

ENG/ART 399, SPRING 2014
T/TH 11:00-12:20
LOCATION: CHANCELLOR GREEN 103
OFFICE: MCCOSH B29

DAVID M. BALL
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OFFICE HOURS: T/TH 10:00-11:00
AND BY APPOINTMENT

CONTEMPORARY EXPERIMENTAL LITERATURE AND VISUAL CULTURE

<http://blogs.princeton.edu/experimentalfiction/>



This course will study contemporary writers and artists at the intersection of the fine art exhibition, the artist's book, and graphic narrative who seek to overturn the traditions, formal devices, and audience expectations of literary fiction. Among the questions we'll be asking include: How do translation, citation, influence, and appropriation travel between different mediums? Do such experiments in image and text radically alter our previous conceptions of literature or do they reassert notions of innovation, authenticity, and originality that undergird conventional ideals of the literary? How do these works respond to the turbulent changes in visual culture and publishing in the digital age and force us to read and see and read differently at the outset of the 21st century? How do contemporary notions of narrative reformulate viewers' experiences of digital and physical books, exhibition spaces and emerging media? We'll pursue these questions with the goal of developing the skills of close reading and seeing in pursuit of substantial, self-designed student research by semester's end. We'll also be conducting our own creative experiments on the class blog to sharpen our critical facilities and make ourselves attuned to the intellectual and creative stakes of the texts we read.

[B] = available as a .pdf file on the course Blackboard site

Week 1: Orientations

Feb 4 Introductions, course policies, and expectations

Feb 6 A very brief history of image-texts (petroglyphs through contemporary graphic narrative, with a significant detour at modernism) [B]

Reading Images, Reading Text

Week 2: Experimental Text, Experimental Image

Feb 11 Jonathan Franzen, "Mr. Difficult: William Gaddis and the Problem of Hard-to-Read Books" [B]

Ben Marcus, "Why Experimental Fiction Threatens to Destroy Publishing, Jonathan Franzen, and Life as We Know It: A Correction" [B]
Opening Pages from Franzen, *The Corrections* and Marcus, *The Age of Wire and String* [B]

Feb 13 Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics* (1993)
Selections from Andrei Molotiu (ed.), *Abstract Comics* [B]

Week 3: Adaptation as Interpretation

Feb 18 Paul Auster, "City of Glass" (1987)
Paul Auster, Paul Karasik, and David Mazzucchelli, *City of Glass: The Graphic Novel* (1994)
****Experiment #1: Adaptation due Feb. 19th, 5:00 PM****

Feb 20 Auster et al., cont.

Week 4: Form as Content

Feb 25 Matt Madden, *99 Ways to Tell a Story* (2005)
Raymond Queneau, selections from *Exercises in Style* [B]
****Experiment #2: Constraint Feb 26th, 5:00 PM****

Feb 27 Madden, cont. **Matt Madden visits class, informal lunch to follow**

Week 5: Collaboration, Text and Image

Mar 4 Sophie Calle (and Paul Auster), *Double Game* (1999)
****Experiment 3: Happening due Mar. 5th, 5:00 PM****

Mar 6 Calle and Auster, cont.

****Mar. 7th, 5:00 PM: Paper #1 Due****

Week 6: Race and Representation

Mar 11 Selected works of Glenn Ligon, Kara Walker [B]

Mar 13 Ligon and Walker, cont.

****Mar 18, 20: Spring Break****

Graphic Narrative, Beyond Narrative

Weeks 7 & 8: Everyday Lives

Mar 25 Chris Ware, *Building Stories* (2012)

Mar 27 Ware, cont.

****Experiment 4: Self-representation due Mar. 31st, 5:00 PM****

Apr 1 Ware, cont.

Apr 3 Fulbright Company, *Gone Home*

Week 9: Graphic Memoir

Apr 8 Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home* (2006)
****Experiment 5: Visual Proposal due Apr. 9th, 5:00 PM****

Apr 10 Bechdel, cont.

Week 10: Selling Images

Apr. 15 Leanne Shapton, *Important Artifacts and Personal Property from the Collection of Lenore Doolan and Harold Morris, Including Books, Street Fashion, and Jewelry* (2009)

Apr. 17 Shapton, cont. **Leanne Shapton visits class, informal lunch to follow**
Lewis Hyde, selections from *The Gift* [B]

Week 11: Codex and Beyond

Apr 22 Tom Phillips, *A Humument* (various editions + iPad app; 1970-present)
Craig Dworkin, selections from *Reading the Illegible* [B]

Apr 24 Phillips, cont.

****Apr. 25th, 5:00 PM: Paper Drafts Due****

Week 12: Conclusions

Apr 29 Research Symposium / Select-a-text
****Experiment 6: Decomposition due Apr. 30th, 5:00 PM****

Mar 1 Conclusions, summations, celebration

**** May 13th, 5:00 PM: Dean's Date—Failure to Turn in all Written Coursework by Dean's Date will Result in a Failing Grade for the Course****

TBD: Painless 1-hour take-home final exam.

REQUIREMENTS:

- TIMELY AND THOUGHTFUL COMPLETION OF READING ASSIGNMENTS
- PUNCTUAL ATTENDANCE AND ENGAGED CLASS PARTICIPATION
- A SHORT, 2-3-PAGE CLOSE READING/SEEING EXERCISE
- A 15-20-PAGE RESEARCH PAPER ANALYZING ONE OF THE TEXTS INCLUDED ON THE SYLLABUS AS WELL AS A PROPOSAL AND DRAFT OF THAT ARGUMENT
- A SERIES OF 6 CREATIVE “EXPERIMENTS” ON THE CLASS BLOG, COMMENTARY ON THE WORK OF CLASSMATES, AND A WILLINGNESS TO TAKE INTELLECTUAL RISKS
- A PAINLESS ONE-HOUR TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAM

REQUIRED TEXTS: All texts are available for purchase at Labyrinth Books and are accessible via three-hour reserves in Firestone Library, including the Tom Phillips iPad app. Private copies of “Fun Home” can be purchased separately or utilized in the New Media Center. **If you purchase your books through other sources, please only purchase the edition/ISBN indicated below.**

Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics* (Harper Paperbacks, 1994) ISBN# 9780060976255

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

Matt Madden, *99 Ways to Tell a Story: Exercises in Style* (Chamberlain, 2005) ISBN#9781596090781

Sophie Calle and Paul Auster, *Double Game* (Violette, 2013) ISBN# 9781900828284

Chris Ware, *Building Stories* (Pantheon, 2012) ISBN# 9780375424335

Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home* (Mariner, 2007) ISBN# 9780618871711

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

The Fulbright Company, *Gone Home* <http://www.gonehomegame.com/>

Tom Phillips, *A Humument* iPad app <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/a-humument-app/id402755491?mt=8>

GRADING: RESEARCH PAPER—50% (PROPOSAL 15%, DRAFT 35%, REVISION 50%);
CLOSE READING/SEEING ASSIGNMENT—5%; CLASS PARTICIPATION—20%;
CLASS BLOG EXPERIMENTS—15%; TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAM—10%

LATE PAPER POLICY: All papers and other assignments are due on the date indicated on the syllabus. With the extraordinary and rare exception for medical or emergency reasons, late papers will receive a failing grade. Failure to turn in all writing assignments by Dean’s Date 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 course grade. Excused absences for non-academic or non-medical 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 by active contributions to course discussion; consistent, silent attendance will receive a “C.”

LAPTOP/PHONE POLICY: While tremendous tools for learning, I have found that laptops in the seminar classroom inhibit rather than promote intellectual dialogue. Unless you have a documented need for a laptop for note taking, please print out all of the course readings and bring them to class, and please refrain from using any internet-enabled devices in the classroom. Obviously, this rule goes out the window when we’re working with iPad apps, games, and the like; when we employ technology, we’ll try to do so in concert. Do I contradict myself? Very well then . . . I contradict myself; I am large . . . I contain multitudes.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: Princeton's policies on academic conduct and the undergraduate honor system are admirably clear and available for review here:

<http://www.princeton.edu/pub/rrr/index.xml> I am happy to discuss questions about academic honesty, permissible collaboration, and 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. Located in Lauritzen Hall, the Writing Center (www.princeton.edu/writing/center) offers student writers free, one-on-one conferences with experienced fellow writers who are trained to consult on assignments in any discipline. Writing Center Fellows can help with any part of the writing process, from getting started to developing a thesis, structuring an argument, or revising a draft. The goal of each session is to teach writing strategies that will encourage you to become an astute reader of your own writing. Although the Writing Center is not an editing or proofreading service, Fellows can help you learn strategies for improving sentences and checking mechanics. I encourage you to make visits to the Writing Center a regular part of your writing process. Every writer—no matter how confident or experienced—can benefit enormously from the insights and suggestions an intelligent outside reader offers. To make an appointment, visit the Writing Center's web site at www.princeton.edu/writing/appt. Evening drop-in hours are also available, Sunday through Thursday. I have also arranged for our seminar to have a Course Fellow, a dedicated tutor who will be familiar with the assignments and expectations of our course. More details will be forthcoming as I have them.

A research librarian can both elevate your scholarship and save tremendous amounts of time in your search for scholarly resources. Two contacts I particularly recommend are John Logan, Literature Bibliographer (jlogan@princeton.edu) and Mary George, Senior Reference Librarian (mwgeorge@princeton.edu), although anyone on staff at Firestone can help orient you to the wealth of scholarly resources at the University.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR DISABILITIES: In full support of Princeton University policy and equal access laws, I am available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that may be recommended for students with disabilities. Students with disabilities requesting academic accommodations must register with the Office of Disability Services (ods@princeton.edu; 258-8840) for disability verification and determination of eligibility for reasonable academic accommodations. Requests for academic accommodations for this course need to be made at the beginning of the semester, or as soon as possible for newly approved students, and again at least two weeks in advance of any needed accommodations in order to make arrangements to implement the accommodations. Please make an appointment to meet with me in order to maintain confidentiality in addressing your needs. No accommodations can be given without authorization from ODS, or without advance notice.

HAVING READ THE SYLLABUS COMPLETELY, PLEASE FILL OUT THE PERSONAL INFORMATION FORM AVAILABLE IN "COURSE MATERIALS" TAB OF THE ENG399 BLACKBOARD PAGE AND EMAIL IT TO ME DIRECTLY. THANK YOU AND WELCOME TO THE CLASS!