

Affects in Modern Literature and Theory

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Within literary studies, interest in affects has grown enormously since Brian Massumi, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, and others prompted an 'affective turn' in theory in the mid-1990s. This course explores select instances of how advances in understanding affects have contributed significantly to a number of critical and theoretical areas, including postcolonialism, queer theory, performativity, race theory, Marxism, and the anthropocene. While discussing set examples of those advances each week, we will also read the theoretical/critical texts in relation to a selection of relevant literary ones. Thinking about the extent to which writers can figure distinctly literary forms of affect will be a primary concern for the course. The variety of theoretical approaches that we examine will be complemented by the range of literary genres that we consider (fiction, poetry, and drama), as well as by the array of affects and affective states that are set for discussion, including shame, solidarity, happiness, love, fear, terror, and misanthropy.

Students may write their course essay on relevant texts other than those set or suggested in the module. Students who wish to concentrate on a particular aspect covered in the general ambit of the course are also welcome to do so.

Short Weekly Responses

Each week students are required to post in the Forum of this course's Moodle site a short response (around 250 words) to the set reading. The response doesn't need to be beautifully crafted, and can be a list of points and questions. When referring to a text, please include page numbers. The responses will be used to foster discussion in and out of the seminars, and will serve as a collective diary of points and queries.

1. Introduction: Affects and Affect Theories

Set Reading:

Denise Riley, 'Who Me? Self-description's Linguistic Affect', in *The Words of Selves: Identification, Solidarity, Irony* (2000)

Sianne Ngai, 'Introduction', in *Ugly Feelings* (2005)

Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg, 'An Inventory of Shimmers', in *The Affect Theory Reader* (2010)

Suggested Further Reading:

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, 'Percept, Affect, and Concept', in *What is Philosophy?* (1994)

Susan L. Feagin, *Reading with Feeling: The Aesthetics of Appreciation* (1996)

Derek Matravers, *Art and Emotion* (1998)

Rei Terada, *Feeling in Theory: Emotion after the 'Death of the Subject'* (2001)

Philip Fisher, *The Vehement Passions* (2002)

Charles Altieri, *The Particulars of Rapture: An Aesthetics of the Affects* (2003)
 Sarah Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2004)
 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (2005)
 Alex Houen (ed.), 'Special Issue: Affects, Text, and Performativity', *Textual Practice* 25:2
 (April 2011)
 Sianne Ngai, *Our Aesthetic Categories: Zany, Cute, Interesting* (2012)

2. Shame and Disgrace

Set Reading:

J.M Coetzee, *Disgrace* (1999)
 Robert Hass, 'Shame: An Aria' [available on *LION*]
 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, 'Shame in the Cybernetic Fold', in *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (2003)
 Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh University Press, 2004), ch. 5

Suggested Further Reading:

Bernard Williams, 'Shame and Autonomy', in *Shame and Necessity* (1993)
 Pamela Fox, *Class fictions: shame and resistance in the British working-class novel, 1890-1945* (1994)
 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank, *Shame and Its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader* (1995)
 Joseph Adamson and Hilary Clark (eds), *Scenes of Shame: Psychoanalysis, Shame, and Writing* (1999)
 Elspeth Probyn, *Blush: Faces of Shame* (2005)
 Michael L. Morgan, *On Shame* (2008)
 J. Brooks Bouson, *Embodied Shame : Uncovering Female Shame in Contemporary Women's Writings* (2009)
 Timothy Bewes, *The Event of Postcolonial Shame* (2011)
 Gillian White, *Lyric Shame: The 'Lyric' Subject of Contemporary American Poetry* (2011)

3. Happiness and the Happenstance

Set Reading:

Samuel Beckett, *Happy Days* (1961)
 Lyn Hejinian, 'Happily' (2000), in *The Language of Inquiry* (2000), 383-405
 Sara Ahmed, 'Happy Objects', in *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. Seigworth and Gregg (2010)
 Claire Colebrook, 'Between Happiness and Extinction', in *Against Life*, ed. Alastair Hunt and Stephanie Youngblood (2016)

Suggested Further Reading:

Frank O'Hara, 'Personal Poem', in *Lunch Poems* (1964)
 ——. 'Having a Coke with You', in *Love Poems* (1965)
 Adam Mars-Jones, 'Blind Bitter Happiness', in *Blind Bitter Happiness* (1998)
 Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (2010)

Alex Houen (ed.), 'Introduction: Affecting Words', in 'Special Issue: Affects, Text, and Performativity', *Textual Practice* 25:2 (April 2011)

Daniel Haybron, *Happiness: A Very Short Introduction* (2013)

Andrew Warnes, *American Tantalus: Horizons, Happiness, and the Impossible Pursuits of US Literature and Culture* (2014)

4. Queer Affect

Set Reading:

James Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room* (1956)

Lauren Berlant, 'Love (A Queer Feeling)', in *Homosexuality and Psychoanalysis*, ed. by Tim Dean and Christopher Lane (2000), 432-451

Richard Thompson Ford, 'What's Queer about Race?' in *After Sex?: On Writing since Queer Theory* (2011), 121-9

Suggested Further Reading:

Anne Cheng, *The Melancholy of Race: Psychoanalysis, Assimilation and Hidden Grief* (2001)

Christopher Nealon, *Foundlings: Lesbian and Gay Historical Emotion before Stonewall* (2001)

Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (2003)

Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (2007)

Janet Halley and Andrew Parker (eds), *After Sex?: On Writing since Queer Theory* (2011)

Eileen Myles, *Inferno: A Poet's Novel* (2010)

Jack Halberstam, *Gaga Feminism: Sex, Gender, and the End of Normal* (2012)

Amber Musser, *Sensational Flesh: Race, Power, and Masochism* (2014)

5. Fear and Trembling

Set Reading:

Selection of Sylvia Plath poems: 'Black Rook in Rainy Weather' (1956); 'Whiteness I Remember' (1958); 'Widow' (1961); 'The Bee Meeting' (1962); 'Elm' (1962) [all available on *LION*]

Don DeLillo, *White Noise* (1984)

Brian Massumi, 'Everywhere You Want to Be: Introduction to Fear', in *The Politics of Everyday Fear* (1993)

Suggested Further Reading:

Pashupati Jha, *Sylvia Plath: The Fear and Fury of her Muse* (1991)

Kate Hebblethwaite and Elizabeth McCarthy (eds), *Fear: Essays on the Meaning and Experience of Fear* (2007)

Geoffrey R. Skoll, *Social Theory of Fear: Terror, Torture, and Death in a Post-capitalist World* (2010)

Kathleen Starck, *Between Fear and Freedom: Cultural Representations of the Cold War* (2010)

- Fredric Jameson, 'The Twin Sources of Realism: Affect, or, the Body's Present', in *Antinomies of Realism* (2013), 27-44
- Joseph Crawford, *Gothic Fiction and the Invention of Terrorism: the Politics and Aesthetics of Fear in the Age of the Reign of Terror* (2013)
- Scott McClintock, *Topologies of Fear in Contemporary Fiction* (2015)

6. The Misanthropocene

Set Reading:

- Juliana Spahr, *this connection of everyone with lungs* (2005)
- Joshua Clover and Juliana Spahr, #*Misanthropocene: 24 Theses* [available as free download from Commune Editions: <http://communeeditions.com/misanthropocene/>]
- Daniel Cottom, 'The Necessity of Misanthropy', in *Unhuman Culture* (2006)
- Rachel Greenwald Smith, 'Ecology, Feeling, and Form in Neoliberal Literature', in *Affect and American Literature in the Age of Neoliberalism* (2015)

Suggested Further Reading:

- Wyndham Lewis (ed.), 'Manifesto' in *Blast I* (1914), pp. 9 – 28:
http://modjourn.org/render.php?id=1143209523824844&view=mjp_object
- Allen Ginsberg, 'Pentagon Exorcism' (1967): <http://beatness-poetry.tumblr.com/post/145682149524/pentagon-exorcism-by-allen-ginsberg>
- Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1984)
- R. Howard Bloch and Frances Ferguson (eds.), *Misogyny, Misandry, and Misanthropy* (1989)
- Christopher Lane, *Hatred & Civility: the Antisocial Life in Victorian England* (2004)
- Julia Kristeva, *Hatred and Forgiveness*, trans. Jeanine Herman (2010)
- Mark Whitehead, *Environmental Transformations: A Geography of the Anthropocene* (2014)
- Peter Vermeulen, *Contemporary Literature and the End of the Novel: Creature, Affect, Form* (2015)
- Katrin Klingan, Ashkan Sepahvand, Christoph Rosol, Bernd M. Scherer (eds), *Textures of the Anthropocene: Grain, Vapor, Ray* (2015)
- McKenzie Wark, *Molecular Red: Theory for the Anthropocene* (2015)
- Special Issue of *New Literary History* 47:1 (2016) on 'Climate, Species, The Anthropocene', with contributions by Benjamin Morgan, Shital Pravinchandra, and Aaron R. Hanlon
- Joshua Clover, *Riot. Strike. Riot* (2016)