

ENG 615  
Spring 2016  
Tres Pyle

McKenzie 122  
Thursdays 2-5  
Office: PLC 270/ W 12-3

### **Affectivities**

This seminar in literary and cultural will explore the question of affect as it has crystallized in the recent developments of “affect theory” and, more expansively and historically, as an important aspect of romantic and post-romantic literature, theory, and culture. From Kant’s conception of the “singularity” of “feeling” in an aesthetic experience and Wordsworth’s definition of poetry as the “spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings” through Jameson’s account of the “waning of affect” in postmodernity, we will explore a range of historical and theoretical dispositions of affects, feelings, moods, and emotions in order to engage with some the significant strands in “affect theory.” We will examine aesthetic and poetic theory, studies in melodrama and spectatorship, eruptions of affect and blockages of feeling, and their social, gendered, philosophical and political implications from Walter Pater to Rei Terada and Gilles Deleuze to Sianne Ngai. In addition to these theories of affect, we will share a small constellation of literary and cinematic texts to think through their feelings, “formal” and otherwise, and measure their ramifications.

**Assignments** Students will write two two-page (single-spaced) close reading papers which address a particular passage in the assigned texts, present one fifteen-minute response to one of the assigned texts, and write a ten- to twelve-page seminar paper. Rough drafts of the seminar paper are due May 27<sup>th</sup> and versions are due June 10<sup>th</sup>.

All critical and literary texts will be made available on Canvas.

### **1. “Feelings, nothing more than feelings” I**

Wimsatt & Beardsley, “The Affective Fallacy,” Pater, Preface and Conclusion to *Studies in the Renaissance*, de Bolla, from *Art Matters*, Gregg & Seigworth, from “An Inventory of Shimmers” (O’Hara)

### **2. “Feelings, nothing more than feelings” II**

Kant, from *The Third Critique*, Deleuze, “Four Poetic Formulas That Might Summarize the Kantian Philosophy,” Wordsworth, Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (2nd Ed.), Terada, “Emotion After the Death of the Subject” (Keats)

### **3. Structures of Feeling, Wanings of Affect, Futures of Enthusiasm**

Williams, “Structures of Feeling,” Goldsmith, “The Future of Enthusiasm,” Jameson, from *Postmodernism, Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Michael Taussig (Ai)

### **4. *Depense, Jouissance, and the Punctum: Barthes and Bataille***

Bataille, “The Notion of Expenditure,” “Sacrifices,” “The Sacred,” Barthes, “The Third Meaning,” from *Camera Lucida*, from *The Pleasure of the Text* (Johnson)

### **5. The Melodrama Interlude I: Magnificent Obsessions**

Copjec, “The Invention of Crying,” Berlant, “The Female Complaint,” Doane, from *Femmes Fatales* (Sirk, *All That Heaven Allows*)

### **6. The Melodrama Interlude II: How Far From Feeling?**

Singer, from *Melodrama and Modernity*, Gunning, “Cinema of Coming Attractions,” Goldberg, from *Melodrama: Aesthetics of Impossibility*, Davis, from *The Desiring-Image* (Haynes, *Far From Heaven*)

### **7. The Event of Affect Theory**

Sedgwick and Frank, “Shame in the Cybernetic Fold,” Massumi, “The Autonomy of Affect,” Leys, “The Turn to Affect: A Critique,” Berlant, “Cruel Optimism,” Colebrook, *Earth Felt the Wound: The Affective Divide* (Dickinson & Ashbery)

### **8. Sianne Ngai’s Ugly Feelings; or, the Pretty Problem of Bartleby**

Ngai, Introduction and Afterword to *Ugly Feelings*, Deleuze, “Bartleby, the formula,” Wendy Anne Lee, “The Scandal of Insensibility; or, The Bartleby Problem” (Melville)

### **9. Past Affect; or, The Problem of Nostalgia**

Jameson, “Nostalgia for the Present,” Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility,” Smith, “Some Notes on Attunement,” de Man, from “The Rhetoric of Blindness,” Williams, “Dominant, Emergent, and Residual” (*Mad Men* & “Tintern Abbey”)

### **10. Deleuze and the Futures of Affect**

Deleuze, from *What is Philosophy?*, “To Have Done With Judgment,” from *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, Rajchman, from *The Deleuze Connections: “Life,” “Sensations,”* Shaviri, “Deleuze’s Theory of Sexuality” (Wong Kar-Wei)

