

AMST266: Future Visions: Temporality and the Politics of Change
Spring 2014

Prof. Amy Tang
285 Court Street (ENGL) room 202
Office Phone: 685-3595
Email: atang@wesleyan.edu
Office Hours: Wednesday 2:30-4:30
and by appointment

Prof. Margot Weiss
255 High Street (CAMS) room 211
Office Phone: 685-5754
Email: mdweiss@wesleyan.edu
Office Hours: Tuesday 1:30-3:00
make an appointment: calendly.com/margot-weiss

Course Description

What is the time of political change? This course explores alternative temporal frameworks embraced by artists, writers, activists, and interdisciplinary scholars from diverse social and cultural locations. We ask: how do concepts of temporality help us understand, resist, contest, and transform prevailing social orders?

We will begin by assembling some conceptual tools for understanding the relationship of time to historical change and to racial, sexual, cultural, and national difference. Drawing on psychoanalysis, literary theory, history, trauma studies, anthropology, African American studies, queer theory, feminist studies, and postcolonial studies, we will explore the telos of modernity and narratives of liberal progress. We will then consider some of the critical and oppositional possibilities of being out of sync with dominant temporal frameworks, asking: are there other, perhaps more livable, temporalities? Next, we will consider the possibilities for memory and memorialization to work against historical forgetting and cultural amnesia – alongside the ways historical pasts might be appropriated to serve nationalist ends. Finally, we will turn to the question of the future as found in meditations on utopias and dystopias, and in political and ecological justice movements

Our readings include three texts that highlight the form and futures of political change: Theresa Hak Jyung Cha's *Dictee*, an avant-garde text that uses multiple genres (poetry, autobiography, history, photography, etc.) juxtaposing historical trauma and aesthetic experimentation; Kim Fortun's *Advocacy After Bhopal: Environmentalism, Disaster, New Global Orders*, an experimental ethnography of environmental disaster and its aftermath; and Octavia Butler's *Kindred*, a speculative fiction about time travel and the memory of slavery. As we consider social change, revolutions, and new "ends" and beginnings, you are invited to explore current social justice movements.

Course Texts

- Theresa Hak Jyung Cha (2009), *Dictee*. U California Press.
- Octavia Butler (2004), *Kindred*. Beacon Press.
- Kim Fortun (2001), *Advocacy After Bhopal: Environmentalism, Disaster, New Global Orders*. University of Chicago Press.

Books are available at Broad Street Books, and on reserve at Olin library. Films are also on reserve at Olin. All other readings available online at Moodle.

Course Assignments

- Attendance and Participation – 10%
- Weekly TPQ Memo (10) – 15%
- Presentation – 10%

AND

- Four Papers (4-5 pp) – 65%

OR

- Research Paper (20-25 pages)– 65%

Attendance and Participation

Your active participation is crucial to the success of our class. We expect you to come to class on time and prepared, and to contribute to our discussion in a positive, relevant, and respectful way. We will be reading challenging theoretical essays that often advocate opposing viewpoints. Thus, participation in this course means coming to class ready to ask questions, to think about what is at stake in these debates, and to begin to forge your own analysis. Your participation should be grounded in the reading; pointing us to relevant sections of an article or to a particular quote is most productive.

TPQ Memo: Two Points and a Question

Once weekly (either Monday or Wednesday), come to class with a typed, printed memo containing two points and a question from the readings. You need to turn in 10 TPQ Memos. The memo has two purposes: first, to give you a formal opportunity to reflect on the readings in a connective or synthetic way before class begins and second, to serve as a starting place for class discussions. The memos – and the class as a whole – will require you to read carefully, looking up terms you do not understand, and keeping notes as you read.

Once you have completed the reading, ask yourself:

How do these authors (perhaps differently) understand time and politics? Which ideas are most important, controversial, enlightening, difficult to understand, provocative? What are the disagreements or debates in this set of readings? What do these authors gain from an analysis of temporal frameworks? How do these readings connect/disconnect to other texts we have read? And finally, what do you think about these arguments, concepts and analyses?

To aid in class discussion, please note particular quotations or pages that you wish to discuss. You will turn in these memos after our class, but they will not be graded (you will receive credit/no credit). However, during the semester we may periodically call on you to share your memos, or discuss them in smaller groups.

Presentation

Working in groups of two to three students, you will give one 5-10 minute presentation over the course of the semester on one of the “extras” on the syllabus (or on your research project, if you choose the Research Option). You can also present on relevant outside material if approved by us in advance. The presentations should give the class additional information, complementing or

expanding the readings for that day. Your task is to present this material in a clear, comprehensible way that will enhance the class's understanding and add to our discussion. Your presentation should explain the main point of the external material and its relation and relevance to the main readings for that day. You might follow the summary with discussion questions, an exercise, a handout, short clips/media, etc. Sign-ups for presentations will take place in the second week of class, so take a look at the schedule to see what you might be interested in presenting on. The presentation is 10% of your grade. You may do an additional presentation for extra credit.

OPTION 1: FOUR PAPERS

You will turn in four 4-5-page double-spaced papers during the semester on the days listed on the syllabus. These papers should reflect your own critical engagement with the overarching themes and concepts of our course – you should connect, contrast, or synthesize the material. The short papers are analytical, argumentative essays, NOT summaries; you will need to use specific examples backed by precisely chosen textual evidence. Prompts will be distributed in advance of each deadline. The papers are worth 65% of your grade.

OPTION 2: RESEARCH PAPER

You will work on a final research paper (20-25 pages), turning in a prospectus, bibliography, and drafts throughout the semester (on the due dates listed in the syllabus). The paper needs to be relevant to the themes and questions raised in this course, but the topic is up to you. You should choose a topic in which you are particularly interested, and integrate the concepts and frameworks you have learned in the course with new perspectives, theories, and analysis you have researched on your own. If you would like this to count for the Research Option in English or FGSS, please let us know. The research paper is worth 65% of your grade. ** If you choose the research option, your in-class presentation will be on your research project.

Class Policies:

Policy on Absences: You may miss two classes without explanation or penalty -- think of these as your sick (or health) days, and take them as you see fit. Otherwise, we will expect you in class. If you miss more than 5 classes, you will fail the course.

Policy on extensions: If you have a dire family, medical, or other emergency that makes it impossible to complete your work for this class, please have your class dean contact us and/or speak to us about your options (such as taking an incomplete).

Policy on late papers: We will accept late papers with a grade penalty of one whole letter grade (=10 points) per day. For example, the paper is due at 5pm on Monday, and, had it been on time, you would have received an A (95). If you turn it in by 5pm on Tuesday, you will receive a B (85). Half days are ½ a letter grade. You cannot turn in memos late.

Policy on computers/cell phones in the classroom: Do not text, use facebook, shop online, look at pictures of cats, tumble, etc. during our class. Your cell phone should be off or on silent and put away. If you take notes on your laptop or have another documented reason for having it

in the class, you may bring it. Any use of your computer for non-class purposes will result in suspension of this privilege. Keep in mind that such use interferes with your ability to learn and focus on material; it is also distracting and disrespectful to us and your fellow students (read [this study](#) on how computer use in the classroom lowers grades for **both** the computer user *and other students within view*).

Resources:

Please come see us in office hours if there is any course material you do not understand, or if you need guidance on our expectations for papers, presentations, or any other aspect of this course. If you cannot make our office hours, please email us to set up an appointment.

Disability Resources

Wesleyan University is committed to ensuring that all qualified students with disabilities are afforded an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from its programs and services. To receive accommodations, a student must have a documented disability as defined by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and provide documentation of the disability. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, **please contact Disability Resources as soon as possible**. If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact Dean Patey in Disability Resources, located in North College, Room 021, or call 860-685-2332 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations.

Honor Code:

All work must be done in compliance with the Honor Code. If you need help with proper citations or you have questions on how to avoid plagiarism, let us know or contact the **Writing Workshop**: <http://www.wesleyan.edu/writing/workshop/>

Schedule

1/27, Monday: Introduction to the course

1. Time and Power

1/29, Wednesday: Power and Time

- E.P. Thompson, "Time, Work and Discipline in Industrial Capitalism" in *Past and Present* (57-97)
- Michel Foucault, "Docile Bodies" from *Discipline and Punish* (135-169: focus on 149-169)

2/3, Monday: Modernity's Others: progress and the primitive

- Johannes Fabian, "Introduction," in *Time and the Other* (25-35)
- Renato Rosaldo, "Imperialist Nostalgia" in *Representations* (107-122)

Recommended: Siobhan Somerville, "Scientific Racism and the Homosexual Body" in *Sexology in Culture*

Valerie Rohy, "Preface" to *Anachronism and Its Others: Sexuality, Race, Temporality*

James Clifford, "Histories of the Tribal and the Modern" in *Predicament of Culture*

Extras: Articles on "Human Zoo", Film: *The Life and Times of Sara Baartman*

2/5, Wednesday: Imperialist Nostalgia

Recommended: Fred Myers, "Primitivism," Anthropology and the Category of Primitive Art"

"On the Making of 'Cannibal Tours'" by Dennis O'Rourke

In class: Film: *Cannibal Tours*

2/10, Monday: Other Times

- Clifford Geertz, "Person, Time and Conduct in Bali" in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (focus on pp. 364-380, 389-404)
- E.E. Evans Pritchard, "Nuer Time-Reckoning" *Africa* (189-216)

Recommended: Edmund Leach, "Two Essays Concerning the Symbolic Representation of Time" in *Rethinking Anthropology*

2/12, Wednesday: Queer Time

- Tom Boellstorff, "When Marriage Falls: Queer Coincidences in Straight Time" in *GLQ* (227-248)
- Judith Halberstam, "Queer Temporalities and Postmodern Geographies" in *In a Queer Time and Place* (1-11)

Recommended: Kathryn Bond Stockton, "Introduction: Growing Sideways" in *The Queer Child*

Extra: Katherine Brewer Ball 2/10 CHUM lecture: "Escape Strategies and the Art of Non-Pragmatic Thinking"

2/17, Monday: Racial Time

- Michael Hanchard, "Afro-Modernity: Temporality, Politics, and the African Diaspora" *Public Culture* (245-268)
 - James Snead, "On Repetition in Black Culture," *Black American Literature Forum* (146-154)
- Paper 1 due / Power, Time, Alternatives

Research Option: Proposal and Working Bibliography Due (2-3 pages)

2. PAST: Trauma, Memory, History

2/19, Wednesday: Traumatic Time

- Sigmund Freud, from *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (8-16) and “Remembering, Repeating, and Working Through” (147-156)
- Ann Cvetkovich, “The Everyday Life of Queer Trauma” in *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (15-48)

Recommended: Cathy Caruth, “Introduction: The Wound and the Voice” in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, History* (1-9)

2/24, Monday: Memory

- Marita Sturken, “Introduction” to *Tangled Memories* (1-xx)
- Marianne Hirsch, “Mourning and Postmemory”

Extras: Film: *History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige*, Online Holocaust Museum exhibits, the Vietnam Wall Controversy

2/26, Wednesday: Start Octavia Butler, *Kindred* (pp. 1-107)

3/3, Monday: Finish Octavia Butler, *Kindred* (pp. 108-264)

Extras: Octavia Butler interview/video, “Positive Obsession”

3/5, Wednesday: Touring the Past

- Paulla Ebron, “Tourists as Pilgrims: Commercial Fashioning of Transatlantic Politics” in *American Ethnologist* (910-932)
- Saidiya Hartman, “Markets and Martyrs” in *Lose your Mother* (49-75)

In class: Oprah tours Auschwitz; *Curb Your Enthusiasm* episode “The Survivor”

Extras: documentary film series *Standing on Sacred Ground* (3/1-2), CT Freedom Trail

3/7, Friday: Paper 2 due / Trauma, Memory, Inhabiting the Past

Research Option: Literature Review Essay Due (6-8 pages)

SPRING BREAK

3. PRESENT. Repetition, Reenactment, Resistance

3/24, Monday: Performativity and Mimicry

- Judith Butler, “Imitation and Gender Insubordination” in *Inside/Out* (13-31)
- Homi Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man” in *The Location of Culture* (121-131)

Recommended: Interview with Judith Butler, “Gender as Performance”

In-class: Kara Walker and Michael Ray Charles

Extra: Glen Ligon at DAC

3/26, Wednesday: Political Melancholia

- Wendy Brown, “Resisting Left Melancholy” in *boundary 2* (19-27)
 - David Eng and Shinhee Han, “A Dialogue on Racial Melancholia” in *Loss* (343-371)
- Extra: Feel Tank Chicago

3/28, Friday: Optional Class Visit to DAC (tentative date)

3/31, Monday: Repetition and Resistance

- Theresa Hak Jyung Cha, *Dictee* (front matter through page 89)

4/2, Wednesday

- Theresa Hak Jyung Cha, *Dictee* (finish)

Recommended: Lisa Lowe, “Unfaithful to the Original: The Subject of *Dictee*” in *Immigrant Acts* (128-153)

Extra: Cha artwork from *Exilee/Temps Morts* or short film *Secret Spill* (both on reserve at Olin)

4/7, Monday Re-presenting the past

- Rebecca Schneider, “Reenactment and Relative Pain” in *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (32-60)
- Rosalind Shaw, from *Memories of the Slave Trade* (1-22, 115-125)

4/9, Wednesday: Feeling Backward

- Heather Love, “Introduction” and “Epilogue: The Politics of Refusal” to *Feeling Backward* (1-24, 146-163)
- Elizabeth Freeman, “Packing History, Count(er)ing Generations” in *New Literary History* (727-743)

Extras: AIDS Memorials, ACT UP Oral History Project

4/11, Friday: Paper 3 due / Repetition, Reenactment, Resistance

Research Option: Outline and Draft Due (10-12 pages)

4. Future: Speculation, Failure, Envisioning

4/14, Monday: Queer Activism, Political Feelings

- Douglas Crimp, “Mourning and Militancy” in *October* (3-18)
- Deborah B. Gould, “Despairing” and “Conclusion: Moving Politics” in *Moving Politics: Emotion and ACT UP's Fight against AIDS* (395-438, 439-444)

In-class: film clips: *United in Anger: A History of ACT UP*

Recommended: Christopher Castiglia and Christopher Reed, “Introduction” in *If Memory Serves: Gay Men, AIDS, and the Promise of the Queer Past* (1-37)

4/16, Wednesday: Utopia/No Future

- Lee Edelman, “The Future is Kid Stuff,” in *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (1-31)
- José Muñoz, “Queerness as Horizon: Utopian Hermeneutics in the Face of a Gay Pragmatism” in *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (19-32)

Extra: PMLA exchange “The Anti-social Thesis in Queer Theory”

4/21, Monday: Afro Futurism

- Jennifer Wenzel, “Remembering the Past’s Future: Anti-Imperialist Nostalgia and Some Versions of the Third World” in *Cultural Critique* (1-32)
- Kodwo Eshun “Further Considerations on Afro-Futurism” in *CR: The New Centennial Review* (287-302)

Recommended: Mark Dery, “Black to the Future: Interviews with Samuel R. Delany, Greg Tate, and Tricia Rose” in *Flame Wars*

Extras: Speculative Life archive, *Social Text*, Afro Futurism online archive

4/23, Wednesday: Precarious Futures

- Lauren Berlant, “Introduction” to *Cruel Optimism* (1-16)
- Kath Weston, “Political Ecologies of the Precarious” in *Anthropological Quarterly* (429-455)

Extras: Berlant blog, “Precarity Talk: A Virtual Roundtable” (*TDR*), Introduction to *Precarious Situations* (*W&P*)

4/28, Monday: The Future of Aftermath

Start Kim Fortun (2001), *Advocacy After Bhopal* (Prologue, Introduction, Chapters 1, 3-4)

Extras: Bhopal Project

4/30, Wednesday

Finish Kim Fortun (2001), *Advocacy After Bhopal* (Chapters 6, 9, 11, Epilogue)

Extra: Media and Interview with Kim Fortun

5/5, Monday: Political Visions

- Ryan Conrad, *Reviving the Queer Political Imagination*
- Margot Weiss, “‘Reinvigorating the Queer Political Imagination’: Roundtable with Ryan Conrad, Yasmin Nair, and Karma Chávez of the Against Equality collective” in *American Quarterly*

Extra: Revolutionary statements

Paper 4 due / Political Futures, Feelings, Visions

5/7, Wednesday

Course wrap up and discussion

Final Research Paper Due: 5/16