

ENG 329-01

FALL 2012

T/TH 9:00-10:30, 301 EAST COLLEGE

OFFICE: 401 EAST COLLEGE

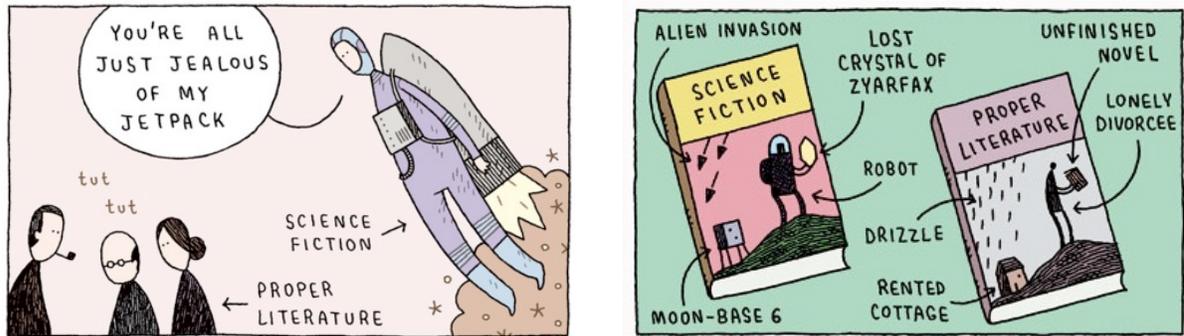
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OFFICE HOURS: W 10:30-11:30, TH 1:30-3:30

AND ALWAYS BY APPOINTMENT

EXPERIMENTAL FICTIONS



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This course will study writers and artists who have attempted to overturn the traditions, formal devices, and audience expectations of literary fiction. We'll investigate whether or not these works are "successful," both in the terms typically reserved for literature and according to the standards these texts lay out for themselves. Do such experiments radically alter our previous conceptions of literature or do they reassert notions of innovation, authenticity, and originality that undergird conventional ideals of the literary? Particular attention will be paid to nineteenth-century antecedents of modernism in the first half of the semester, and to contemporary experiments in text and image in the second half of the semester.

After reading a framing set of critical debates, we'll begin at the end with contemporary work in text and image in preparation for a class trip to the Small Press Expo, the premier gathering of independent and alternative comics artists and producers in the country. After assessing the state of these current literary experiments, we'll unearth a genealogy of such experiments in two key literary fabulists: Poe and Carroll. We'll then read authors conventionally—and at times, unconventionally—thought of as modernist, postmodernist, and contemporary, questioning throughout what these categories mean and whether they apply to the texts we'll investigate together.

Along the way, we'll be trying our hand at some of the generative devices and formal experiments employed by these authors, composing a set of creative and critical "experiments" for our class blog to gain some experiential knowledge into these endeavors. My hope is to frame experimental work of the past and present not merely as willfully arcane and conspicuously difficult, but also as a series of games that authors and artists continue to play with our expectations for what literature can and should be.

[M] = available as a .pdf file on the course Moodle site

Orientations: What is experimental fiction exactly?

Aug 28 Introductions, Course Policies, Expectations, and Constraints

Aug 30 Jonathan Franzen, “Mr. Difficult: William Gaddis and the Problem of Hard-to-Read Books” [M]

Ben Marcus, “Why Experimental Fiction Threatens to Destroy Publishing, Jonathan Franzen, and Life as We Know It: A Correction” [M]

Opening Pages from Franzen, *The Corrections* and Marcus, *The Age of Wire and String* [M]

EXPERIMENTAL FICTION NOW

Sept 4 Class meeting in Instructional Media Room, basement of Bosler Hall

****Experiment #1: Scrabble tiles due Sept. 5, 5:00 PM****

Sept 6 Chris Ware, *The ACME Novelty Library Final Report to Shareholders and Rainy Day Saturday Afternoon Fun Book* (2005)

****Experiment #2: collage, repurposing work due Sept. 10, 5:00 PM****

Sept 11 Ware, cont.

Martha Kuhlman, “In the Comics Workshop: Chris Ware and the Oubapo” [M]

David M. Ball, “Chris Ware’s Failures” [M]

Martha Kuhlman, “Avant-Garde Comics” [M]

Sept 13 Ware, cont.

****paper #1 due Sept. 14th, 5:00 PM****

**SEPT. 16TH ALL-DAY CLASS TRIP TO
2012 SMALL PRESS EXPO**

INNOVATIONS IN GENRE

Sept 18 Edgar Allan Poe, *Selected Writings*: “The Fall of the House of Usher” (1839), “William Wilson” (1839), “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” (1841), “The Gold-Bug” (1843) “The Imp of the Perverse” (1845) “The Man that was Used Up” (1839), “The Philosophy of Composition” [M], “The Unparalleled Adventures of One Hans Phaall” (1835) [M]

Sept 20 Poe, cont.

John Tresch, “Extra! Extra! Poe Invents Science Fiction!” [M]

Sept 25 Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* (1865, 1871)

Edmund Lear, selections from *The Complete Verse and Other Nonsense* [M]

****Experiment 3: language play, nonsense due Sept. 26, 5:00 PM****

Sept 27 Carroll/Lear, cont.

Seth Lerer, selections from *Children’s Literature : A Reader’s History* [M]

MODERNISMS

- Oct 2** Stephen Crane, “The Monster” (1898) [M]
Bill Brown, selections from *The Material Unconscious* [M]
- Oct 4** Gertrude Stein, “Melanctha” (1909)
David Harvey, selections from *The Condition of Postmodernity* [M]
- Oct 9** Lynd Ward, *Vertigo* (1937)
Rutgers University online exhibition of *Vertigo*: <http://www2.scc.rutgers.edu/Vertigo/>
****Experiment #4: graphic narrative due Oct. 10, 5:00 PM****

METATEXTS

- Oct 11** Vladimir Nabokov, *Pale Fire* pp. 1-69 (1962)
****Fall Pause—No Class Meeting Oct 16****
- Oct 18** Nabokov, pp. 69-end
- Oct 23** Nabokov, cont.
Nabokov critical article TBD
- Oct 25** Paul Auster, *The New York Trilogy* (1987)
- Oct 30** Auster, cont.
Auster critical article TBD
- Nov 1** Paul Auster, Paul Karasik, and David Mazzucchelli, *City of Glass: The Graphic Novel* (1994)

CONTEMPORARY EXPERIMENTS

- Nov 6** Christian Bök, *Eunoia* (2001)
****Experiment 5: constraint due Nov. 6, 5:00 PM****
- Nov 8** Bök, cont.
Jerome McGann, “*Eunoia*: Beauty or Truth (or What?)”
****paper proposals due Nov. 9 at 5:00 PM****
- Nov 13** Leanne Shapton, *Important Artifacts and Personal Property from the Collection of Lenore Doolan and Harold Morris, Including Books, Street Fashion, and Jewelry* (2009)
- Nov 15** Shapton, cont.
Lewis Hyde, selections from *The Gift* [M]
****Experiment 6: object lessons due Nov. 16, 5:00 PM****

Nov 20 One-on-one meetings,
Thanksgiving Break—No Class Meeting Nov 22

Nov 27 Chris Ware, *Building Stories* (2012)

Nov 29 Ware, cont.
Selections from *The Comics of Chris Ware* contributors to *The Comics Journal* [M]

Dec 4 Ware, cont.
Chris Ware, “Touch Sensitive” iPad app (2011)
Tom Phillips, *A Humument* iPad app (2010)
Craig Dworkin, selections from *Reading the Illegible*

Dec 6 Conclusions, Evaluations, Celebrations
Phillips, cont.
Experiments cover letters due in class

****final assignments due Wednesday December 12th, 5:00 PM****

REQUIREMENTS:

- TIMELY AND THOUGHTFUL COMPLETION OF READING ASSIGNMENTS
- COMPLETION OF ALL WRITING ASSIGNMENTS
- SIX LITERARY “EXPERIMENTS” ON THE CLASS BLOG AND A REFLECTIVE COVER LETTER ABOUT THOSE EXPERIMENTS
- PUNCTUAL ATTENDANCE AND ENGAGED PARTICIPATION

REQUIRED TEXTS: All texts are available for purchase in the College Bookstore. **If you purchase your books through other sources, please only purchase the edition indicated below by matching the ISBN#s.**

Chris Ware, *The ACME Novelty Library Final Report to Shareholders and Saturday Afternoon Rainy Day Fun Book* (Pantheon, 2005) ISBN# 9780375422959

Edgar Allan Poe, *Selected Writings of Edgar Allan Poe* (Norton Critical Edition, 2004)
ISBN# 9780393972856

Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*, **second edition** (Norton Critical Edition, 1992)
ISBN# 9780393958041 **N.B.: Please only buy the second edition of this volume.**

Lynd Ward, *Vertigo: A Novel in Woodcuts* (Dover, 2009) ISBN# 9780486468891

Vladimir Nabokov, *Pale Fire* (Vintage, 1989) ISBN# 9780679723424

Paul Auster, *The New York Trilogy* **deluxe edition** (Penguin, 2006) ISBN# 9780143039839
N.B.: Please only buy the Penguin Classics deluxe edition

Paul Auster, Paul Karasik, and David Mazzucchelli, *City of Glass: The Graphic Novel* (Picador, 2004)
ISBN# 9780312423605

Christian Bök, *Eunoia: The Upgraded Edition* (Coach House, 2005) ISBN# 9781552452257

Leanne Shapton, *Important Artifacts and Personal Property from the Collection of Lenore Doolan and Harold Morris, Including Books, Street Fashion, and Jewelry* (Sarah Crichton, 2009)
ISBN# 9780374175306

Chris Ware, *Building Stories* (Pantheon, 2012) ISBN# 9780375424335 **N.B.: Copies of *Building Stories* will not go on sale until October. Signed copies may be available for purchase at SPX.**

Optional: If you own an iPad and wish to own personal copies of Chris Ware's "Touch Sensitive" and Tom Phillips' *A Humument* apps, you can download them here:

Ware (via McSweeney's): <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/mcsweeneys/id325330901?mt=8>

Phillips: <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/a-humument-app/id402755491?mt=8>

GRADING: WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS—65% (CLOSE READING ASSIGNMENT—5%, RESEARCH PAPER PROPOSAL—20%, RESEARCH PAPER REVISION—40%); WRITING EXPERIMENTS—15%; CLASS PARTICIPATION—20%

LATE PAPER POLICY: All papers are due on the date indicated on the syllabus. With the rare exception for medical or emergency reasons, late papers will receive a failing grade. Failure to turn in all writing assignments by the date of the final will result in a failing grade for the course.

COURSE ATTENDANCE POLICY: More than two unexcused absences will result in a failing course participation grade. More than four unexcused absences will result in a failing grade for the course. Excused absences for non-academic reasons (job interviews, significant extracurricular commitments, etc.) must be arranged with me well in advance of the scheduled date. Attendance is measured not only by your physical presence, but also by active contributions to course discussion; consistent, silent attendance will receive a "C." Your course participation grade includes participation in writing workshops in addition to your role in class discussions. Failure to attend your scheduled writing workshop will be treated as a class absence.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: taken from "The Dickinson College Plagiarism Policy":
"To plagiarize is to use without proper citation or acknowledgment the words, ideas or original research of another. [. . .] When one borrows facts which are not matters of general knowledge—including all statistics—one must indicate one's indebtedness in the text or footnote. When one borrows an idea or the logic of an agreement, one must acknowledge indebtedness either in a footnote or in the text. When in doubt—footnote [. . .] if you have questions, consult with your instructor." I am happy to discuss questions about proper citation both during class time and privately during office hours.

RESEARCH AND WRITING RESOURCES: I strongly encourage students to take advantage of writing and research assistance that is available on campus. The library liaison for this course is Chris Bombaro (bombaroc@dickinson.edu), who is happy to schedule individual meetings to discuss your research project and the resources of the College's library. You are also encouraged to visit the Writing Center at any stage of the writing process, from formulating a thesis to polishing a final draft. You can walk in or call and make an appointment at (717) 245-1620. In both cases, you will not always be able to make last-minute appointments; plan ahead to take full advantage of these resources. As always, office hours are an ideal opportunity to ask questions about your writing and research process.

CALM LAB:

ENG 300 - C.A.L.M. Lab: If this is **your first 300-level literature course** in the English Department, you will be required to complete ENG 300 - C.A.L.M. Lab, that is, the Critical Approaches and Literary Methods Laboratory. This research module allows students to apply

their work in English 220 into research and writing expectations for 300-level courses. C.A.L.M. Lab adopts current best-practices for using Dickinson's library resources; it also helps students to understand the tools, application, and proper MLA citation for all subsequent research in the English Department. Students will be taught how to shape a research prospectus, find materials in our electronic databases, and properly annotate sources in an MLA Works Cited bibliography. C.A.L.M. Lab takes place over 2 sessions lasting about 50 minutes each. Students enrolled in C.A.L.M. lab must visit the course's Moodle site to sign up for attendance. The Information Commons in the lower level of Waidner-Spahr Library has been confirmed for all sessions.

You should have received further information about C.A.L.M. Lab from Christine Bombaro, library liaison to the English Department. Email: bombaroc@dickinson.edu if you have questions. The course is also outlined on Moodle.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR DISABILITIES: Dickinson College makes reasonable academic accommodations for students with documented disabilities. I am available to discuss the implementation of those accommodations. Students requesting accommodations must first register with Disability Services to verify their eligibility. After documentation review, Marni Jones, Director of Learning Skills and Disability Services, will provide eligible students with accommodation letters for their professors. Students must obtain a new letter every semester and meet with each relevant professor prior to any accommodations being implemented. These meetings should occur during the first three weeks of the semester (except for unusual circumstances), and at least one week before any testing accommodations. Disability Services is located in Biddle House. Address inquiries to Stephanie Anderberg at 717-245-1734 or email disabilityservices@dickinson.edu. For more information, see the Disability Services website: www.dickinson.edu/disabilityservices.

OVERVIEW OF WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:

Assignment #1: Close Reading Assignment (2-3 pp., due Sept. 14th)

The first assignment asks you to write a thesis-based close reading of your choosing on Chris Ware's *ACME Library*. Successful papers will demonstrate how careful attention to the language *and/or* images of the primary text can alter our conventional understanding of these texts, advancing a controvertible and compelling thesis. Given the extremely limited page length of this assignment, depth of analysis rather than breath of argument should be privileged—no more than a small portion of either text should be treated directly.

Assignment #2: Research Paper Proposal (5-8 pp., due Nov. 9th)

The second assignment asks you to begin to map out the subject matter, thesis, and research agenda for your final paper for the course. Successful proposals will offer a compelling thesis, or possible theses, demonstrate a clear set of critical questions, and offer a five-work bibliography toward answering those questions. Students are encouraged to take risks at this early stage, and while the course material needs to inform the final shape of your project, I am open to essays that deal with experimental fictions not included on our syllabus.

Assignment #3: Research Paper Revision (15-20 pp., due Dec. 12th)

The final paper for the course carries with it the expectations of all your written work at the 300 level: independent, thesis-driven, and research-informed literary analysis. Given the topic of this class, I am also open to non-traditional final projects that carry with them the rigor and intellectual engagement of a term paper.

Assignment #4: Course Blog: Writing Experiments (cover letter due Dec. 6th in class)

Throughout the semester, we'll be trying our hand at the literary experiments essayed by the texts on this syllabus—operating under creative constraints, experimenting with sound and meaning in language, combining image and text, repurposing and creating collages out of our previous efforts—in the service of experiential learning. Our efforts will go on our course website and will frequently serve as the launching off point of our discussions of the texts we read throughout the semester.

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT COURSE GOALS:

- 1) the ability to make an argument relying on literary evidence and demonstrating familiarity with the relationship between primary and secondary sources, building on the skills developed in 220
- 2) the ability to evaluate arguments and sources; identify methodologies in critical arguments
- 3) the ability to master library databases, the annotated bibliography form, and the mechanics of citation through successful completion of the CALM camp laboratory in the library
- 4) the ability to write a researched project incorporating critical arguments in the service of an original thesis

HAVING READ THE SYLLABUS COMPLETELY, PLEASE FILL OUT THE PERSONAL INFORMATION FORM AVAILABLE IN THE FIRST BLOCK OF THE COURSE MOODLE PAGE AND EMAIL IT TO ME DIRECTLY. THANK YOU AND WELCOME TO THE CLASS!