

Sergio Muñoz-Sarmiento

DYSGRAPHIA: THE ARTIST AS WRITER

U.C. Irvine: **Fall 2000**

Monday & Wednesday 9-11:20

Instructor: **Sergio Muñoz-Sarmiento**

Office hours: by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The aim of this course is to explore and investigate the global production and reception of culture via written, verbal and visual texts. We will look at the different roles available to artists as writers, and the differing strategies available for writing and text-ing. Simultaneously we will look at how language, communication, interpretation, translation and de-coding affect the manner in which we construct and "world" our knowledge and power. In essence, we will look at artists who primarily use language and text in their art work, whom write as part of their practice (both as critics and as part of their own work), while analyzing the expanded notions of "writing" and "text".

We will take this chosen path in order to try and understand the critical art writing of our time. What is the difference between an artist and a writer? Where are the critical writings of artists by artists? What has happened to the venues and journals where artists have written? Why are curators given so much privilege and importance as to the explanation and interpretation of an artist's work? Why is rational meaning championed and assumed? What is "stupid" writing? What are its uses, if any? What are the politics of translation and interpretation? Who gets to code and de-code? Should writing be ethical? Fundamentally, who gets to write, and why?

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Class reader

Of Grammatology, Jacques Derrida

Words of Light: Theses on the Photography of History, Eduardo Cadava

Note: Some additional readings might be added during the quarter. You will be required to purchase these.

**Select one book from the following list: (to be read by end of quarter)

"Season of Migration to the North", Tayeb Salih

"Disgrace", J.M. Coetzee

"The God of Small Things", Arundhati Roy

"Home and Exile", Chinua Achebe

"Places Left Unfinished at the Time of Creation", John Philip Santos

"Her wild American Self", Evelina Galang

"Blindness", Jose Saramago

"Woman Hollering Creek", Sandra Cisneros

"Diamond Dust", Anita Desai

"Down These Mean Streets", Piri Thomas

"Hunger", Lan Samantha Chang

"Reading and Writing: a personal account", V.S. Naipaul

"The Concubines Children", Denise Chong

"The Crystal Frontier: a novel in nine stories", Carlos Fuentes

"When the Rainbow Goddess Wept", Cecilia Manguerra

"The Blackwater Lightship", Colm Toibin

"White Noise", Don DeLillo

CLASS FORMAT: Discussions, readings, lectures, slides, videos, guest speakers, fieldtrips.

COURSE MATERIALS: Journal

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: Your final grade will be based on the following:

class participation and readings 15%

critical essay,(art, architecture, fashion, design, writing, music) 25%

art criticism paper 25%

critical essay on selected book 25%

journal (to be turned in during the semester) 10%

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You will be expected to have read ALL written material before the date that it is assigned, to attend ALL class meetings, and to contribute regularly, constructively, and actively to the discussions and critiques. As mentioned above, I enjoy polemics, yet do not tolerate personal, unwarranted and negative comments or remarks.

CLASS ATTENDANCE IS **MANDATORY !!** THUS, ANY UNEXCUSED ABSENCE WILL **AUTOMATICALLY** REDUCE YOUR GRADE BY A FULL GRADE POINT. i.e., one unexcused absence will lower an A to a B !!

YOU ARE ALSO EXPECTED TO BE ON TIME ! Two late arrivals of 10 minutes or more will automatically be counted as an UNEXCUSED absence.

If you are ill, please contact me via the art office or email me at:.....
ABOVE ALL ELSE, **READ !! READ !! READ !! READ !! READ !! READ !! READ !! READ!!**

WEEK 1

Monday

Review syllabus and class requirements.

Introductory lecture: "The artist as writer"

Watch first half of: "Images of the World, Inscriptions of the War", Harun Farocki

Please read for WEDNESDAY: "New York Was Yesterday", Gregg Bordowitz (Summer 2000)

"Heat and Dust", Daniel Asa Rose

Wednesday

Discuss Rose and Bordowitz

Watch second half of : "Images of the World, Inscriptions of the War", Harun Farocki

Please read for MONDAY: Preface to *Of Grammatology*, Gayatri C. Spivak

"Writing as a Woman", Luce Irigaray

WEEK 2

Monday

Discuss Spivak, Irigaray. Discuss Project #1, Critical essay.

Please read for Wednesday: "Writing", Barbara Johnson, "Death of the Author", Roland Barthes

Wednesday

Discuss Johnson, Barthes. On Kosuth, Mary Kelly, Ligon, Gonzalez-Torres.

Please read for MONDAY: "Minimal Art", Donald Judd, "Flying", Adrian Piper, and "Preface:

Photagogos", from Words of Light, Cadava

WEEK 3

Monday

Discuss: Judd, Piper, Cadava

Read for WEDNESDAY: "Inscriptions: of Truth to Size", Gayatri C. Spivak

Wednesday

Discuss Spivak

Read for MONDAY: "Towards a Transformation of the Plastic Arts", David A. Siqueiros, "The Revolutionary Spirit in Modern Art", Diego Rivera, "The Inoperative Community", Nancy

WEEK 4

Monday

Discuss Siqueiros, Rivera, Nancy. Discuss Project #3, Critical Book Essay. Selection due.

Read for WEDNESDAY: "Introduction" on Trauma, Cathy Caruth, "Shocks" and "Lightning" from Words of Light, Cadava, "New York Was Yesterday", Gregg Bordowitz (Sp '97)

Wednesday

Discuss Caruth, Bordowitz and Cadava

Read for MONDAY: "Writing Before the Letter" section, from *Of Grammatology*, pp. 1-26

"Intervention", Lawrence Weiner.

WEEK 5

Monday

Discuss Derrida, Weiner, Turn in Project #1, Discuss Project #2, Art criticism paper
Read for WEDNESDAY: "The Uninterrogated Question of Stupidity", Avital Ronell
"Born to be mild", Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe, "Therapy?"; interview with Sean Landers

Wednesday

Discuss Ronell

Read for MONDAY: "Fantasia of the Library", Michel Foucault
"Open Letters, Industrial Poems", Benjamin Buchloh on Marcel Broodthaers

WEEK 6

Monday

Discuss Foucault, Buchloh

Read for WEDNESDAY: "Writers, Intellectuals, Teachers", Roland Barthes

Wednesday

Discuss Barthes

Read for MONDAY: "Semiotics and Architecture", Diana Agrest and Mario Gandelsonas
"Michael Asher, Down to Earth", Allan Sekula, "The Exorbitant. Question of Method", p.157-164
Of Grammatology.

WEEK 7

Monday

Discuss Agrest and Gandelsonas, and Sekula, Derrida

Read for WEDNESDAY: "Words Must Travel Far", Maurice Blanchot, "The alphabet and absolute representation", p.295-302, *Of Grammatology*

Wednesday

Discuss Blanchot and Derrida

Read for MONDAY: "In a Word: interview", Spivak, "History", "Origins", "Politics", from Cadava

WEEK 8

Monday

Discuss Spivak and Cadava. Turn in Project #2.

Read for WEDNESDAY: "Writing and the prohibition of incest", p. 255-268, Derrida

Wednesday

Discuss Derrida

Read for MONDAY: "The Problem of Incest", Georges Bataille.

WEEK 9

Monday

Discuss Bataille

Read for WEDNESDAY: "Borges: philosopher? poet?, revolutionary?"

Wednesday

Discuss Borges

Read for MONDAY: "The Politics of Translation", Gayatri C. Spivak
"Translations", "Caesura", "Language", from Cadava

WEEK 10

Monday

Discuss Spivak, Cadava. Turn in Project # 3, Book Essay.

Read for WEDNESDAY: "Eternal Return", "History", "Death", "Epitaphs" from Cadava

Wednesday

Discuss Cadava, Share any journal entries.