminar: The Performance of Everyday Life

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Office Hours: MR 5:30-6:30/R 12-1pm

Term: Fall 2013
Class Hours: MR 3:45-5:15pm
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Catalog Course Description: Prior to the twentieth century, most people assumed that “great art” was defined by its ability to transcend the concerns and constraints of popular, everyday life. However, the twentieth century welcomed a number of artists, philosophers and activists who challenged the sacred line separating “art” from “real life.” These vanguard artists and scholars challenged traditional definitions of art by asking: What happens if we apply what we know about literary interpretation to the world outside of the book? If all the world is truly a stage, can we analyze that stage the way we analyze dramatic performances? What props and what settings shape the variety of characters we perform in our daily routines? How are theatrical rituals related to other social rituals, and how are these related to quotidian habits (*e.g.* ordering food, making small talk, shopping, playing sports, or walking through the city)? How is the line separating art from everyday life constructed and maintained by institutions such as schools, churches, museums, galleries, and courts? This course will introduce students to an interdisciplinary field known as “everyday life studies,” a growing field that combines the methods and insights of literary studies with those of theatre and performance studies, anthropology, psychoanalysis, political theory, cartography, architecture, the visual arts, and sociology. The main text in the class will be the everyday life and world of the students, but we will also read essays by writers who have blurred the distinction between the “aesthetic” and the “everyday.” Such writers include Walter Benjamin, Bertolt Brecht, Michel de Certeau, Judith Butler, Mark Fisher, Bruno Latour, Roland Barthes, Erving Goffman, J.L. Austin, Jacques Rancière, Karl Marx, Terry Eagleton, Friedrich Nietzsche, Arlie Hochschild, and Slavoj Žižek.

Course Goals: In this course, students will gain exposure to the interdisciplinary field of “everyday life studies.” They will build on their disciplinary knowledge and practice applying these literary methodologies across disciplines. Students will be able to frame their analysis of cultural objects within a larger interpretive context. They will gain exposure to the key twentieth and twenty-first century arguments and terms used by everyday life scholars who study the quotidian (*e.g.* *flâneurie*, *bricolage*, new cartography, commodity fetishism, performativity, *verfremdungseffekt*, ideology, and *detourment*). Students will also study methods and approaches to the social construction of everyday life: speech-act theory, theories of (gender and racial) performativity, psychoanalysis, cultural materialism, institutional critique, deconstruction, actor-network theory, poststructuralism, and relational aesthetics.

Measurable Student Learning Outcomes: Students will rigorously engage with a number of complicated readings. Each week, student will demonstrate their comprehension of readings through weekly compositions. Student will also isolate particularly complicated and rich aspects of these texts and share these passages with classmates. Each week, a pair of students will be tasked to lead and guide the discussion of readings. Students will also engage and share reactions to each of the course texts through Moodle, our online forum. Finally, each student will engage in an extensive research project, in which s/he will combine course materials with additional research and fresh analysis.

Experiential Component: This course will include a minimum of five (5) hours of unmonitored appropriate experience outside of the classroom. This will involve a course field trip and a journal in which students connect concepts and theories learned in class to “readings” and “writings” present in their everyday lives. Details regarding this requirement will be further explained in class.

Required Texts:

- J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*
- Roland Barthes, *What is Sport?*
- Students are required to read, **print**, annotate, and bring to class all articles uploaded to **Moodle**.

Participation/Attendance: This class will not be possible without your participation. Unlike some courses, the success of this course depends on your contributions, your labor, and your perspective. **This is a seminar.** Each class meeting will cover a wide range of material. The lessons of this course build cumulatively, so any absence threatens to quickly push you far behind. Students should come to class having printed out and read all required reading. Students should take notes while actively and courteously listening to and engaging with the professor and their peers. Any student discovered to be off-task (as determined by the professor) will be *marked absent*. Using technology to virtually exit the class will always constitute an *absence*. Coming to class after I’ve taken role or leaving before the class is over will constitute an *absence*. Students can miss two classes with no questions asked. A third absence lowers the student’s grade (by 1/2 a grade, 5%). A student absent four times in one semester cannot earn higher than a C+ (79%). If a student is absent five times, s/he automatically fails the course. **Please** do not e-mail me about your attendance. There are **no excused absences** in college (you are **already excused for two absences**), so do not offer “notes” from doctors, lawyers or parents. College policy states that students must notify faculty within the first three weeks of the semester if they anticipate missing any classes due to religious observance.

Reading Responses: Reading will be assigned for each class. Students should bring in a 1-page write-up for each of the readings (If we read two essays for one class, you should write two 1-page responses, totaling 2 pages. In each of your reading responses, you will need to identify two passages from the assigned text: the first passage should be one that you find interesting/significant and the second should be a passage that you find confusing/troubling/problematic. After citing each passage, you should succinctly explain why you find the passage significant, interesting (try to link this claim to the larger argument), confusing, troubling or problematic. These write-ups will serve for springboards for conversation in our seminar.

Discussion Leaders: Each week, a different pair of students will help me lead discussion. This is very informal and will in no way involve PowerPoint presentations. Each student will ultimately lead class twice during the semester (two different weeks). When it is your turn to help lead discussion, you should do three things: 1) isolate additional “key passages” for the class to discuss, 2) bring to class a number of discussion questions about the text, 3) find one outside source which discusses the week’s reading and share that source with the class.

Papers: No late papers will be accepted. As Hamlet tells us, “The readiness is all.” Your responses/essays need not be perfect, but I do expect them to be on time. If you are struggling with a project, let me know **in advance**, and we can arrange an extension (**really, please just ask**). All papers are to be typed and formatted according to the most recent MLA guidelines: <http://www.mla.org/>. Students may also use the Chicago Style. See the Chicago Manual of Style for the most recent guidelines: <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>.

For additional help in writing papers, I encourage you to visit our **Center for Reading and Writing**. Their helpful website can be accessed here: <http://ww2.ramapo.edu/crw/>

Plagiarism: ‘Plagiarism’, etymologically, means *kidnapping*. Do not steal the brainchildren of others. Students who engage in plagiarism will suffer the consequences set forth by the college. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, see one of your instructors, a tutor, or go visit this training module offered by our library:

http://library.ramapo.edu/captivate_tutorials/citation/citation.htm

This course will be powered by **TurnItIn.com**’s plagiarism detection technology.

Note: This course follows standard Ramapo College policy for Electronic Forms of Communication, Academic Integrity and Students with Disabilities. For details, please refer to the Academic Review Committee Website at <http://ww2.ramapo.edu/arc/>.

Disabilities/Accommodations: All students need accommodations to succeed. If you feel you might need any additional accommodations in order to succeed in this course, please let me know privately as soon as possible. Also, you should contact the Office of Specialized Services at 201.684.7514 (voice), 201.684.7092 (TTY), or oss@ramapo.edu (email).

Requirements/Grades

Your performance in this course (and your experience of this course) will be assessed through course blogs, class discussion, regular quizzes, an essay, a final exam and a final research paper. Your weighted grade in the course will be determined according to the following schema:

Reading Responses/Quizzes:	60%	Course Citizenship/Participation:	20%
Discussion Leadership:	5%	Final Research Paper:	15%

Course Blog: There will be an online component to this course. We will be utilizing Moodle. You can logon to Moodle here: <https://moodle.ramapo.edu/> Students will be required to regularly post short essays, comments and feedback through this site’s forum. I will also use this site to post readings, make announcements and give student feedback. Our course’s *home* is online. Most of your questions are answered there.

Course Satisfactions: Writing Intensive; this course can fulfill the capstone OR drama requirement for the literature major. At the same time, it can fulfill the drama requirement for secondary education English certification. It also fulfills the International Literature Major requirement.

PROSPECTIVE SCHEDULE: (*subject to change at the professor’s discretion*)

Week Zero/ Introduction

9/5 R: Introduction

Week Six / WALKING / Urban Cartographies, Pedestrian Selves

de Certeau, Michel "Walking in the City"
Manauagh, Geoff "Forensic Topology"
Wood, Denis "What Are the Characteristics of Neighborhoodness?"
Butler, Kristen "Everything Sings: Making the Case for the New Cartography"

10/14M: de Certeau
10/17R: Manauagh, Wood, Butler

Week Seven / COLLECTING / Consolidating Self and Community

Tribby, Jay "Body/Building: Living the Museum Life in Early Modern Europe"
Nietzsche, Friedrich "On Truth and Lies in a Non-Moral Sense"

10/21M: Tribby
10/24 R: Nietzsche

Week Eight / SERVING & CARING / Sanitation Aesthetics

Ukeles, Mierle Laderman "Manifesto for Maintenance Art, 1969!"
Jackson, Shannon "High Maintenance: The Sanitation Aesthetics of Mierle Laderman Ukeles"
Eighner, Lars "On Dumpster Diving"
Krug, Don "Ecological Restoration: Mierle Ukeles, Flow City"

10/28M: Krug, Ukeles, Jackson
10/31R: Eighner

Week Nine: SHOPPING / Mass Culture & Commodity Fetishism

Marx, Karl *Capital*, Vol. 1
Zizek, Slavoj "Occupy Wall Street: What Is to Be Done Now?"

11/4 M: Marx
11/7 R: Marx, Zizek

Week Ten / SERVING & SPORTING / Ensemble Performance

Hochschild, Arlie Russell *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*
Barthes, Roland *What is Sport?*
Eagleton, Terry “Football: A Good Friend of Capitalism”

11/11 M: Hochschild
11/14 R: Barthes, Eagleton

Week Eleven / PAYING ATTENTION / Attention Deficits

Fisher, Mark *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?*
Kureishi, Hanif “The Art of Distraction”
Carr, Nicholas “Is Google Making Us Stupid? What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains”

11/18 M: Fisher
11/21 R: Fisher, Kureishi, Carr

Week Twelve / TINKERING WITH PROPS / The Secret Life of Objects

Barthes, Roland “Plastic” and “Toys”
Woodcock, George “The Tyranny of the Clock”
Latour, Bruno Mixing Humans and Nonhumans Together: The Sociology of a Door-Closer”

11/25 M: Barthes, Woodcock, Latour
11/28 R: **HOLIDAY**

Week Thirteen: STAGING / Back on Stage

Brecht, Bertol “The Street Scene: A Basic Model for Epic Theatre”
Rancière, Jacques *The Emancipated Spectator*

12/2 M: Brecht
12/5 R: Rancière

Week Fourteen: SCREENING / Scopic Fantasies

Zizek, Slavoj *The Pervert’s Guide to Cinema*

12/9 M: Pervert’s Guide
12/12R: Pervert’s Guide

Final Class: December 16, 3-6pm