Syllabus

Making Strange:
Constructing Identities and Making Sense of our Surroundings
Spring, 2017
WF, 3:30-4:45 p.m., Eastern Time Zone

Instructors:
Janet Wesselius, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Philosophy, University of Alberta
Yvonne Franke, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of German, Midwestern State University

Contact information will be sent to students via email.

Office Hours:
Wesselius — Mondays 12-2 p.m. EST (in my office and accessible by e-mail, Skype, or phone)
Franke — Tuesdays & Thursdays 10-11 a.m. EST (in my office and accessible by e-mail, Skype, or phone)

Course Description: In the light of increased sensitivities towards global threats, people are afraid of strangers. This course aims to give students the time and tools to reflect upon the meaning of "strange." How is strangeness constructed? What is strange in one place at one time may not be considered strange elsewhere. How do we identify ourselves as being part of a particular culture and nation? What is familiar and what is alien to us and why? Through discussing these questions we can identify and explore larger issues, drawing from our respective local cultures. Course materials include film and short philosophical and literary texts. Students are welcomed from a wide variety of disciplines. They will venture out into their own communities to find local examples of strangeness and familiarity in the form of images, places, legends and stories, sayings, and history and see how the local fits in with larger narratives. This research will be used to create digital projects on "making strange" that will be part of the COPLACDigital site and provide a resource for thinking through the issues of strangeness.

Learning Objectives: In this class, students will develop and practice the following:
- An appreciation of diverse methods and processes of the digital humanities, and utilization of technological resources in research, data analysis, and presentation.
- To make discipline-specific oral presentations to groups.
- To work together cooperatively and creatively
- To conduct research in multiple sites.
- To master the skills of critical analysis and writing

Course Requirements: Every student will accomplish the following:
1. Complete a website based on a contract made between the individual and the professors
2. Post weekly progress reports on your own blog
3. Regularly present to the class about the status of your project
4. Participate in class discussions of readings, videos, and the process of creating digital humanities
5. Participate in class workshops related to specific digital tools and research skills
6. At end of the semester, complete a brief paper/blog post reflecting on the process and defending your project as contracted

Students are expected to attend all class sessions or view the class sessions online and meet with professors as needed/required, read all assigned texts, and participate in class. [Students are also responsible for submitting all project drafts and the final product by the contracted due date. Assignments are considered late if turned in/posted anytime after the appointed due date. Late projects will be penalized one half-letter grade per day.]

Discussions: Students are expected to attend all classes having read the assigned material or having completed assigned tasks. Class participation includes actively participating in daily discussions and responding to class presentations. To that end, for each class for which there are readings/videos, students should also prepare a list of comments on the material (parallels, problems, factual questions, reminders of past readings, connections to ideas from other classes or from "real life") so that they have those points in front of them for the discussion. Although we have no current plan to collect these comments, we reserve the right to do so at any point during the semester.

Blogging: Distance learning courses present unique challenges with regard to collaboration and communication. Some of the tactics we will use to bridge the distance gap will be blogs, discussions on Google Hangout, Zoom, Join.me or Skype, and use of other social media. Narrating the planning, research, and implementation processes via your blogs is a central part of the class and a way for us to measure your effort, your creativity, and your progress as digital scholars. Blog about your problems as well as your successes. Be sure to comment on each others' blogs and help each other out. This is a community of people going through similar efforts that you can tap into, so do so. Weekly posts & comments are a minimum expectation of the class.

Texts:
All readings for this semester will be available on-line.

Final Grades: Final grades will be determined based on class participation (including blogging, mini assignments, and regular presentations to the class) (35%), Contract (project outline, 5%), project (50%), and on the quality of the final formal presentations on the projects (10%). Unsatisfactory performance will be reported mid-semester to your advisor on your home campus. The seminar instructors, Dr. Janet Wesselius and Dr. Yvonne Franke, will transmit the final grade to your advisor, and she or he will enter the grade using an independent study option at your home campus.

Academic Conduct: You should know that if you cheat or plagiarize in this class, you will fail, and we will report the incident to our liaison on your home campus. On the other hand, having friends or family read and comment on your writing can be extremely helpful and falls within the bounds of proper academic conduct (assuming the writing itself remains yours). If you have questions about these issues, then you should talk to us sooner rather than later.

Project Contracts: Each student will create contracts with Professors Wesselius and Franke about their projects. The contracts are due February 24, though each contract will need to be approved by us & may need to be tweaked before approval. Each contract must include:
- Mission statement (describe project)
- Tools the student plans to use
- Schedule of milestones (when critical pieces are ready to present)

NOTE: These contracts may be revised as the semester goes on, though only with good reasons and only after discussion with Professors Wesselius and Franke

Regular Presentations (or Updates): Starting in week 6, each individual will be expected to make weekly status updates in class on Wednesdays on their progress. Although some weeks 3-5 minute updates will be sufficient, every other week individuals will need to present a more thorough update. More details on when you will be responsible for a lengthier presentation will be posted later in the semester.

End of the Semester (Public) Presentations: At the end of the semester each individual will make a 8-10 minute presentation summarizing their project. More on this later in the semester.

Reflection post/defense of contract: In the last week of the semester, each person will be expected to write a brief blog post or paper (your choice). This paper (~1-2 pages/~500 words) should reflect on the process and defend your project as contracted.

Accommodations: If you receive services through your Office of Disability Resources and require accommodations for this class, please speak with us as soon as possible to discuss your approved accommodation needs. We will need a copy of your accommodation letter. We will hold any information you share with us in the strictest confidence unless you give us permission to do otherwise. If you need accommodations, please consult with your Office of Disability Resources about the appropriate documentation of a disability.

Class Session Outline (Syllabus subject to change depending on progression of the class and students' interests)

Wednesday, January 18
Introduction to the course and of basic terminology: What does strangeness mean to you? What or who is the *Other*?

Friday, January 20
Introduction to the Digital Humanities and WordPress
Reading for this class: Ch. 1 of "Debate in the Digital Humanities"

Wednesday, January 25
Genres of Strangeness
Readings for this class: From Teju Cole, *Known and Strange Things*:
"Poetry of the Disregarded" (pp. 38-44)
"Memories of Things Unseen" (pp. 196-200)

Friday, January 27
Strangeness in the Neck of my Woods
Reading for this class: "Home strange Home" (*Known and Strange Things,* pp. 236-238)

Wednesday, February 1
Fearing what is "strange"
Reading for this class: From Stephen T. Asma, *On Monsters. An Unnatural History of Our Worst Fears* (pp. 183-188: "Angst and Horror", "Angst and Fear")
Watch: "The White Ribbon" (dir. Michael Haneke, 2009)

Friday, February 3
Fearing what is "strange" (continuation)
Reading: "Why We're Living in the Age of Fear"
http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/features/why-were-living-in-the-age-of-fear-w443554

Wednesday, February 8
Xenophobia
Reading for this class: From *On Monsters* (pp. 231-244: Xenophobia and Race,
Theoretical Xenophobia, Instinctual Xenophobia, Monstrous Civilizations)
Watch: "Ali: Fear Eats the Soul" (accessible online)

Friday, February 10
Terrorism
Reading for this class: From *On Monsters* (pp. 246-254: Monsters of Oppressed
Classes, Monsters of Ideology, Deconstructing Monsters)

Wednesday, February 15
Language & Culture
Reading: From Guy Deutscher, *Through the Language Glass. Why the World Looks
Different in Other Languages* (pp. 1-22: "Prologue. Language, Culture, and Thought)
Watch: Coca-Cola commercial "America the Beautiful" (YouTube)
        "Schultze Gets the Blues" (dir. Michael Schorr, 2004)
            Lifeswab cartoons: https://www.goethe.de/ins/nz/de/kul/sup/lsw.html

Friday, February 17
Class is cancelled

Wednesday, February 22
Perspectives in Literature: Sharon Dodua Otoo, bilingual reading of "Herr Gröttrup
Sits Down:" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QEAN3mjR6oo

Friday, February 24
Language & Culture (continuation)
Reading TBA

Wednesday, March 1
Student presentation/update on your project

The remaining class sessions will include student presentations about their projects.
Other themes can be included according to students' preferences.

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Wednesday, April 26
Last day of class