

Making Meaning: Conversations on Society and Culture

Winter 2008

Monday, Jan 14th

Sheetal Lodhia: "Making Meaning of Material Culture"

This lecture will be a brief introduction to material culture and cultural materialism. Thus, the class will entail reading critically something that wouldn't ordinarily be considered a text (such as monetary coins, a printed advertisement, television advertisement, or even an object (TBA)). Our objective would be to demonstrate that "things" (i.e. material culture) are as political as traditional texts, and shape the way we think and behave.

Biography: Sheetal Lodhia is a doctoral candidate in English literature at Queen's University. Her dissertation involves a study of bodies in the Renaissance. Her interests include literature, cultural studies, colonialism, history of science and medicine.

Monday, Jan 21st

Emmy Anglin and Matt Strohack: "Functions of the Macabre in 20th Century Popular Fiction"

We both have an interest in self-invention and transformation as themes and functions of horror in literature, film, and visual art. Matt will discuss pulp magazines from the modernist period, such as *Weird Tales*, as well as the works of H.P. Lovecraft. I would like to explore the morbid self-invention of New Yorker cartoonist Charles Addams, whose drawn creations generated the *Addams Family* TV show and movies. Primary topics will be self-invention, the complex relationship between horror and capitalism, and horror's potential for generating community.

Emmy's Biography: Emily Anglin is a Ph.D. candidate at Queen's University, where she does research in the field of Renaissance poetry and prose. Her main interest is in the idea that things can be collected in words, through listing and encyclopedic forms. She is also interested in contemporary American poetics and popular culture, where listing acquires new significance in commodity culture. She has an MA in Creative Writing from Concordia University.

Matt's Biography: Matt Strohack is a Ph.D. candidate at Queen's University. He is currently working on his dissertation on Modernism and the literature of

horror. He is interested in the divide between high and low culture, and is currently examining early examples of horror in film. His recent work considers texts ranging from those of Poe, Eliot, to the films of actor Lon Chaney as both horrific and Modernist.

Monday, Jan 28th

Andrew Stevens: "Calling for resistance: Union organizing and the globalization of information technology employment"

This lecture looks at the nature of call centre employment, an important part of the broader information- and knowledge-based industries, and how this sector is being shaped by corporate globalization, offshoring, and technological change. The lecture also examines the conditions of work within call centres, such as the degree of workplace surveillance, management control, as well as related physical and mental stress. As a response to these realities, the lecture looks at forms of resistance that take place at local and collective levels, with an emphasis on the potential for increased unionism within the sector and greater solidarity between workers and worker organizations. With StarTek (an American-based outsourced call centre firm) being a major employer in Kingston, this lecture has some regional significance.

Biography: Andrew Stevens is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Sociology and is researching the political economy of outsourcing, offshoring, and the call centre industries in Canada and India. His Master's level work looked at Marxist and anarchist theories of organization.

Monday, Feb 4th

Cheryl Cundell: "How beautiful is *That?*"

Using examples from the works of Wyatt, Surrey, and Sidney, the class outlines some of the conventions, forms, and rhetoric of Early Modern sonnets in order to provide a context for understanding the ambiguities of meaning in Shakespeare's sonnet 130.

Biography: Cheryl Cundell is a Ph.D. student studying late-twentieth-century Canadian literature that evokes late-eighteenth century British exploration writing. Her Master's thesis is on *Hamlet*.

Monday, Feb. 11th

Mark Streeter: "Panel Discussion: The Art of Comics"

Don't let that new "Graphic Novel" section in your local bookstore fool you: we've been using sequential art to talk to each other for at least a thousand years. Comic narrative is a system of communication that represents time and space on the one-dimensional surface of the page. It is appropriate, then, that comics predate most modern languages, and are read and understood in virtually every part of the world. The way we move through a comic narrative is so intuitive that it can be difficult to recognize the incredibly sophisticated process of negotiation we are carrying out -- not only with regard to space and time, but also between words and images, concrete objects and abstract concepts. This lecture will outline some of the basic formal properties of comic narrative, and trace the evolution of the comics medium up to the present day. We will spend most of our time looking at North American comics from the beginning of the Twentieth Century onward, a period in which comic literature has been explicitly bound up with the economy of mass culture, and we will consider several titles -- everything from the "classics" to the obscure and forgotten, from the wildly popular to the staunchly independent.

Biography: Mark Streeter is PhD student in the English Department at Queen's University. As a young person, he wrote and drew his own superhero comics. Later, when he became an adult who still wrote and drew like a six-year old, he decided to criticize comics instead of trying to make them. His current project involves the figure of the vigilante in Modern American literature and early comic book superheroes.

Monday, Feb 18th

Allison Smith and Raji Soni: "Love's Verses and Versions: Secular Songs, Sacred Poems"

During this lecture, we will explore intersections and differences between expressions of sacred and secular love. Some of the questions to be considered include: Where and how do authors draw the line between what is secular and what is sacred? Is it possible for something or someone--a love object, for instance--to disrupt that line? What relationships, if any, might exist between biblical poetry and contemporary love songs?

Allison's Biography: Allison Smith is a second-year Ph.D. student in the Department of English at Queen's. Her research focuses on contemporary song lyrics, particularly in terms of the sacred and the erotic.

Raji's Biography: Raji Soni is also a second-year Ph.D. student in the Department of English at Queen's. He researches forms of theological and secular desire in twentieth-century British and American poetry. He is also very interested in the Hebrew Scriptures.

Monday, Feb 25th

Vee Blackbourn: "Reading Contemporary Travel and Tourism"

What does modern-day luxury tourism have to do with the legacy of European imperialism? This lecture will focus on a section of Jamaica Kincaid's essay *A Small Place* as an introduction to contemporary post-colonial critiques of the tourist industry and to post-colonial writing strategies.

Biography: Vee Blackbourn is a doctoral student in the English Department at Queen's. Her dissertation focuses on the legacies of apartheid in contemporary South African fiction.

Monday, March 3rd

Scott Rutherford: "From Christians to Communists: Making meaning of "liberation" in Cold War Canada"

Scott Rutherford helps make meaning of "liberation" in Canada during the Cold War by examining the period between 1945 and 1975. His lecture discusses how a wide array of actors imagined liberation by simultaneously drawing from their own local experiences while conceptually linking to a politics of global dissent. Through an examination of newspapers, journals, and visual media, we will spend time discussing the public debates that occurred around "revolutionary moments" in Canada. From armed occupations to campaigns against nuclear weapons, by discussing public challenges to the Canadian state, and the debates and responses to them, we can unravel how "liberation" significantly shaped Cold War Canada.

Biography: Scott Rutherford is a PhD candidate in the History department at Queen's University.

Monday, March 10th

Dana Olwan and Wail Qattan: "Critical Readings of Palestine in Media and Film"

This lecture examines representations of Palestine in North American popular media and film. We will discuss how Palestine has been constructed, as well as why there is a pervasive silence surrounding who the Palestinians are culturally and politically. The aim of this lecture is to facilitate a discussion of why Palestine is typically represented in a negative manner and to question how international stories are developed in the news.

Dana's Biography: Dana Olwan is a PhD Candidate in the Department of English. She is working on a dissertation that examines the marketing and reception of Arab women's texts in North America. She is active in groups with social justice agendas like Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights and the Ontario Public Interest Research Group.

Wail's Biography: Wail Qattan is a PhD student in the Department of English. He has studied at many universities in Egypt, the USA and Canada, but has primarily learned his theoretical and critical thinking skills from people decidedly outside the academy. Some of Wail's more fortunate employment opportunities have been in guerilla theatre, with artists' cooperatives, NGO's that promote a one-state solution in Israel/Palestine, and as a voice for radio documentaries. Wail's current research, and planned dissertation, is on the making of the border that divides México and the USA.

Monday, March 17th

Ian Johnston: "Shakespeare and his Contemporaries: Reading Renaissance Drama"

This lecture will examine the historical context of Shakespeare's, as well as his contemporaries', drama, and explain how to use that context to better understand these plays. Shakespeare's plays in particular will be considered in the context of a vibrant, competitive, as well as cooperative play writing environment. This lecture will also examine some of the language of Renaissance plays in an effort to help the casual reader or viewer of Renaissance drama interpret internal cues that have been lost over time.

Biography: Ian Johnston is in the fourth year of his Ph.D. and has had a long love for drama, both Renaissance and contemporary. Currently he is teaching a

course on Shakespeare's later plays. His dissertation is a trans-historical project on power and sexuality's relationship to political ideology.

Monday, March 24th

Susan Cahill and Carla Taunton: "Performing Culture: Gender, Race, and Class in Nineteenth-Century World's Fairs"

This seminar investigates the ways in which identities were constructed, promoted, and maintained on behalf of those who were silenced due to their gender, race, and/or class. Including issues of imperialism, colonialism, power relations, and constructions of the Other(s), our discussion aims to explore how certain marginalised communities were exploited in order to legitimise the expansion, power, and wealth of the British Empire in the nineteenth century.

Susan's Biography: Susan Cahill is a PhD Candidate in Visual and Material Culture at Queen's University. Her main areas of interest include contemporary craft, gender, and globalisation. Susan's current project focuses on a Southeast Asian organisation - Carol Cassidy and Lao Textiles - and how this company constructs its identity through exhibitions and displays throughout North America and Europe.

Carla's Biography: I am a PhD Candidate at Queen's University in the Department of Art and an alliance member of the Aboriginal Curatorial Collective. I am interested in local arts communities and I am a board member at the Modern Fuel Artist Run Centre. Recently, I graduated from Carleton University in 2006 with a MA in Canadian art history. My MA thesis, "Lori Blondeau: High Tech Storytelling for Social Change" explores performance art as a vehicle negotiating indigenous decolonization. Currently my research interests are indigenous performance art, contemporary indigenous visual culture, interventions and activism in the arts, as well as globalization theory

Monday, March 30th

Breanne Oryschak: "Making Sense of Cinema: Looking beyond Plot and Character for Meaning in Film"

This lecture will survey basic film theories that push the moviegoer to consider aspects of film production and composition, which inform and inflect a movie's meaning beyond issues of storyline and characterisation. This class will consist of an introduction to film theory, a screening of a short film, and a discussion whereby students can practice applying newfound theoretical concepts to the short film shown.

Biography: Breanne Oryschak is a 3rd year PhD student in Queen's English Department. Her research interests include Restoration and Eighteenth-century literature and contemporary world cinema. Her particular focus is on the theoretical, political, ethical, and social dimensions of satire in performance, be it on the stage or the screen. Plus, she absolutely just loves movies.