

LTCO 201 — Theories and Methods of Literary Analysis

Contemporary Experimental Thought



ph. Joanna Brooks

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Course description

This seminar engages with experimental scholarship in the wake of the humanities—*ex humanitas*—and will itself be a kind of experiment. After perusing the work of several “precursors” of experimental conceptual writing (Benjamin, Adorno, Genet, Derrida), we will dedicate the quarter to contemporary thinkers (some of whom will join us via zoom) who seek to disrupt, transgress, or subvert the boundaries of conventional academic genres, disciplines, and institutions. Together, we will read, discuss, listen to, and cogitate over Joanna Brooks’s quilting histories, Denise Ferreira da Silva + Arjuna Neuman’s transsensory philosophical films, Lynne Huffer’s auto-collage, Saidiya Hartman’s critical fabulation, Sora Han’s dystranslation, Natalie Loveless’s research-creations, Fred Moten + Stefano Harney’s undercommons, and Maggie Nelson’s autotheory. You might associate some of these proper names with fields or schools of thought—deconstruction, Marxism, political thought, Black study, psychoanalysis, poetics, feminist and queer theory—but it will not be our intention to cover “all” areas of contemporary critical theory. Rather, we will ask how we might allow our *own* intellectual labor, bound or unbound by disciplinary norms, to be inspired and transformed by our engagement with these thinkers. Our collective and individual experiments will be motivated by a series of *What if...?* questions: What if we were to consider experimental work as scholarship on par with, or far beyond, what we typically produce in the critical humanities? What if we were to attune ourselves to transsensory and transmedial experience as we write within more conventional academic genres (the conference paper, the article, the dissertation, the book)? What if we were to imagine intellectual work as a wholly creative endeavor?