

Bookworms, Computer Nerds and Drama Queens: Rhetorics of Academic Love and Labor from the Greeks to the Geeks

Rhetoric R1B; Section 1

Class Hours: MWF 2-3

Professor: Todd Landon Barnes

Office hours: Wednesdays 3:30-4:30 & by appointment

This course will both facilitate and interrogate passionate engagements with academic modes of inquiry. In other words, the course will allow you to “geek out” while studying the history of bookworms, drama queens, and computer nerds. We will follow the figure of the “geek” from ancient Greece to Silicon Valley, but instead of searching for the transhistorical, transcultural essence of the geek, we will analyze and practice research methodologies that look at the many different ways historical discourses and practices have invented, shaped, and transformed the figure of the geek. The course will be structured around the following questions:

How has the figure of the geek shaped what has been imagined as the “proper” relationship between love and labor, the human and the nonhuman, the masculine and the feminine, the physical and the metaphysical? What kinds of knowledges and behaviors are produced by the geek, and how do these knowledges and behaviors change alongside various technological innovations? How does the figure of the geek get refigured as it becomes historically associated with various technologies of learning? How do Shakespeare’s early-modern “bookworms” and “drama queens” differ from the computer nerds of the 1980s? How do Socrates’ dialogic technologies differ from those practiced by software engineers or theatre directors? How do different figures of the geek balance (or fail to balance) passions for learning with social or erotic passions? What is the relationship between academic modes of inquiry and those of the so-called “real world”? How do today’s research methods change in relation to technologies of literacy, performance and digital archivization? How does the geek, as a category of difference and exclusion, operate in relation to forms of difference defined by race, class, gender and/or body type?

Like the bookworms we study, we will be reading and composing intensely throughout the semester. We will also spend time developing an intimate relationship with the landscape of the university library (along with its virtual holdings). Like the computer nerds we study, a significant portion of the course will happen on bSpace. Like the drama queens we study, we will spend time at the campus theater. As a class, we will attend Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre’s production of Shakespeare’s *Love’s Labour’s Lost*.

Required Texts:

- *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace*, Joseph Williams (Longman, 9th edition, 2006)
- *Writing Analytically*, David Rosenwasser and Jill Stephen (Wadsworth, 4th edition, 2005)
- *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, William Shakespeare (Arden Edition, 3rd Series)
- *American Nerd: the Story of My People*, Benjamin Nugent
- *Figures of Speech*, Arthur Quinn
- *Aristophanes’ The Clouds*, trans. Jeffrey Henderson (Focus Classical Library, 1992)
- A course reader with selections from: Plato, Aristotle, F. Nietzsche, J.L. Austin, W. Montag, H. Mialet, J. Roach, R. Schechner, B. Hodgdon, L. Kendall, B. Latour, J. Butler, R.G. Thompson, G. Taylor, M. Bristol, W. Benjamin, and others.

The course reader will be available at Replica Copy on Oxford by 9/2.

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. In addition to the authors we read together, your work will form a central focus of the course.

Students are allowed three absences. Absences in excess of three will negatively affect student grade.

Papers (late/format)

No late papers will be accepted. Your essays need not be perfect, but I do expect them to be on time. Papers will be written, reviewed and returned in accordance with a shared schedule. Late papers threaten to jam what I hope will be the smooth machinery of the review process.

All papers are to be typed and formatted according to the most recent MLA guidelines.

Plagiarism

Those who engage in (or even flirt with the idea of) plagiarism will suffer the consequences set forth by the university. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, see one of the instructors or the university's guidelines at:

<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/instruct/guides/citations.html#Plagiarism>

Today's technology makes it so much easier to plagiarize, but it also makes it that much easier to get caught.

Disabilities/Accommodations

If you feel you might need any accommodations in order to succeed in this course, please let me know privately as soon as possible. Also, you might contact the Disabled Students' Program, 260 César Chávez Center #4250, 510.642.0518 (voice) or 510.642.6376 (TTY).

Requirements/Grades

Your weighted grade in the course will be determined according to the following schema:

70% compositions/research journal
15% discussion/participation/blog
15% *Style*, peer review, short exercises

Course Blog

The virtual component of this course is substantial. This semester, we will be utilizing **bspace** found at <http://bspace.berkeley.edu>. Students are required to regularly post comments and feedback through this site. Punctuality on bspace (because it operates cooperatively in "real" time) is key. Stay tuned for more information on how this will work.

Recommended Texts

A current MLA Guide (*e.g.* Dianne Hacker's *A Writer's Reference*)

Prospective Schedule (subject to minor change):

Week One: Introduction: Figuration

Nietzsche, F. "On Truth and Lies in an Extra-Moral Sense" (CR)
Lackoff, G. & Johnson, M. *Metaphors We Live By* (excerpt)

8/26 W: Introductions; Figuring Speech
8/28 F: Nietzsche's Truth; **Paper 1 Assigned**

Week Two: Figuring Truth

Quinn, A. *Figures of Speech*
Austin, J.L. *How to Do Things with Words* (Lecture 1) (CR)

8/31 M: Nietzsche; Quinn (first half)
9/2 W: Nietzsche; Quinn (second half)
9/4 F: Austin (Lecture 1) & Quinn/**Paper 1 due**

Week Three: Performativity & Normativity

Austin, J.L. *How to Do Things with Words* (Lectures 2-4) (CR)

9/7 M: **Holiday**
9/9 W: Austin's Geekiness/**Blog 1.1 Due**
9/11 F: Austin & the Constative State of Mind/**Blog 1.2 Due**

Blog: Find and discuss an interesting/awkward example of performative infelicity.

Week Four: Greek Geeks

Plato "Allegory of the Cave," *Gorgias* (excerpt) (CR)
Aristophanes *The Clouds*
Williams, J. *Style*

9/14 M: Platonic Metaphysics
9/16 W: *Gorgias*
9/18 F: *The Clouds*

Week Five: Twilight of Metaphysics

Nietzsche, F. Excerpts from *Twilight of the Idols* (CR)
Rosenwasser/Stephen Ch. 7-12

9/21 M: Aristophanes/Nietzsche/**Paper 1.2 Due/Style Exercises Due**
9/23 W: Nietzsche's Problem/**Blog 2.1 Due**
9/25 F: Nietzsche's Problem/**Blog 2.2 Due/Peer Evaluations Due**

Blog: on Aristophanes & Nz

Week Six: History Geeks

Shakespeare, W. *Love's Labour's Lost*
Bristol, M. "The Shakespeare Myth" (CR)
Hodgdon, B. "Introduction" (CR)
Taylor, G. "Preface" (CR)

9/28 M: *LLL* (Acts 1)/Intro to *LLL*/**Paper 1.3 Due**
9/30 W: *LLL* (Acts 2)/Bristol/Hodgdon/Taylor
10/2 F: *LLL* (Acts 3-4)/Bristol/Hodgdon/Taylor

Week Seven: Language, Love and Labor

Shakespeare, W. *Love's Labour's Lost*
Barton, A. "Love's Labour's Lost"
Secondary Source

10/5 M: *LLL* (Act 5)/Barton/**Blog 3.1 Due**
10/7 W: *LLL*/**Blog 3.2 Due**
10/9 F: *LLL*/Barton & Secondary Sources

Blog: Deal with one secondary source.

Week Eight: Summoning the Early Modern

Shakespeare, W. *Love's Labour's Lost*
Roach, J. "Surrogation"
Schechner, R. "Restored Behavior"
Tribby, J. "Body/Building: Living the Museum Life in Early Modern Europe"

10/12 M: Roach/Schechner
10/14 W: Tribby
10/16 F: *LLL* Conclusion

Week Nine: Materialism, Labor, & Love

Montag, W. *Bodies, Masses, Power* (excerpt)
Althusser, L. *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*
10/19 M: Montag
10/21 W: Montag
10/23 F: Althusser

Blog: TBA

Week Ten: Writing Workshop: Research Problem

Nuggent, B. *Nerds: The Story of My People*
Althusser, L. “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses”

10/26 M: Althusser/**Paper 2.0 Draft Due**
10/28 W: Althusser/Writing Workshop
10/30 F: Althusser/Nuggent (first half)/**Peer Review Due**

Week Eleven: Nerd Genealogy

Nuggent, B. *Nerds: The Story of My People*
Historical Newspapers

11/2 M: Nuggent (second half)/**Paper 2.2 Due**
11/4 W: Nuggent/Writing Workshop
11/6 F: Historical Sources & Figuration

Week Twelve: Drama Queens

Butler, J. *Gender Trouble* (excerpt)

11/9 M: Butler/**Blog 4.1 Due**
11/11 W: **Holiday**
11/13 F: Butler/**Blog 3.2 Due**

Blog: TBA

Week Thirteen: Social Affects

Baron-Cohen, S. *Mindblindness* (excerpt)
Kendell, L. “Nerd Nation: Images of Nerds in Popular Culture”
Silberman, S. “The Geek Syndrom”
R.G. Thompson *Extraordinary Bodies* (excerpt)
 Revenge of the Nerds (DVD)

11/16 M: Baron-Cohen/Kendell/**Blog 4 Due**
11/18 W: Silberman/Thompson/**Blog 4.2 Due/Film Screening** in the evening
11/20 F: Silberman/Thompson

Blog: TBA

Week Fourteen: Research Methods

Research Journals; Annotated Bibliographies

11/23 M: Research Workshop
11/25 W: **Prospectuses & Annotated Bibliographies Due**
11/27 F: **Holiday**

Week Fifteen: Geek Chic

Mialet, H. "Reading Hawking's Presence: An Interview with A Self-Effacing Man"
Latour, B. Visualization and Cognition: Thinking with Eyes and Hands
Kendell, L. "White & Nerdy: Computers, Race, and the Nerd Stereotype"

11/30 M: Mialet/Latour
12/2 W: Mialet/Latour/Kendell
12/4 F: Kendell

Week Sixteen: Dead Week/Optional Presentations

12/7 M Presentations
12/9 W Presentations

12/14 **Final Papers Due**