

AY 397A: Introduction to Anthropology of the Senses

Tuesday, Thursday 2:30 – 3:45 pm

Instructor:

William Hope, PhD

305 Diamond

Office Hours: by appointment, please

wmhope@colby.edu

Course Description

This course explores a basic premise of the Anthropology of the Senses: *sensory perception is as much a cultural act as a physical or biological function*. Central to this claim are the many ways that sensory domains become associated with particular social values and cultural practices. In this class, we will consider a number of scholarly debates and concerns regarding the inter-relations of the senses with historically dynamic human bodily experience. What does it mean to study the senses? What are the possible relationships among physiological capacities; social, political, and economic organizations; and their corresponding relations of power? How are gender, race, sexuality, and social class constructed not only through public institutions and markets but also embodied through everyday sociality and sensory perceptions? A particular focus of the course will be an examination of the various ways food, drink, art, music, dance, and other corporeal practices are mediated through personal and collective ideologies and practices around the affective and the sensual.

Requirements

Guiding principles:

1. Full and complete attendance, attention, participation, listening, and reading.
 - This class requires a serious commitment to maintaining the course readings as these will be the foundations upon which we will develop our class discussions. Some of these readings are challenging; however, each presents a series of considerations and insights that will provide you with useful conceptual tools in your engagements with the complexities of human conditions and experiences. In order to get the most out of them, we will all need to be actively present in class and prepared to engage in productive discussion.
2. Good faith, good humor, and respect toward your colleagues (and your teacher) in the classroom.
 - We will inevitably have differences of opinion and moments of disagreement: this is good. Feel free to passionately engage your colleagues as you share your perspectives. Equally important, make a conscious effort to listen to and consider their perspectives as well. Rudeness and personal attacks will not be acceptable under any circumstances.

Assignments:

1. *Weekly Reading Notes with Questions for Discussion*

Each class you will turn in a brief set of reading notes that outline the central arguments of the assigned readings, any questions that might have emerged from your readings, and one concrete point of discussion for the class. Far from being busy work, this is a great reading skill to cultivate as you will establish strong habits in looking for an author's central points, organization, and style of writing. These insights can productively shape your own writing.

- Submit your reading notes via email no later than one hour prior to the start of class.
- Make sure to reference specific passages from the readings.
- Refrain from the “Search and Destroy” approach to academic criticism, but rather seek to understand the coherency of the essays on the author's own terms. *You do not have to be in agreement with the argument, implications, organization, or conclusions of the essay.* These are great points for discussion. However, you do need to be able to identify and engage with the author's intent for writing the essay.
- We will not be able to incorporate everyone's points of discussion in every class. If there is something that you really prepared for that didn't come up in discussion, don't be discouraged. These can be good resources for your response papers or final project. Finally, I will be happy to discuss outside of class anything that you find interesting about the readings or class discussion.

2. *Response Papers*

You will write six response papers dealing with class themes, topics, or discussion. Each paper will be app. 3 to 5 pages long. Broadly speaking, these response papers will allow you to engage our study of the senses by attending to and reflecting upon your own sensory perceptions and/ or those of friends, colleagues, family members, etc. I will provide more specific guidelines over the course of the semester as we prepare for each response paper.

3. *Sensory Journals*

Over the course of the semester, I would like each of us to document a range of sensory perceptions that we experience and to put these into narrative form. The idea is to actively reflect upon our experiences and to bring them into dialogue with those of our colleagues and with the themes we are exploring in the class. I would like you to have at least one entry each week (you are, of course, free to do much more, if you like).

4. *Project Proposals and updates*

Mid-way through the semester, you will turn in a brief descriptive proposal of your final research project. I expect this to be app. three pages long. You are not completely bound by this proposal. Rather, the proposal is an opportunity to start organizing your thoughts for the final project. This will provide you a concrete basis for describing your project to your colleagues and to me. I am happy to meet and discuss any ideas that you might have prior to your submitting the proposal.

5. *Final Project*

There are several options available for the final project. Feel free to craft your own distinct project from the following:

a) *Standard Class Paper*

This paper will be the result of your analysis, interpretations, and reactions to class readings and discussions. Key to this approach is the development of a clear thesis statement that is supported with substantial reference to the class materials.

Proposals for this option should include a clearly stated premise as to why you are pursuing this line of inquiry, a discussion of how you intend to approach it, and a preliminary discussion of the readings that will help you refine your thinking on this subject. The paper should be approximately 12-15 pages, double-spaced, and conforming to a conventional academic format and reference system.

b) *Applied Analysis Paper*

This paper will seek to apply/ test specific insights of the class readings and discussions to the interpretation and analysis of a particular work (literary, musical, film, event, etc.). Key to this approach is selecting a topic that you think allows for a substantial discussion of the significance of sensory domains in the production, experience, and/ or reception of this particular work.

Proposals for this option should include a clearly stated premise as to why you are selecting this work, a discussion of how you intend to approach it, and a preliminary discussion of the readings that will help you refine your engagement with this subject. The research paper should be approximately 12-15 pages, double-spaced, and conforming to a conventional academic format and reference system.

c) *Individual or Group Sensory Ethnography*

This paper will be the result of your own research design and implementation. This option can be the outgrowth of the response papers, especially if you find one topic particularly engaging and productive. Possible topics include the various sensory-scapes and the meanings that people invest in them that we will be exploring throughout the class.

Proposals for this option should include a clearly stated focus for your research project, a discussion of the methods you intend to employ, and a preliminary discussion of the readings that will help you refine your engagement with this project. Be warned: this can be the most fun yet demanding option. It is not recommended for procrastinators!

d) *Other thoughts or projects that might come to your mind.* Be sure to discuss them with me prior to submitting your proposal.

Composition of final grade:

Attendance/ participation	10%
Reading notes	10%
6 short response papers	30%
Sensory Journal	10%
Project proposal/ discussion	10%
Research project	30%

Grading Scale:

98-100	A+	77-79	C+
93-97	A	73-76	C
90-92	A-	70-72	C-
87-89	B+	67-69	D+
83-86	B	63-66	D
80-82	B-	60-62	D-/ 0-59 F

Required Readings:

David Howes, ed. (2005) *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader*. New York: Berg.

Additional articles will be posted on Moodle.

Note on Academic Integrity

It is your responsibility to become familiar with the College's policy on academic honesty (http://www.colby.edu/academics_cs/catalogue/2009_2010/academic_program/acad-honesty.cfm). For all graded assignments, your work must be your own. You should cite authors for their contributions to your thinking or your writing. If you copy text from published or unpublished sources not your own without proper citations or any material from the internet, or if you purchase or receive a paper in full from another source, this constitutes plagiarism and/or cheating. You will receive an "F" grade for this course.

Attendance Policy

I expect you to attend every class. Absences will lower your attendance/ participation grade and you will not receive credit for any missed reading notes. That said, I recognize that situations might arise where you will not be able to attend class. I strongly encourage you to contact me (and all of your professors) in such events. Failure to communicate your situation within three days will give you a zero for the assignment grade.

For excused absences, the student must provide supporting documentation. Such documentation must come from a physician, nurse, military supervisor, athletics coach or supervisor, or whoever has the authority to explain your absence. You must supply documentation and make arrangements to make up any missed work within three days.

Syllabus of Lectures and Readings

Week 1

Thursday 9/8

Introduction and course overview

Readings:

- Constance Classen. 1997. "Foundations for an Anthropology of the Senses." *International Social Science Journal* 153: 401-412.

Response Paper 1 assigned

Week 2

Tuesday 9/13

Initial Considerations on "Making Sense of Culture"

Readings:

- Howes, David. 2003. "Taking Leave of our Senses" and "Coming to our Senses." *Sensual Relations: Engaging the Senses in Culture and Social Theory*, 1-58. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Thursday 9/15

Readings:

- Turino, Thomas. 2008. "Habits of the Self, Identity, and Culture." *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation*, 93-121. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Week 3

The Body and Embodiment

Tuesday 9/20

Readings:

- Mauss, Marcel. 1979. "Body Techniques." In *Sociology and Psychology Essays*, 95-109, trans. Ben Brewster, 120-123. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1990. "Structures, *Habitus*, Practices." In *The Logic of Practice*, 52-65. Trans. by Richard Nice. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Geurts, Katherine Linn. 2005. "Consciousness as 'Feeling in the Body' A West African Theory of Embodiment, Emotion, and Making of Mind." In *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader*, 164-177.

Thursday 9/22

Readings:

- Noland, Carrie. 2009. "Introduction" and Ch. 1 *Agency and Embodiment: Performing Gestures/ producing Culture*, 1-54. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Encounter 1: Susan Golden, School Street Yoga Studio

Response Paper 2 assigned

Week 4

Senses of Place

Tuesday 9/27

Readings:

- Casey, Edward. S. 1996. "How to Get from Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time: Phenomenological Prolegomena." In *Getting Back into Place*, 317-348. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Feld, Steven. 2005. "Places Sensed, Senses Placed: Toward a Sensuous Epistemology of Environments." In *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader*, 179-191.

Thursday 9/29

Readings:

- Sutton, David. 2006. "Synesthesia, Memory, and the Taste of Home." In *The Taste Culture Reader*, 304-316. New York: Berg.
- Haden, Roger. 2006. "Taste in an Age of Convenience." In *The Taste Culture Reader*, 344-358. New York: Berg.

Encounter 2: David Gulak, Barrels Community Market

Week 5***Hearing, Listening, and Sounding***

Tuesday 10/4

Readings:

- Feld Steven, Brenneis D. 2004. "Doing anthropology in sound". *Am. Ethnol.* 41(4): 461-74.
- Schafer, R. Murray. 2005. "Introduction" (3-12), "Perception" (151-160), "Listening" (205-213), "The Acoustic Community" (214-225) In *The Soundscape: Our Environment and the Tuning of the World*. Rochester: Destiny.

Thursday 10/6

Readings:

- Torigoe, Keiko. 2002. "A City Traced by Soundscape" In *Soundscape Studies and Methods*, 39-58. Eds. Helmi Jarviluoma and Gregg Wagstaff. Helsinki: University of Turku.
- Wagstaff, Gregg. 2002. "Towards a Social Ecological Soundscape" In *Soundscape Studies and Methods*, 115-132.
- Winkler, Justin. 2002. "Rhythmicity" In *Soundscape Studies and Methods*, 133-90.

Response Paper 3 assigned

Week 6***Power and the senses***

Tuesday 10/11

Readings:

- Foucault, Michel. 1977. "Panopticism," in *Discipline and Punish*, 195-228 (trans. Alan Sheridan). New York: Vintage Books.
- Ranciere, Jacques. 2004. "The Distribution of the Sensible: Politics and Aesthetics." In *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 12-30. London: Continuum.

Thursday 10/13

Readings:

- Noland, Carrie. 2009. Ch. 5 and Conclusion in *Agency and Embodiment: Performing Gestures/ producing Culture*, 170-215. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Week 7***Sensescapes***

Tuesday 10/18

Readings:

- "Sensation in Cultural Context." In *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader*, 143-145.
- Law, Lisa. 2005. "Home Cooking: Filipino Women and Geographies of the Senses in Hong Kong." In *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader*, 224-241.
- Drobnick, Jim. 2005. "Volatile Effects: Olfactory Dimensions of Art and Architecture." In *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader*, 265-280.
- Miller, William Ian. "Darwin's Disgust." In *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader*, 335-354.

Meeting: Tower room Miller Library

Thursday 10/20

Readings:

- Mazow, Leo. 2010. "Sensing America." *American Art*, Vol. 24, No. 3, (Fall), pp. 2-11.
- Smith, Mark. 2010. "When Seeing Makes Scents." *American Art*, Vol. 24, No. 3, (Fall), pp. 12-14.
- Naeem, Asma. 2010. "The Aural Imagination." *American Art*, Vol. 24, No. 3, (Fall), pp. 14-17.
- Jordan, Guy. 2010. "What does it mean to 'Consume' images?" *American Art*, Vol. 24, No. 3, (Fall), pp. 18-21.
- Bellion, Wendy. 2010. "Vision and Visuality." *American Art*, Vol. 24, No. 3, (Fall), pp. 21-25.

Encounter 3: Lauren Lessing, Colby Art Museum
Proposals for Final Projects are Due Oct. 20

Week 8

Tuesday 10/25

Reordering Sensory Experience

Readings:

- "Culture Tunes our Neurons." In *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader*, 21-24.
- Sacks, Oliver. 2005. "The Mind's Eye: What the blind see." In *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader*, 25-42.
- Glennie, Evelyn. 1993. "Hearing Essay."
http://www.evelyn.co.uk/hearing_essay.aspx

Movie: *Touch the Sound*

Thursday 10/27

Encounter 4: Alan Von Herrmann

Week 9

Tuesday 11/1

Readings:

- Thompson, E. P. 1967. "Time, Work discipline and Industrial Capitalism", *Past and Present* 38: 56-97.
- McLuhan, Marshall. 2005. "Inside the Five Sense Sensorium." In *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader*, 43-51.
- Slater, Don. 2009. "The Ethics of Routine: Consciousness, Tedium, and Value." In *Time, Consumption and Everyday Life: Practice, Materiality, and Culture*, 217-230.

Thursday 11/3

Readings:

- Bull, Michael. 2007. "Sound moves, iPod Culture and urban experience: and Introduction." In *Sound Moves: iPod culture and urban experience*, 1-11. New York: Routledge.
- Bull, Michael. 2007. "The audio-visual iPod: aesthetics and the city." In *Sound Moves: iPod culture and urban experience*, 38-49.

Response Paper 5 assigned

Week 10

Tuesday 11/8

Disordered Senses and Sensory DisordersReadings:

- Keller, Helen. 2006. "Sense and Sensibility." In *The Smell Culture Reader*, 181-183. Ed. Jim Drobnick. New York: Berg.
- Hull, John. 2005. "Rainfall and the Blind Body." In *The Book of Touch*, 324-327. Ed. Constance Classen. New York: Berg.
- "The Senses Disordered." In *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader*, 357-359. Ed. David Howes. New York: Berg.
- Ekman, Hans-Goran. 2005. "Strindberg's 'Deranged Sensations'." In *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader*, 361-368. Ed. David Howes. New York: Berg.

Thursday 11/10

Readings:

- Desjarlais, Robert. 2005. "Movement, Stillness: On the Sensory World of a Shelter for the 'Homeless Mentally Ill'." In *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader*, 369-379.
- Fletcher, Christopher. 2005. "Dystoposthesia: Emplacing Environmental Sensitivities." In *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader*, 380-394.

Week 11

Tuesday 11/15

Readings:

- Kontos, Pia. 2006. "Embodied Selfhood: an Ethnographic exploration of Alzheimer's Disease." In *Thinking about Dementia: Culture, Loss, and the Anthropology of Senility*, 195-217. Eds. Annette Leibing and Lawrence Cohen. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press.
- Leibing, Annette. 2006. "Divided Gazes: Alzheimer's Disease, the Person Within, and Death in Life." In *Thinking about Dementia: Culture, Loss, and the Anthropology of Senility*, 240-268.

Thursday 11/17

No class: AAA conference

Week 12

Tuesday 11/22

Encounter 5: Chuck Lakin, coffin builder for green funerals

Readings:

- Foucault, Michel. 1979. "The Birth of Biopolitics." In *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth (Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984, Vol. 1)*. Perseus Distribution Services.
- Feely-Harnick, Gillian. 1989. "Cloth and the Creation of Ancestors in Madagascar." Eds. Annette Weiner and Jane Schneider. In *Cloth and Human Experience*, Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press.

Thursday 11/24

No class: Thanksgiving Break

Week 13

Tuesday 11/29

Branding the Senses

Readings:

- Howes, David. 2005. "HYPERESTESIA, or, The Sensual Logic of Late Capitalism." In *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader*, 179-191.
- Howes, David. 2005. "Multi-Sensory Marketing in Cross-Cultural Perspective (part I): From Synergy to Synaesthesia." http://www.perceptnet.com/cien01_07_ang.htm
- Howes, David. 2005. "Multi-Sensory Marketing in Cross-Cultural Perspective (part II): Making Sense of the Senses." http://www.perceptnet.com/cien01_07_ang.htm

Thursday 12/1

Readings:

- de Waal Malefyt, Timothy. 2007. "From Rational Calculation to Sensual Experience." In *The Emotions: A Cultural Reader*, 321-338. New York: Berg.

Response Paper 6 assigned

Week 14

Tuesday 12/6

Wrap-up

Final projects are due by Friday, Dec. 16.