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 27th and versions are due June 10th.

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

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

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

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

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,” Shaviro, “Deleuze’s Theory of Sexuality” (Wong Kar-Wei)