ENGL200: Poetry in a Digital Culture

What is writing in the age of emoji? Where is the place of the book in a digital culture? How do we read literature that straddles the border of video art and text? And—more importantly—where is the text in new media? Although traditional methods of publishing poetry persist, digital cultures have forced us to reassess how we read and write. This course investigates how contemporary poetic practice has responded to—and is shaped by—the everyday language of the World Wide Web as well as media authoring tools and formats such as iPads, mp3s, and Flash. Key texts include important digital and print works such as William Gibson’s artist book *Agrippa*, Young-Hae Chang Heavy Industries’ Flash-poem *Dakota* (c.a. 2001), Stephanie Strickland’s online sonnets *Vniverse* (2004-14), and Tan Lin’s book on web culture, *Heath Course Pak* (2009).

The Junior Research Seminar is designed to involve students in the kinds of research that the discipline of literary studies currently demands, including: working with primary sources and archival materials; reviewing the critical literature; using online databases of historical newspapers, periodicals, and other cultural materials; exploring relevant contexts in literary, linguistic, and cultural history; studying the etymological history and changing meanings of words; experimenting with new methods of computational analysis of texts; and other methodologies. The course typically involves a few main texts that are studied intensively from a variety of approaches. Research exercises throughout the semester will culminate in a final project emerging from independent inquiry. Final projects will consist of a 10-15 page scholarly paper on any topic or theme such as performance and text, remixing and video art, or the book as new media. Creative projects using and exploring media platforms and tools such as tumbler, twitter, or video are also encouraged.

**Previous knowledge of new media tools is not required.** Students interested in the intersections of poetry, technology, and web culture will find the lessons from this course not only a useful introduction to new media studies and digital cultures but also applicable to the study of print-based poetry.

**COURSE ASSIGNMENTS**
Attendance and participation: 10%
8 Research Skill Assignments (including 1 ungraded): 60% of which
   Assignment 1. Figures of speech = 10 %
   Assignment 2. Annotation/Close reading = 10%
   Assignment 3. Joining the scholarly Conversation (ungraded)
   Assignment 4. Adaptation = 10 %
   Assignment 5. Visual Culture = 10%
   Assignment 6: Historical context = 10%
   Assignment 7: Material texts exercise = 10%
   Assignment 8. Annotated bibliography = 10%
Your lowest assignment score will be dropped.

Final Project (10-15 page research paper or creative project): 30%

You may either write a 10-15 page scholarly essay based on independent research or a creative
project. If you choose to undertake a creative project, you must also include a 4-5 page critical evaluation of your piece. In the first week of November, everyone must make an appointment with me to discuss their project and underlying research components. Your final projects should not use the assigned course texts, and they should grow out of the issues we have addressed in class.

Before Thanksgiving, you will turn in a project proposal (3-4 pages) that you can incorporate into your final essay regardless of whether you are submitting a critical or creative project. Your grade will reflect not only your final project but also its proposal and in-class presentation.

COURSE TEXTS
Young-Hae Chang Heavy Industries, *Dakota* (c.a. 2001).
http://www.yhchang.com/DAKOTA.html

Other readings will be available on canvas.

ATTENDANCE POLICY
You may miss up to two classes, regardless of reason and without penalty, provided that you let me know by email as soon as possible. Additional absences and/or lateness to class may affect your participation grade unless there are extenuating circumstances (such as illness, bereavement, etc.). If you experience any difficulties with the scheduling or workload, again please see me as soon as possible so that we may devise a fair and balanced solution together.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES POLICY
Due to the nature of this course, laptops, iPads, and mobile phones are encouraged for notetaking and playback, but please do not use social media in class unless it relates to the course material.

ACCESSIBILITY POLICY
I strive to create an open and fair classroom space and students are warmly encouraged to contact me if they experience any problems throughout the semester. If you have a psychological, physical, or learning disability that is affecting your work in this course, please also contact Penn’s Office of Student Disability Services at Weingarten Learning Resource Center at Stouffer Commons, Suite 300, 3702 Spruce Street. Alternatively, you can contact them at 215-473-9235. All services are confidential.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY
Academic integrity is critical to the development and publication of research and, to this end, plagiarism will be not tolerated. If you are confused about what constitutes plagiarism, please see me before submitting work. For information relating to the University of Pennsylvania’s Code of Academic Integrity, visit https://www.college.upenn.edu/academic-integrity.

SYLLABUS
Session 1. Linguistic Approaches
Introductions, approaches to key poetic, digital terms, figures of speech, and digital terms. What is close reading? How do we close read poetry on the page?

Readings: Introduction to Christopher Funkhouser, *Prehistoric Digital Poetry* i
Stephanie Strickland, pages 1-48 from the *V: Losing L’una* section in *V: WaveTercets/Losing L’una*
Andrew Dubois, “Close Reading Introduction”
Steve Benson, “Close Reading”

Session 2. Close Reading
Discussion of *V*, form, content, modes of interpretation.

Readings: Stephanie Strickland, pages 1-48 from the *V: WaveTercets* section in *WaveTercets/Losing L’una*
Lisa Samuels and Jerome McGann, “Deformance and Interpretation”

Session 3. Close Reading continued
Discussion of *Vniverse*, translation/transliteration/code: how can we read a digital poem? Where is the text? Introduction to critical code studies.

N. Katherine Hayles, “The Time of Digital Poetry”
Adalaide Morris, “New Media Poetics: As We May Think/How to Write”

Session 4. Joining the scholarly conversation
Discuss comparative readings across media.

Readings: Stephanie Strickland, *Vniverse*
Marjorie Perloff, “Screening the Page/Paging the Screen”
N. Katherine Hayles, “Print is Flat, Code is Deep: The Importance of Media-Specific Analysis”

Session 5. Gender and performance
Discuss *Vniverse*, the body, gender, and performance.

Readings: Stephanie Strickland, *Vniverse*
Carrie Noland, “Digital Gestures”

Session 6. Adaptation
Discuss *Dakota*, the epic.

Readings: Young-Hae Chang Heavy Industries *Dakota*
Ezra Pound, *Cantos* 1 and 2.

Session 7. Remediation
What is remediation? How does it shape literature?
Session 8. Visual Cultures
What is visual culture?
Readings: Young-Hae Chang Heavy Industries, *Dakota*
Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin, introduction to *Remediation*

Session 9. Visual Cultures Continued
What is concrete poetry? Discuss popular culture, advertising, and poetry.
Readings: Young-Hae Chang Heavy Industries, *Dakota*
Christopher Funkhouser, “Visual and Digital Kinetic Poems”

Session 10. Technocultures
The reading machine
Readings: Young-Hae Chang Heavy Industries, *Dakota*
William Poundstone, *Project for Tachistoscope*
http://collection.eliterature.org/1/works/poundstone__project_for_tachistoscope_bottomless_pit.html
Mary Ellen Solt, excerpts from *Concrete Poetry: A World View*
Marjorie Perloff, “Against Transparency”

Session 11. Technocultures Continued
Continue discussion of media and technoculture.
Readings: Young-Hae Chang Heavy Industries, *Dakota*
Friedrich Kittler, “Gramophone, Film, Typewriter”

Session 12. Historical Context
How do we research the historical contexts of a work?
Readings: William Gibson, *Agrippa*
Matthew Kirschenbaum, “Text Messaging: The Transformations of *Agrippa*”

Session 13. Media Archaeology
What is media archaeology?
Readings: William Gibson, *Agrippa*
Jussi Parikka, “Cartographies of the Old and New”
Ernst Wolfgang, “Media Archaeology”
Erkki Huhtamo, “Dismantling the Fairy Engine”

Session 14. Production, distribution, Reception
Discuss distribution and reception histories.
Readings: William Gibson, *Agrippa*
Craig Saper, “Assemblings as Intimate Bureaucracies”
Session 15. The Textual Condition/The Material Text
What is an artist book?
Readings: William Gibson, *Agrippa*
Johanna Drucker, “The Artist Book as Idea and Form,” “Conceptualizing the book”
Jerome McGann, “Visible and Invisible Books”

Session 16. The Textual Condition/The Material Text Continued
What is a page?
Reading Lisa Gitelman, “Near Print and Beyond Paper”
Jerome McGann, “Socialization of Text”, “Textual Condition”
Marshall McLuhan, “The Medium is the Message”

Session 17. Web Cultures
Discussion of *Heath Course Pak*, the web, interface, and network.
Readings: Tan Lin, *Heath Course Pak*
Lori Emerson, “The Googlization of Literature”
Fred Benenson, excerpts from *Emoji Dick*

Session 18. Web Cultures Continued
Discussion of text, intertext, and open source, and authoriship.
Readings: Tan Lin, *Heath Course Pak*, “Disco as Operating System”
Stephen Voyce, “Toward an Open Source Poetics”

Session 19. Distant Readings
Discussion of distant reading approaches.
Readings: Tan Lin, *Heath Course Pak*
Peter Middleton, “Distant Reading”

Session 20. Distant Readings Continued
How can we distantly read poetry? Introduction to Voyant, Google ngrams.
Readings: Matthew Kirschenbaum, “The Remaking of Reading: Data Mining and the Digital Humanities”

Session 21. Final project workshop and presentations
Session 22. Final project workshop and presentations