

# Syllabus-ness: Graphic Texts & Experimental Writing

written by Anna Joy Springer | September 3, 2014



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## **LTWR 114** ***Graphic Texts*** ***Word & Image Combined***

Anna Joy Springer

### **☒ Course Description**

Every picture frames and stages a story, and all writing is both visual mark and cognitive prompt. What kinds of meaning can we conjure when we combine illustration with writing and when we blur distinctions? In this class we will study and create texts in which visual design and illustration do as much work to perform the meaning of our works as the words do.

Even though the class focuses on graphic aspects of writing, the verbal aspects should represent your highest-quality writing – thoughtfully developed and revised.

You will leave this course with a well-developed object, a revised and ready-to-show piece. It may be a book or something like a book, a comic, a series of posters or postcards, or a series of wall-mounted or standing artworks which provide a complex reading experience via multiple routes of perception and recognition. At the end of the course you will organize a public showing of these final projects.

**Prerequisite:** 8-Series course-work completed or permission from instructor

### **Grading**

**20% Participation** – Being in class and adding thoughtfully to the discussion – having obviously spent some time thinking about the week’s readings. When we exchange weekly prompts in class, good participation is **not** giving advice on how to make a piece “work,” but telling the author what your reading experience is like, what the piece teaches you as you learn to read it. Helping to organize the end-of-quarter gallery showing, including finding a space, hanging work, and lighting, arranging for snacks/drinks, greeting

guests, advertising, and taking down the work.

**25% Reading Quizzes** – I will give 4-5 unannounced quizzes on the readings we've done over the previous week or two. They take the form of regular quizzes or impromptu presentations.

**30% Weekly Prompts/ Aesthetic Responses.** You will hand in 6 literary/artistic responses to the weekly reading and to my prompts over the course of the quarter. **You should spend at least 4 hours creating each response,** and consider each piece to be a potential draft version of what you intend to develop into your final project. The prompts can be motivated by content and should, in part, be catalyzed by an interest to experiment with a technique or style discussed in class or in the week's readings. You should bring copies of your prompts, or take a picture of your prompt if you can't bring it to class, making sure all the text is visible. You can show it to your small group via a computer presentation on your laptop screen., otherwise you should bring copies for everyone. You will also read the text aloud in class, if that's possible, or have other class members read the text aloud. The text in these pieces should be as developed as the visual material. You will use these short exercises as the basis for your Final Project. **Your Weekly Prompt should not be larger than a rolled poster or a small breadbox, even if your final version of it will be large. Please firmly attach some sort of coversheet or make a place (on the back?) where I can write comments, so I don't mess up your original. Prompts without a coversheet or place for comments won't receive comments.**

**25% Final Project** A significantly developed image/text work such as a short book, series of posters or photographs, sculpture, installation, video or hypertext, etc. – should be a professional looking gallery-ready piece that is a continuation of one or more of the weekly prompts you have ALREADY shown and discussed. This work should be framed or presented in a professional fashion in a pop-up gallery show produced by the class. The pop-up gallery is part of your collective final project.

**Texts:** Reader – at CalCopy by Monday. *Writing on the Wall : Word and Image in Modern Art* by Simon Morely; *Understanding Comics* by Scott McCloud; *Best American Comics 2011* edited by Allison Bechdel; *A Humument* by Tom Phillips at:

<http://library.artstor.org/library/welcome.html#3|search|6|All20Collections3A20humument|Filtered20Search|||type3D3626kw3Dhumument26geoIds3D26clsIds3D26id3Dall26bDate3D26eDate3D26dExact3D3126prGeoId3D>

**A note on projects:** Because of the nature of this course, your projects may cost much more money to produce than manuscript copies. Please think of cost as you are designing your weekly prompts and final project. You must be able to afford the cost of producing your work for this class, which might mean getting quotes for costs before you begin a piece.

**WEEK 1 Jan 11, 2012 – Alphabets, glyphs, type: Introductions. Syllabus. Show and discuss alphabet systems, made up symbol-systems, and layered meaning in type.**

**HW – Reading:** From *Writing On the Wall: Words and Pictures in Modern Art*: “Introduction: Words and Pictures”; also read “Practices of Looking: Images, Power, and Politics” by Sturken and Cartwright (READER); **Recommended:** look further at alphabets, abjads, logograms, and symbols at <http://www.omniglot.com/>; finally; **Also Recommended:** check out new fonts and typography from designers at <http://www.typographyserverd.com/> .

**Make a sign with your name on it** that you will use for the entire quarter. **It should reveal your taste in typeface and design.** Think about how to display your name. The sign can sit in front of you on the desk, fit on your head, or whatever. Please make it legible from across the room.

There are 6 prompts to work with over the course of the quarter. I will give much higher points to those works that seem to have taken time, thought, and effort but also that address some of the theoretical questions raised by the texts and discussions. The first prompt is below. Please make sure to mark on your cover page or on the artwork “This is my first (second, third, fourth, fifth, or sixth) prompt exercise for the quarter”.

**Writing Prompt 1 – Alphabet Prompt: Choose one of the following Alphabet Prompt exercises.** Keep your response at a length that will allow you to share about 5 minutes of reading, showing, and explanation during next week’s class. Make 9 copies or bring your laptop to show it.

**\*Make your own writing system,** which reveals a character’s worldview, OR use signs that are in your landscape to create a writing system (phonetic? Logogram? Something else?) – Please provide a SHORT sample text in addition to the written alphabet. Can be 2 or 3 dimensional.

**\*Write a mythology** about the letters of the Latin Alphabet (ours), and their origin, meanings and interrelationship, and possible mysticism. (see “The Inner Meaning of The Hebrew Letters” in your reader)

**\*Create a typeface,** and then make a poster-sized reproduction of the font, including typographic symbols and numbers. Write a sentence in this typeface. Name the typeface.

**WEEK 2 Jan 18 – Illuminated Manuscripts and Illustrated books: Lecture on Medieval Illuminations, marginalia, *Be Here Now*, illustrated books. Get into groups of 8. Share each other’s alphabet prompts.**

**HW – Chapters 3, 5, 6 and 8 in *Writing on the Wall* by Morley.** As you read, think about the possibility of a reading quiz next Wed. and take a few notes on the movements Moreley describes. If you haven’t read the first week’s readings, catch up and take notes on those too – so you’ll be prepared to answer questions and discuss them well. **BRING drawing pencils, a ruler, and**

thin drawing pens (black and white or color) to class on WED.

**Writing Prompt – none this week** – Do you think there might be a reading quiz next week? Hmm, I wonder.

**WEEK 3 Jan 25 – Some Modernist Words and Images: PPT lecture. Dada comics tracing exercise. Need to find space to have art show.**

**Reading:** Chapters 2-6 From *Understanding Comics* by Scott McCloud (reader); *Best American Comics 2011*.

**Writing Prompt 2 – Comics Prompt: Choose one of the following exercises – should be inked but can be in draft form, to be colored or re-made with more time for final project DO NOT GIVE ME YOUR ORIGINAL:**

\***Photomontage comic** about the concept “Paradox” – Using regular paper and scissors or Photoshop, make a photomontage comic out of found images. NONE OF THE IMAGES SHOULD BE OF ANYONE YOU KNOW or CELEBRITIES. (This limitation will help you be more creative.)

\***Comic made of three-dimensional objects** about “The Ephemerality of Existence” (macaroni, sticks, engine parts, etc.) – brought to class as legible photographs of the original.

\***Regular 6-9 panel memoir comic**, inked, about a death or significant loss, that makes use of all five panel transitions described in detail by Scott McCloud.

**WEEK 4 Feb 1 – Comics: Lecture on the Grammar of comics, plus making and reading comics. Share Prompts.**

**HW – Reading:** Excerpts from *An Anthology of concrete poetry*, edited by Emmett Williams and *Alphabets Sublime: Contemporary artists on Collage and Visual Literature* (reader) and *Speaking Pictures: A gallery of pictorial poetry from the sixteenth century to the present*; (TED), Chapters 10 & 11 of *Writing on the Wall* by Morely.

**Writing Prompt 3 – Pictorial poetry**

\***Pictorial Poem Adaptation:** Adapt one of your previous writings into a pictorial poem

\***Concrete on Concrete:** Make a concrete poem out of found objects and/or in public space. If in public space, what if you leave it there? Can you keep it from looking like an Advertisement? Is it an advertisement? Bring in photo.

\***Larger than Life:** Paint a large-scale pictorial poem addressing the concept “representation vs. the real” on canvas or another material. Make it stunning. Bring photo and original.

## **WEEK 5 Feb 8 – Pictorial Poetry – lecture, discussion and share prompts**

**HW – Reading:** Excerpts from *Photo Text Text Photo: Synthesis of Photography and Text in Contemporary Art* by Hapkemeyer and Weiermair (174-208 in reader); images from *Word as Image: American Art 1960-1990*;

### **Writing Prompt 4 –**

**\*You make your own prompt this week, based on the readings and art from this week's readings**

## **WEEK 6 Feb 15 – Photo-Texts and Paintings – Presentation on Carrie Mae Weems, John Baldessari & other artists. Also, plan final gallery show. Share Prompts.**

**HW – Reading:** . “Consumer Culture and the Manufacturing of Desire” (p. 253 of reader, and pages 301-end of reader on Graffiti, and look at images in TED.

### **Writing Prompt 5 – Public Texts**

**\*Wearable message.** Make a piece of wearable image/text art. Wear it or share it.

**\*Resist Brainwashing:** Decide what this means, and make a piece of public text/image art that lets everyone know what you mean. Could be a poster, stickers, secret messages in books in library, etc. If you can't bring the object in, take pictures.

**\*Alter Ads:** take advertisements and alter them to mean something more useful to people. Make your advertisement public.

## **WEEK 7 Feb 22 – Public Writing: Propaganda and Graffiti: Public Persuasive Literature: posters, stencils, t-shirts, etc. and 2000 years of graffiti. Share Prompts.**

**HW – Reading:** . Chapters 13-16 in *Writing on The Wall*.

**Writing Prompt –** No Writing Prompt this week – imagine the possibility of a reading quiz

**Bring to class one book you do not mind destroying. Bring also glue, scissors, markers or oil pastels.**

## **WEEK 8 Feb 29 –**

**HW Reading:** Excerpt from *Text in the Book Format* by Keith A. Smith (reader) Read also *A Humument* by Tom Phillips available online through UCSD Library at Artstor

### **Writing Prompt 6 – Altered Books**

\*Make an altered book. Remember you need to let each page dry before you close the book. Use the whole book, let no pages go unaltered in some way. Show in class, but bring Anna Joy some photos of inside and out, so she can carry these home! Don't forget to put your name on it.

\*Bring to class about 15 sheets of nice writing paper, a piece of thicker paper or cardstock, an awl or something sharp and pointy that's bigger than a needle, a piece of thick cardboard, a needle with a big eye, and some embroidery thread. Also good to bring something to cut paper with.

**WEEK 9 Mar 7 – Go to Special Collections in Library. Look at Artist's Books. Go back to class – make Blank Books. Showing of altered books.**

**Writing for Everyone:** Make a draft of your final piece. It should be an extended, revised, and more beautifully crafted version of one of your prompts.

**WEEK 10 Mar 14 – Discuss Final Project and Final Showing. Show final project draft, read the text, and help each other plan for finalizing for show.**



## **Experimental Writing: Women's Experiments Now Syllabus and Calendar Winter 2011**

**LTWR 115: Anna Joy Springer**

*IF WRITING IS LANGUAGE and language is desire and longing and suffering, and it is capable of great passion and also great nuances of passion – the passion of the mind, the passion of the body ...then why when we write, when we make shapes on paper, why then does it so often look like the traditional straight models...*

– Carole Maso “Break Every Rule”

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

 There are no prerequisites for this upper-division course, although

experience with creative writing, visual and other arts, and/or a background in literary theory or gender studies may help you feel more comfortable with some of the assignments. The main requirement for this course is that you come prepared to work (&play) **very** hard. As a member of the class, you will spend a *minimum* of 10 hours outside of class each week reading, writing, and theorizing your classmates' work. The workload is very substantial.

In this incarnation of Experimental Writing, we'll create written works that perform our *truest* and most *complex* states of "desire, longing, and suffering." This is, therefore, more of a fine arts class than a regular writing class. During the course, we'll make hybrid literary art, or art that is primarily textual but might also involve visual, sound, or theatrical artistry. Never relying upon limiting ideas of what "literature" can be or should be, our work will blend literary genres to create surprising, weirdly inventive texts. For instance, I may have you make a narrative that is also a card or board game.

✘ The focus of this class is on contemporary experiments in writing by women, with a particular emphasis on radical themes and forms that resist harmful and/or reductive ideologies and modes of expression. We'll be reading unruly texts written by women whose work reflects the authors' multifaceted identity-structures and politics. The course readings specifically explore women's physical, intellectual, discursive, spiritual, and political interactions in their world(s) and the vicissitudes and interplay of characters' "identities" as gendered, racialized, nationalized, aged subjects, embodied, in history. Each of the course texts will provoke questions about what literature *is* and what it *can be* and *might do* in the world. Via theme, syntax, methodology, and structure, these works provide counter-narratives to a variety of dominant and dominating discourses. In so doing, these works galvanize critical/creative agility, allowing us fresh possibilities for understanding ourselves in relationship to others and for re-creating ourselves and our worlds through our own writing.

Experimenting with some of these writers' techniques and inquiries, as well as making up our own, we'll play exhilarating, edgy literary games. We'll produce new works that are unexpected, thrilling and politically relevant. I hope that the whole-hearted creative abandon I of ask of you during this course will become a most potent and pleasurable tool in your life-long artistic struggle against all forces seeking to dull your strange brilliance.

## **READING:**

As reading is at least 50% of writing, about half of our time will be devoted to reading assignments. We're reading 4 books and several essays and shorter works, in various genres. The books are available at the bookstore. I'll give you the essays and shorter works. You may find it useful to refer to these articles in your Project Attention Letters and Pedagogical Performances, **so take notes and integrate the ideas.**

Remember, literary criticism is just another genre of writing, so don't treat it too preciously and don't let it scare you – read it like poetry. You can

always email me or drop by my office to talk about complex or new ideas in essays, your writing, or about anything at all.

I will present on: ***Blood and Guts in High School*** by Kathy Acker (and "Laugh of the Medusa" by Helene Cixous)

Books and essays you will present on, starting next week:

***Les Guerilleres*** by Monique Wittig (with 1975 film *The Stepford Wives*)

***Venus*** by Suzan-Lori Parks (with *The Life and Times of Sara Baartman* & short play from *Play: A Journal of Plays*)

***Kerotakis*** by Janice Lee (with excerpt from ***TEXT IN THE BOOK FORMAT*** by Keith A. Smith )

***Incubation: A Space For Monsters*** by Bhanu Kapil (with excerpt from "Grotesque Bodies: A Response to Disembodied Cyborgs" ) by Sarah Shabot



## GRADING

**Writing To Turn In (75% of grade):**

**Prompts: (10% total)** – During the first part of the quarter, you will turn in two writings (Not to exceed 1000 words) in response to my weekly prompts over the course of the quarter. Don't pick a prompt to write and turn in every week, pick one before the due date and work on it. Due Dates are listed in the calendar. Use one of my prompts to develop a piece or to conduct a beginning experience that may become a piece you turn in for Project Attention. Your Prompt can become part of your Project Attention Piece, but your Project Attention Piece should be *much* more developed than a Prompt.

**Project Attention Piece (PA) (20% of grade) – 2 assignments:** Your PA Piece is a written work to be turned in to everyone in class, **the WEDNESDAY BEFORE** we discuss it in class. (Not to exceed 10 dbl spaced pps or 3000 Words). If not on paper, the final form of these texts can be on tape or CD, hypertext, sculpture, environmental, in the form of a web log, a play, etc., but **you must provide copies of the text to me and the class** as well as some documentation – photos, video, etc. – of the final form on the day your text is due.

 **Your second Project Attention piece should be a draft of your final project.** It should be in conversation with two of the books or essays we have read for the class. For instance, it could be a rewrite of *Kerotakis* as if written in the style of Monique Wittig.

If you do not have the work ready on the day it's due, or if you've forgotten to bring it, *we can not review it and you will not get credit for it.* If you are not in class to collect the Project Attention pieces handed out on WEDNESDAY, you may arrange to pick up the writing from each author at a time and place convenient to both of you.

## **Project Attention Response Letters (15% of grade):**

After you read each of the Project Attention pieces for the week, pick 3 of them and write a 1 page letter to the author about the piece.

Basic instructions on Project Attention Letters:

- 1. This is not a letter for editing and revision tips.** You must not give advice on how to make this an ideal read for you or to transform the piece in any way, to suit anyone's taste. Instead, this is a letter investigating your peers' approaches, experiments, and interventions, and telling the author about the writing's effects upon you.
- This letter should discuss one major aspect of what the TEXT is doing and *very specifically*, how it's accomplishing its goals. Pretend the piece is already published and widely respected and you are performing a close reading upon it.
  - **STORY or SEQUENCE:** Summarize the plot or story or sequence of ideas or moments— describe succinctly who, what, when, where, and why, so that someone who hasn't read the story sort of gets what's going on within the piece.
  - **STYLE:** Describe the aesthetics of the piece – how is it written? What format does it take, what's its narrative structure or poetic form, what sorts of diction and syntax does it deploy, are there lots of visual details or is it mostly ideas? Are there textures of emotion or concept, is it synaesthetic in any way? Etc. Just give a summary of what you notice about its style and structural aspects right away. How is it made, and of what?
  - Say what you think is the **HEART** of the piece – a **BIG IDEA** or **THE PHILOSOPHY** or **THE INNEFABLE TRUTH** or **THE MAGIC QUESTION** what the piece asks you to reflect upon about the world outside of the piece (about people, about the senses, about literature, about thinking, about being, about story, about science, about justice, about war, about love) – you get what I mean.
  - Now, home in on a.) one or two aspects of the **STYLE** and b.) one or two aspects of the **STORY/SEQUENCE** to support your theory about what the heart of the piece is. Everyone may come up with different "hearts". Please give examples by quoting the text.
- Tell the author both your emotional and your intellectual twists and turns while navigating the piece.
- Start the letter with "Dear" or some salutation, and sign it. **Please indicate the name of the author's piece in the heading of your letter** so I can easily see what you are responding to.
- You will turn a copy of these letters in to the author and to me on the date of the author's Project Attention. For my copy, **STAPLE ALL LETTERS FOR ONE WEEK TOGETHER** and hand in at the end of class.
- You will get high scores for letters that are thoughtful, generous, interesting, and do not offer editing advice.**

**Project Attention Rewrites: (10% of grade) – In the last part of the quarter, I will ask that you pick ONE of the pieces up for the second Project Attention during a given week and REWRITE it, using between 20 % – 50% of the original text.** I will give you a prompt, and using one of these prompts, you

will take your classmates' original piece and adapt it. Re-vision it. Fiddle with its art direction. That is, like you did in your Project Attention letters, you will take into account the writing's major themes, styles, formats, textural tensions, philosophies, methodologies, etc., and create an ADAPTATION of the piece, in terms of what it – and all of its aesthetic parts – is REALLY, FULLY trying to express and dramatize. Here's an example: I may have you turn a story about a woman who speaks an unrecognizable language 3000 years in the future into a set of performance instructions for a hologram musical. Each author should receive two Project Attention Rewrites of her or his work after this Project Attention, plus plenty of discussion, and we will have time for some of these to be read or performed in class at group level.

Try to put as much time and effort into your version of the piece as the author did. You will give a copy of this to me and to the author of the original text. (Don't go over 1000 words).

**Final Project – 20%** A polished work in the book format that responds aesthetically and or thematically (or both) to at least one of the books we've read. It can include language from the book, but only intermittently. If you would like to turn in something other than a book, such as a film or installation, please get permission from me 2 weeks before end of quarter. A regular double-spaced 8 ½ x 11 paper manuscript (even if it includes images) is not acceptable for the purposes of the final project.

**\*\*\*Final Project due and reading MONDAY JUNE 10 at 8PM – Please mark your calendars now and reschedule any other finals or plans**

## **Teaching and Interaction (25% of Grade)**

**Interaction & Attendance– 10% of your final grade** – Points given for preparation and thoughtful comment on course texts and peer projects. Points reduced for lack of preparation or editorial advice-giving. Even if you are shy, please be willing to share your thoughts in class, and if you are garrulous, please be sensitive so that everyone gets the opportunity to interact. **From time to time, I may give a quiz on the assigned course reading.** Please read the texts as they are listed in the syllabus. Also, because this course relies heavily on student-run presentations and peer interaction, **if you miss more than TWO classes I will ask you to drop the class.**

**Pedagogical Performance 15%:** You will get in a group based on the book you'd like to teach. Each member of your group will pick one aspect of the book we've just read to explore in-depth and to teach us about in the style of a panel-discussion in which each panelist is both a performer and a teacher. You should give any handouts or other materials or instructions we might need to prepare for your presentation the week before. **You can teach the class any way you want, as long as it's legal.** Members the group should each teach on a different aspect of the book for 10-15 minutes for each member of panel. **I will give the most points for well-researched Pedagogical Performances that synthesize our class inquiries, and bring something entirely new to the discussion of both the book itself and to our ideas about writing techniques**

and literary history, thus both challenging and inspiring the class.

### Further Instructions on Pedagogical Performance –

- **Research Aspect:** The Pedagogical Performance should make use of significant research, as if it were a creatively taught research paper. This Presentation should be teaching us in a creative way *about the book itself* and about how to write experimentally and to think about literature as it relates to issues of identity and aesthetics. In addition to your group's book, you may also focus on one of the handouts I've given, or you may assign the class additional reading or assignments in preparation of your Pedagogical Performance.
- **Some things to consider in preparing for Pedagogical Performance:** Research and reflect upon how it's intervening in literary history or speaking to literary traditions, experiments, and concerns, how it's taking a strong political/social stand, how its illustration or design may be "proving" its themes, how its use of multiple genres effect the reader's own personal interaction & reaction, what its poetics are or what its narrative arc is and why it might be presented that way, how it relates to another field of arts or letters, the why's and how's of its intertextuality (how it's commenting upon or even stealing from other texts), the basis of its theorizing, how it *presents* its social critique(s), etc.
- **Performance Aspect:** You can teach the class ANY WAY you want for about **10 minutes, but not longer. Imagine the coolest class in the whole world, and make it happen.** You could use puppets or other props. You could make us play a game. The Pedagogical Performance, like all teaching, is a kind of performance – a kind of story. I will give more points to creative Pedagogical Performances than to basic lectures or Q&A's, so use this Teaching Assignment as an exercise in Experimental Writing and Performance. The Pedagogical Performance should be "creative and fun" but should also be a well-developed investigation of a specific aspect of the text itself in order to teach your class members more about the book and how the techniques in the book can provide new insights into your classmates' own writing practice.

I may adjust the assignments, depending on unforeseen circumstances and better ideas.

## CALENDAR

Each of you will put yourselves in a group on the second day of class. Your group designation will be based on your preference of book to teach. Your group will be named after the book.

Week 1

*Language, Desire, Form & Commerce – A Methodological Framework*

4/1/11 IN CLASS:

- Introduce class, course structure, ourselves; Read: “Break Every Rule” by Carole Maso. Go over handout on Project Attention & Response Letters – discuss this alternate method of “work-shopping”; read student stories; Lecture on Postmodern Literature.

**HOMEWORK:**

- Make name tags. They should be at least 12” wide and should stand up or otherwise be legible across the room
- Begin reading *Blood and Guts In High School* by Kathy Acker
- Watch *The Corporation* available for streaming video on Netflix (you can get free Netflix access for 1 month at <http://www.netflix.com/Default?loms=abcd&mqso=80001347> ); you can also check this movie out at the UCSD library
- Read instructions on Project Attention & Response Letters
- Do a practice “Project Attention Letter” for Kathy Acker’s 1<sup>st</sup> Chapter of *Blood and Guts in High School*; Bring it to class on Monday (1 page).
- Pick top 3 books you would like to teach for Pedagogical Performance in order of preference
- Finish reading *Introduction to Feminism* if you haven’t yet.
- INCUBATION GROUP prepares something for Project Attention Due APRIL 8 (PA is following week) – makes copies for everyone.

Week 2

*Pleasure, Rupture & Thievery*

**April 8 – IN CLASS**

- Practice Project Attention on *Blood and Guts in High School*. Get into Pedagogical Performance Groups; INCUBATION GROUP hands out Project Attention pieces. Finish Lecture on Intro to Postmodernism and discuss in relation to Intro to Feminism. Writing Exercise.

**HOMEWORK:**

- Finish reading *Blood & Guts in High School*.
- Read “The Laugh of the Medusa,” by Helene Cixous. We will discuss in class: What does it mean to write the body versus to with the body? To write in white ink? What is Cixous understanding of the relationship between “mothering” and writing? Prepare a 1 page response indicating your understanding of this essay and your questions about issues it brings up about biology and the creation of literature.
- Recommended: Read also Peter Landesman – “The Girls Next Door” (*New York Times* article on contemporary sex trafficking in US/San Diego) <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/01/25/magazine/25SEXTRAFFIC.html?ei=5007&en=43dbe6ef76e45af8&ex=1390366800&pagewanted=print&position>
- READ writing by all members of INCUBATION GROUP and WRITE 3 Project Attention Letters

- VENUS GROUP prepares something for Project Attention
- WRITING PROMPTS – pick one to do, up to 3 pps.
  - **Sampling/Plagiarizing Prompt:** Any genre – Lay out 4 different kinds of texts on your desk, for instance science textbook, Beat Poetry, cookbook, and birdwatcher’s guide –Create a sampled poetic dream map from these texts, illustrating the dream map with your own or borrowed images. Let it be the map to the worst place/concept and to the best place/concept.
  - **The Moral History Of The USA Prompt** (or another nation or large institution, like CAPITALISM or DEMOCRACY), Freewrite the history of this institution without worrying about making sense – begin using the language of one of the texts or skip between them, sampling language from one or many until you get bored and want to switch or until you want to use your own language. Then when you get bored, use language from another of the books, and so on. Edit down to right size.
  - **Janey Rises Again Prompt.** Put Janey (anti-heroine in B&G in HS) in a formulaic genre framework, such as detective story, horror, sci fi, children’s didactic, etc, and give her a little quest in that aesthetic world. Of course, her presence in that story will provoke certain changes. In order to do this assignment well, *you will have to do a bit of research* on the genre you choose in order to discover who reads it, the period of its popularity, what its subtexts or subtle comments about the culture are, and especially what its narrative conventions are.

\*\*\*\*\*First PROMPT is due Monday April 22 to share with group\*\*\*\*\*

Week 3  
*Revising History’s Miseries*

**4/15 – IN CLASS:**

- Project Attention for **INCUBATION GROUP**; Anna Joy Does *Blood & Guts* Pedagogical Performance. Discuss Essays and read from *Cunt Ups* – the notion of pilfering, ownership of and trade in language, ideas.
- Venus group hands out Project Attention Pieces.

**HOMEWORK:**

- Begin reading *Les Guerilleres* by Monique Wittig
- Watch *The Stepford Wives* (1975) (get from Netflix or watch bad reproduction on YouTube  
<http://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=the+stepford+wives+1975&view=detail&mid=85659BE737D008B9272C85659BE737D008B9272C&first=0&FORM=NVPFVR&qpv=the+stepford+wives+1975>)
- READ writing by members of Venus Group and write Project Attention Letters
- KEROTAKIS GROUP prepares something for Project Atten
- PROMPTS (pick one, if you like)
  - **Women’s War Prompt.** Speculative (Science Fiction or Fantasy)

Writing: "The Women's War" – perhaps use language from news on other wars happening now.

- **Symbol Prompt:** Pick a symbol that describes your identity or cultural affiliations. Write a piece that both describes the history of the symbol and performs its shape in its syntax and structure.
- **Feminary Prompt:** Write a Feminary; leave instructions for when it is to be destroyed or transformed. Remember a Feminary contains seeds of its own destruction.

#### Week 4

#### *To See It, Turn It Inside Out*

#### 4/22 IN CLASS:

- **VENUS GROUP Project Attention**
- Everyone's first PROMPT is due to Anna Joy Springer
- **LES GUERILLERES PEDAGOGICAL PERFORMANCE!!!**
- *KEROTAKIS* GROUP hands out Project Attn Piece

#### HOMEWORK:

- Read excerpt from *Tales of Neveryon* by Samuel Delaney
- Begin reading Suzan-Lori Parks' *Venus*
- LES GUERILLERES Group rustles something up for Project Attention Due to hand out next Monday
- Prompts:
  - **Adam & Eve Prompt:** Turn a famous story that is known and accepted in its violence toward women or degradation toward a maligned or disempowered group of people and reverse the power dynamic dramatically, in terms of who comes out ahead. Use the language and conventions of authoritative *detached voice of reason* and truth or of mythological certainty.

#### Mid-quarter – Week 5

#### *Re-directing History – Venus*

**APRIL 29 – IN CLASS** (AJ will not be in class – there will be substitute):  
KEROTAKIS GROUP Project Attention; Watch Venus film; LES GUERILLERES Group hands out Project Attention pieces for PA; come up with 3 PROMPTS in class based on readings and interests in experimentation so far

#### HOMEWORK:

- Read "Icing : Hockey Wedding" by Sawako Nakayasu
- Finish Reading: Suzan-Lori Parks' *Venus* (please do any research you need to do in order to get the play).
- VENUS GROUP prepares Pedagogical Performance
- READ *LES GUERILLERS* Group Project Attention pieces, write letters
- PROMPTS:
  - **Historical Research/ Performance Prompt.** Make a Play/Performance piece (any discipline, with emphasis on performing (and resisting))

*identity roles*) about a historical figure you want to crush or to avenge – introduce bits of research and/or fake research about this historical figure, such as letters, newspaper articles, Google search info, etc. The end result should perform its content, through not only theme and storytelling, but also visually and energetically. For instance, if I were to write a story about giving the president acid, what would his world look like?

- **Rewrite A Mythological Celebrity Prompt:** Rewrite a known story about a racialized historical and/or fictional figure (like Aunt Jemima, Betsy Ross, or Pocahontas, for instance) to turn its power relationships on their head as Parks does.

\*\*\*\*\*Second Prompt Due May 13\*\*\*\*\*

Week 6

*Imagination, Re[s]trained*

#### MAY 6 – IN CLASS:

- Project Attention: LES GUERILLERES GROUP
- Pedagogical Performance by VENUS GROUP

#### HOMEWORK:

- VENUS Group gets their PA Piece together to hand out on Thurs. May 8
- Read: “Narrative, Interactivity, and Games” article by Zimmerman in *First Person*.
- PROMPTS:
  - **Child’s Toy Prompt:** Write and Construct a toy or game for girls that teaches them a complex story about women’s bodies in the world you live in or in a historical place or an imaginary world. You can reassemble or graffiti a pre-existing game/toy, like a board game or puzzle or cards. It can be 2 or 3 – dimensional. Please make this object be small enough so I can carry it in my bag
  - **Constraint-based Prompt:** Create a constraint that’s alphabetic, grammatical, syllabic or otherwise materially interferes with written language production. For instance, don’t allow yourself to use letters that hang below the line, like “y” or “g,” or create sentences where each word in the sentence has to have one more syllable than the previous one. Write a piece that is framed by this constraint.
  - **Dictionary Prompt:** Concept Dictionary (imperialism, colonialism, language, body, land).
  - **Get AWAY Prompt:** Go on a writing/exploration trip alone one or two days this week. Take a train or a bus. Turn off your phone and send an email out that says you’ll be off the grid for awhile. Be alone. Write so you get back in touch with yourself, your language. Begin your final project.

Next week is “catching up week”. If you haven’t handed in a letter or prompt, do it by the end of week 7 – that’s your final chance to catch up. I won’t accept letters or 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> prompts after

Week 7  
*Imagination, Retrained.*

**May 13 – IN CLASS:**

- Catch up on Project Attentions; If time, some people read prompts aloud. Organize 3-person groups for 2<sup>nd</sup> Project Attention.
- EVERYONE Turn in your SECOND PROMPT

**HOMEWORK:**

- Read *Kerotakis*
- Read excerpts from *Text in the Book Format*
- Read Spahr essay from *FEMMINAISSANCE*
- Write 2<sup>nd</sup> Project Attention Piece (which will become your final project)

Week 8  
*Am I Mind (Or, Whose Experience Am I)?*

**May 20 – IN CLASS:**

- **Kerotakis Pedagogical Performance;**
- **discuss excerpt from *Text in the Book Format***
- **All Members of Small groups** hand in a draft version of their final project (2<sup>nd</sup> Project Attention Piece) new 3-person group and to me.
- I explain how small groups and PA rewrites work. Arrange who will write rewrites on whose work

**HOMEWORK:**

- Everyone Reads Project Attentions for their small group and does a rewrite for the two they are assigned to rewrite. The two rewriting authors will read their work to the small group and will lead the small group discussion of their author's piece. Each piece should receive 30-35 minutes' attention, including reading the rewrites out loud and discussing the heart of the story relative to its formal presentation and experimentation.
- Project Attention on drafts of 2<sup>nd</sup> PA Piece (draft final projects) in small groups

Week 9

**May 27 – IN CLASS: NO CLASS – MEMORIAL DAY**

- By email or on googledocs make appointments to come talk to me about your final project.

**HOMEWORK:**

- Read Bhanu Kapil's *Incubation: A Space for Monsters*
- Finish reading and annotating the stories you received for Final Project Attn.
- Rewrite of someone else's draft of final project: Consider making this

rewrite a monster. Perhaps it is the original piece's monster offspring or monster mother.

- Workshop leaders prepare opening questions to discuss the work on Monday

#### **HOMEWORK:**

Read "Grotesque Bodies: A Response to Disembodied Cyborgs" by Sarah Shabot ( Available through UCSD Electronic Library in Journal of Gender Studies, Issue 3 November 2006 , pages 223 – 235 )

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content~db=all?content=10.1080/09589230600862026>

*Week 10*

*Cyborg-Monster or What Sort of Technology is A Culture?*

#### **JUNE 3 – IN CLASS:**

- **Pedagogical Performance: *Incubation: A Space for Monsters*. Readings from PA rewrites**

**HOMEWORK:** Complete your final projects – *make them something you can keep forever and that you're very proud of*. Please make sure that your method of presentation (your product) reflects your content – that is, the container should be part of the story – an inseparable element. Style and Content are one.

**Final Project DUE MONDAY JUNE 10 at 8PM – final reading/party**

### **Instructions Preparation for Project Attention Letters & Rewrites**

*Your Opinion About What The Piece Could or Should Be Doing Better Isn't The Point*

*Cultural and Literary Analysis IS the Point*

**Take notes:** Annotate (rather than edit) each piece in a way that will tell the author about your experience as a reader. Remember, this is not a workshop telling the author what's "working" or "not working" in the piece, but actually **what** its parts are doing on behalf of its whole, from phoneme (smallest unit of meaning, like a suffix) to illustrations, to rhyme, to architecture, to energetic flow, to character development.

**Focus on one or two elements of the piece, in depth,** and find ways to discuss specifically how and why the element is affecting you, **especially in relation to the piece AS A WHOLE**. How do the individual parts (even clashing ones) all add up?

When you write your letter, start with a paragraph summarizing the piece – name its characters if it has them, describe its form, talk about “what happens”. Then talk about the “heart: of the piece – what are the ideas about life or art that are being explored? What is this piece doing that deals with ideas in a way other people haven’t? Then get more specific as to how all the parts of the work add up to this whole – this heart. How did you come up with your ideas about the deepest points of the piece?

**ASSUME THE WRITER HAS CHOSEN TO SHOW YOU HIS OR HER WORK IN THE EXACT FORM PRESENTED FOR A SPECIAL REASON, AND THAT THE WORK IS WELL-INTENTIONED (but don’t pretend to think a typo is intentional if it doesn’t follow an already-established pattern in the piece).**

If you do not understand the work, deeply explore your own state of perplexity or anxiety – discover when and where in the piece you’re getting confused or your buttons are getting pressed, then ask yourself why the piece might WANT to disorient or provoke you at particular moments. What state of being or complexity of sensations might the writer be *trying* to provoke in you? The disorientation may be a part of the overall staging or performance of a “narrative” or system of meaning.

**Determine what “rules” the piece is making for its own reading** (the making of its own ecosystem), and how it’s teaching you, its reader, what the rules are, **as you read**. How is it teaching you to read it? What worlds or concepts is it bringing together, onto the stage? How do these worlds and concepts relate to one another, how do they interact, and how does their interaction affect you?

The author does not need to know whether you *like* the work. The author needs to know what the work is *doing* to you and what strategies you’re employing in reading it. **Read it slowly and puzzle it through, even if you don’t like the feelings it’s making you have and even if you “don’t get it”.** Pretend to yourself that you do “get it” at some level, in fact you are the expert on this piece and what it’s doing. Pretend you really are.

In your letter, express the feelings and ideas you had while reading the piece, and claim responsibility for those ideas and feelings as *yours*. Explain to the author SPECIFICALLY what words or combinations of words in his/her work triggered those feelings and ideas, and why. Just because you’re not telling the author, “I really hate this piece” does *not mean that you have to be dishonest or fake*. It just means that you’re claiming responsibility for your own reactions, rather than blaming or shaming the author.

**Other ideas on what to discuss during Project Attention:** Tell the author what the piece makes you think about. Tell her/him what experiments you want to do now that you’ve read the work. Tell the author how much work you put into navigating the text and what strategies you used to “make sense” of the writing. Remember, not all writing wants to make “rational” sense, so you will have to pay close attention to what your body and emotions are doing as you read it – see if patterns emerge in your response and try to understand what those patterns are. Explain to the author what you think he/she is

trying to do, moment by moment, in the piece. Tell the author about other writers or artists (including yourself) who have tried similar experiments in their own work, and relate those experiments back to the actual piece in front of you, specifically. **Talk to the author like she/he is a person. A person who's reading your letter with curiosity.**

**Be as specific as possible. *Quote the author in your letter.***

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See the rest of our back-to-school feature [Syllabus-ness here](#).