The Society for the Humanities Fellows for 2015 - 2016

Director: Timothy Murray

Annetta Alexandridis - Classical Art and Archaeology, Cornell University

Craig A. Campbell - Anthropology, University of Texas at Austin

Arnika I. Fuhrmann - Asian Studies, Cornell University

Kelly Lynn Grotke - Erik Castrén Institute of International Law & Human Rights, Faculty of Law, Helsinki University

Rayna Kalas - English, Cornell University

Viranjini Munasinghe - Anthropology and Asian American Studies, Cornell University

Miguel Ángel Hernández Navarro - Art History, Universidad De Murcia

Steve Potter - Music Composition, Goldsmiths University of London

Carina E. Ray - History, Fordham University

Rebecca Wanzo - Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies, Washington University

The Society for the Humanities
2015 - 2016 Focal Theme: 

The Society annually awards fellowships for research in the humanities. The fellows offer, in line with their research, seminars intended to be exploratory or interdisciplinary. These seminars are open to graduate students, and suitably qualified undergraduates. The theme for 2015 – 2016 is “TIME.”

For information about the Society, fellows, and courses visit: www.arts.cornell.edu/sochum/
SHUM 4500  
Collecting Copies  
(also ARTH, CLASS, MUSIC)  
Fall, T: 10:10-12:05. 4 credits. Limited to 15 students. A. Alexandridis.

This seminar takes Cornell’s sesquicentennial anniversary as an opportunity to investigate some of the university’s old and often neglected teaching collections. Focus is on those collections that consist of replicas (e.g. musical instruments, Rau plow collection, plaster cast collection, Blaschka glass models of invertebrates). We will explore the collection’s and their object’s multiple temporalities, materiality, and correspondent multi-disciplinarity.

Made at some point in time for one field they now might have become attractive for another and for different reasons. The seminar will draw on Reinhart Koselleck’s concept of time layers (Zeitschichten) to capture both homogenous sequential as well as disruptive ways of reception. In a first historiographical step we want to understand, what purpose these copies serve(d) within a given discipline (e.g. the plow models for agricultural sciences) and how they eventually shaped it. Here the focus is on what the copies represent. In a second step we will look at these replicas and their materiality in their own right to analyze their transformative potential: how are they made to translate the original or prototype? How did/does this “translation” affect the way the very originals or prototypes were understood by different disciplines? – The seminar hopes to make these collections relevant again to students and the university alike.

BIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT: Annetta Alexandridis is Associate Professor in the Departments of History of Art and Classics at Cornell, a member of the Cornell Institute of Archaeology and Material Studies (CIAMS), co-curator of Cornell’s Plaster Cast Collection and field member of the Archaeological Exploration of Sardis/Turkey. She holds a PhD in Classical Archaeology from Munich. Before joining Cornell faculty she worked at the Staatliche Antikensammlungen, Berlin and taught at Rostock University.

Informed by gender and animal studies, her work centers on various manifestations of the body in Graeco-Roman antiquity, including Roman portraits and funeral sculpture or depictions of Greek mythological figures. Annetta is also interested in archaeology and its media (photography, plaster casts). She is the author of Die Frauen des römischen Kaiserhauses (Mainz 2004), Archäologie der Photographie (with Wolf-Dieter Heilmeyer; Mainz 2004) and co-editor of Mensch und Tier in der Antike (with Markus Wild and Lorenz Winkler-Horacek, Wiesbaden 2008). Currently, she is revising a book manuscript on Images of the Body Between Man, Woman, and Animal in Ancient Greece.
SHUM 4501
Lessons In The Anthropocene
(also ANTHRO)
Fall, R: 2:30-4:25. 4 credits. Limited to 15 students. C. Campbell.

The “Lessons in the Anthropocene” seminar examines the idea of the “end of time” with particular attention given to the peoples and culture groups of the circumpolar subarctic and arctic. We begin with key ethnographies in thinking about northern worlds: Robin Ridington’s Little Bit Know Something; Stories in a Language of Anthropology and Piers Vitebski’s Reindeer People: Living with Animals and Spirits in Siberia. By examining ethnographies of peoples who have been depicted as being out-of-time or culturally anachronistic with a modern world the seminar seeks to de-center histories and historical methodologies privileging temporal constructs emergent in Euro-American intellectual, spiritual, and popular traditions. This approach is carefully designed to help gaze beyond the common and conventional discursive frames to develop flexible techniques for looking at life as well as responsive modes of expression to describe it. The idea of time and particularly the end of time will be run against central themes that include human and non-human personhood, cosmological and ecological models of belief, spirit worlds (animism, shamanism), and complexities of culture change under the conditions of colonialism, industrialism, and capitalism/communism.

Each of our circumpolar readings are set against current theory and critique, putting ethnography and history into a critical and challenging conversation with concepts from critical and cultural theory like the event, the end of history, the posthuman, and the anthropocene. The social philosopher Arthur Kroker writes on technologies of acceleration, drift, and crash. Drift in particular, is conceptualized in his work as a kind of post-planning global experience. It is undoubtedly a powerful metaphor. The arctic in peril and the arctic adrift are caught up in the kind of energopolitics described by the anthropologist Dominic Boyer—a concept that helps to frame this moment of increasingly dramatic climate change in the Arctic. Nassim Taleb’s temporal intervention, “The Black Swan,” will be used to examine indeterminacy and probability as factors in predictive temporal modeling – randomness and accident. This directs attention to concepts like deep-time, unearthly agency, and the cosmological event. Selections from Tim Ingold’s Evolution and Social Life will bring us back to a more nuanced exploration of human experience framed against industrialism and extractive economies in the North. This seminar is thus designed to counter pose work of ethnography and cultural history against continental philosophy and critical theory. Thus while reading about Evenki concepts of demonic curses we’re also looking into Brian Massumi’s theory of the Event, the perverse futurity of Lauren Berlant’s ‘cruel optimism,’ or the unabashed threat of Kroeker’s technological drift.

BIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT: Craig Campbell is Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the University of Texas, Austin. He received his PhD in Sociology (Cultural Theory) from the University of Alberta in 2009. Craig is a founding member of the Ethnographic Terminalia curatorial collective (www.ethnographicterminalia.org). His research is concerned with modes of description with a special focus on ethnographic and documentary images. In particular he has been exploring the possibility for ignored, overlooked, failed, defaced, degraded, manipulated, and damaged images to activate interpretive fields typically unacknowledged in conventional ethnographies and histories.
This intermedia and aesthetic approach pushes the sensuousness of the world back into an intellectual and scholarly understanding of it.

Craig Campbell’s ethnographic, historical, and regional interests include: Siberia, Central Siberia, Indigenous Siberians, Evenki, Evenkiia, Reindeer hunting and herding, Travel and mobility, Socialist colonialism, early forms of Sovietization, and the circumpolar North. He publishes widely in journals including Space and Culture, Geographical Review, Sibirica, and Visual Anthropology Review. His second book Agitating Images: Photography Against History in Indigenous Siberia was published by University of Minnesota Press in the fall of 2014.

His website is: www.metafactory.ca
SHUM 4504
Temporalities of the City: Asia
(also ASIAN, FGSS, PMA)
Fall, R: 12:20–2:15. 4 credits. Limited to 15 students. A. Fuhrmann.

This course investigates the socio-spatial problematics and new kinds of subjectivity engendered by recent trans-Asia economic shifts. It examines what happens when old and new forms of labor, capital, and governance create new forms of everyday and aesthetic practice in urban environments in Asia. The theme of temporality structures the course to encapsulate these transformations. The cinemas and literatures of the region furnish its primary sites of inquiry. In order to develop tools that help unpack the spatial, and cultural forms of density and the layered histories that define the urban fabric of cities such as Hanoi, Bangkok, Shanghai, and Hong Kong, the course combines readings from the humanities and interpretive social sciences with the study of cinematic and literary cultures. Temporalities of the City thus pairs primary cinematic and literary texts with writing on temporality and cities from anthropology, film studies, queer theory, religious studies, literary theory, and Asian studies. We will view films by directors such as Wong Kar Wai, Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Yau Ching, Huang Weikai, and Garin Nugroho and read the work of authors such as Bliss Cua Lim, Elizabeth Povinelli, Saskia Sassen, Ackbar Abbas, Brian McGrath, and Valerie Rohy.

BIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT: Arnika Fuhrmann is an interdisciplinary scholar of Southeast Asia, working at the intersections of the region’s aesthetic and political modernities. Her book manuscript Ghostly Desires examines how Buddhist-coded anachronisms of haunting figure struggles over sexuality, personhood, and notions of collectivity in contemporary Thai cinema. In a new research project, Fuhrmann focuses on new media and how the study of the digital allows for a perspective on the political public sphere that transcends commonplace distinctions of liberalism and illiberalism. This project intersects with her interests in the transformation of cities in contemporary South/east Asia. Fuhrmann’s recent writing has appeared in Discourse: Journal for Theoretical Studies in Media and Culture, Oriens Extremus, and positions: asia critique. Complementing her academic work, she also engages in cultural programming and works in the curatorial team of the Asian Film Festival Berlin (www.asianfilmfestivalberlin.de).
SHUM 4505
Civil Rights Temporalities
(also AMST, ASRC)
Fall, M: 10:10-12:05. 4 credits. Limited to 15 students. R. Wanzo.

In Graham v. Connor (1989), the Supreme Court constructed a standard of “reasonable. . . split-second” responses of police, a decision that ignores the research indicating that split-second affective responses to black people are often shaped by racism. But this is just one of many legal decisions crafting a fiction about identity and time, a fiction that has serious implications for the rights we have as U.S. citizens. From the recent Shelby County (2013) decision rolling back the Voting Rights Act to the language and legislation involving abortion, a number of social issues are being shaped civil rights temporalities—narratives that make amorphous conceptions of “how long,” “time enough,” progress, and speculations about futurity central to discussions of rights held by identity groups. These stories linking time, identity, and rights are not only told by jurists and legislators, but by news pundits, activists, and creators of popular cultural productions. In this class we will look at Supreme Court decisions, theorists of temporality, film, fiction, and a variety of other texts to explore the kinds of fictions told about identity, time, and rights in the United States.

BIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT: Rebecca Wanzo is Associate Professor of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and Associate Director of the Center for the Humanities at Washington University in St Louis. She received her Ph.D. in English from Duke University. Her first book, The Suffering Will Not Be Televised: African American Women and Sentimental Political Storytelling was published by SUNY in 2009. Her primary research areas are affect theory, African American literature and culture, feminist theory, and popular culture (particularly graphic storytelling and representations of African Americans in popular culture). She has published essays on topics such as African American literature and comics, race and child abduction, black women film and television performers, discourses about African American women and romantic love, “post-race” politics, and the role of feelings in police brutality discourse.
SHUM 4506
European Temporal Imagination
(also GERST, HIST)

This course offers an exploration of the European temporal imagination, or the ways that questions and concerns about time have been integral to both cultural self-understanding and philosophical reflection. It is divided into two main sections, each with a specific objective: the first sets out a series of historically active constraints upon this temporal imagination, focusing on the ways in which temporal frameworks have been constructed, criticized, and altered in European history; the second part will explore the critical usefulness of the category of “time” in the interpretation of nineteenth century work in particular, and examine how temporal notions and patterns (e.g., predictability, recurrence, uniqueness) helped shape institutional and disciplinary boundaries and agendas.

Across the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, time was rapidly expanding in both extent and detail: geological study was pushing the age of the earth from thousands to millions of years, and cross-cultural encounters along with the gradual reconciliation of numerous available time-frames and standards were propelling claims for a “universal” understanding of history. But these changes took place against an already well-established background of discussions and debates in Europe about the meaning and possible direction of time. In order to grasp what was at stake in the measurement of time and the turn toward history and historicism in European thought, it is important to understand how very different the temporal frameworks preceding the nineteenth century in particular were from those of today. The simplified understanding of “chronology” chiefly as a list or table of historical events was made possible by a far more complex series of developments, a slow and laborious undertaking that combined mathematical method and historical content with the aim of producing a ‘universal history’ of the kind simply not previously possible, because there had been multiple chronological conventions and no universal standard by virtue of which they could be brought into relation. What can we say about the intellectual and cultural effects of such changes? How might contemporary ideas about historical time (such as “Big History”) be related to these earlier developments?

Course readings will be in English, but participants are encouraged to develop paper proposals in line with their own research interests and language proficiencies. The course is focused on Europe, but non-Europeans and those interested in comparative work are welcome.
Participants will be required to prepare at least one short summary/introduction of a course text for presentation at the seminar, and to produce a final research paper of approximately 20 pages (topic to be developed in consultation with instructor during Section I).

BIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT: Kelly Grotke is an intellectual historian affiliated with the Heidelberg Academy of Science and the Erik Castrén Institute, and was recently a Fellow with the ERC-funded Research Project Europe 1815-1914 at the University of Helsinki. She has also worked in finance. Her current book project, Time, History, and Epistemology in the Long Nineteenth Century: A Study in Philosophical Culture, shows how the gradual fragmentation of natural law in Europe shaped nineteenth-century disciplines, methodologies, and theoretical preoccupations. She is the co-editor of Constitutionalism, Legitimacy and Power: Nineteenth-Century Experiences (Oxford, 2014).
SHUM 4507
Counter-Time: Anachronism and Obsolescence in Contemporary Art
(also ARTH, COML, VISST)
Spring, R: 10:10-12:05. 4 credits. Limited to 15 students. M. Navarro.

This seminar explores the uses and forms of anachronism in contemporary art. Anachronism is a defect in linear temporality, the presence of an element that belongs to another time which interrupts and disrupts the course of history. During recent years, using different stances and disciplines, a large number of artists have started to work incorporating technologies, iconographies, references and elements that do not belong to the present timeline. Obsolescence in particular is used as a master strategy to display the alteration of temporality. In addition to this, in the last two decades a whole host of theorists and art historians have used anachronism as a methodological tool and have advocated for an anachronistic interpretation of contemporary art. In both cases (theoretical and practical), these shapes and tools do not just present an aesthetic or epistemological stance, they also account for a political compromise: anachronism as a temporal disconformity that presents a desynchronisation in the hegemonic temporalities. The aim of this seminar is to present a map of theories and artistic strategies in order to better understand the validity of the anachronism and obsolescence in today’s culture. In order to do this, the seminar will be divided into four parts:

1) *Theories of the anachronism.* In this part, some of the key texts regarding the construction of an anachronic methodology will be analysed: classic texts, like those by Ernst Bloch and Walter Benjamin, and above all, contemporary texts by Georges Didi-Huberman and Mieke Bal, Alexander Nagel, Terry Smith or Keith Moxey.

2) *Retromania and obsolescence.* Here we will observe the central importance of obsolescence and retro in contemporary visual culture, and its importance in some poetics of contemporary art. By analysing the work of artists such as Tacita Dean, Stan Douglas, Zoe Leonard, Rodney Graham or Warren Neidich, we will try to indicate some of the problems related to the use of the obsolete: mourning for the analogical, nostalgia or resistance to technological progress and the eras of merchandise.

3) *Opening Time: Art of History.* In this section we will analyse the way in which some artists work as though they were historians, making a particular type of history close to that imagined by Walter Benjamin: open time, constellation, dialectical image, liberation from the past. Artists like Matthew Buckingham, Anri Sala, Peter Forgacs or Francesc Torres are examples of this practice. Here we will focus on the Spanish context and the problem of the recent past (the Civil War, Francoism and the Transition) reverberating in the present.

4) *Politics of the anachronism: towards strategic fetishism.* In this last part we will examine the political and strategical meaning of the anachronism and obsolescence. Through the analysis of texts by Jacques Rancière and Antonio Negri we will see how the obsolete past is the place to generate energies relating to change and transformation. In particular, we will study the case of the aesthetics of protest movements like “los indignados” (a Spanish grassroots protest movement) in Spain and their “analogue” revolution. In addition, we will try to question the notion of the fetishism of the past and the aim to move towards a positive, “strategical” and critical use of fetishism.
The seminar is located in the midpoint between visual art, cinema, history, philosophy and politics. Perhaps it could be best situated in the field of visual culture studies. The problem common to all of the disciplines here is time. Ultimately, the seminar is trying to explore some of the types of resistance when faced with the hegemonic time of the present. The work of the artists and theorists that we will explore is characterised by understanding time as a material that can be worked with, time that can be open and modified, time that is capable of interrupting the global rhythms of circulation of capital and of introducing chronologies and temporal experiences that shatter and fracture any type of hegemonic temporality. In conclusion, it is about observing and suggesting “contra chronologies” that resist the established experiences of those in power. Perhaps today this is the only thing that the advanced arts have in common: the capability to undermine the temporal experience of those in power.

BIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT: Miguel Ángel Hernández Navarro (Murcia, Spain, 1977) is Associate Professor of Art History at University of Murcia, Spain and formerly the director of the Centro de Documentación y Estudios Avanzados de Arte Contemporáneo (CENDEAC) in Murcia. He focuses on contemporary art and theory, migratory aesthetics, Spanish literature and memory. He is author of several books on art and visual culture including: Materializar el pasado. El artista como historiador benjaminiano (2012), Robert Morris (2010) and 2Move: Video Art Migration (2008, with Mieke Bal). He is editor of Art and Visibility in Migratory Culture (with Mieke Bal, 2011) and Mary Kelly: La balada de Kastriot Rexhepi (2008). Among the exhibition curated: 2Move: Double Movement / Migratory Aesthetics (With Mieke Bal), Ursula Bieman: Sahara Cronicle (2010) and Mieke Bal: The Last Frontier (2012). He is also fiction writer. His novel Intento de escapada (2013) was shortlisted in Herralde Prize and is on translation into English, French, German, Italian and Portuguese.
SHUM 4508
Fictions for New Worlds
(also ENGL)
Spring, T: 10:10-12:05. 4 credits. Limited to 15 students.  R. Kalas.

In The New Science, Vico posits that all nations are “poetic in their beginning.” In this course we will read works of literature that imagine themselves at the beginning of a new nation or polity: such works as Virgil’s Aeneid, Thomas More’s Utopia, John Milton’s Paradise Lost, Jonathan Swift’s Gulliver’s Travels, Toni Morrison’s A Mercy, and NoViolet Bulawayo’s We Need New Names. We will reflect upon each of these works in its specific historical and geopolitical context. But we will also imagine how, collectively, these literatures might tell a different history of civil society than the one we are accustomed to.

Using Vico (primarily but not exclusively) as our guide, we will consider how “poetic wisdom” might complement other forms of analytical knowledge and calculative reason; and using Vico’s reading of Homer as a model, we will look for both particularities in and patterns among our exemplary texts that might help us to envision a poetic history of polities and collectivities. For each of these texts, we will try to reconstruct how literature both shapes and is made by political culture. But we will also explore the different kinds of causation and temporality that are necessary to “poetic wisdom.” Finally, taking a step back from Vico, we will consider the role of providence in Vico’s poetic history, asking, in turn, how we might refashion a poetic wisdom for the twenty-first century.

SHUM 4509
Temporalities of Empire, Nation and Colonial Difference
(also AAS, ANTHRO)
Spring, T: 2:30-4:25. 4 credits. Limited to 15 students. V. Munasinghe.

This course asks how do racialization projects constitutive of modern European empire figure in the making of nation states? How in particular did anticipation of rights bearing European publics, enshrining post Enlightenment values, implicate/disturb the linear narrative of nation states emerging from the ruins of empire? We will explore the temporal entanglements between racialization logics of empire and nation, one demanding difference the other, sameness. How does the rule of difference address the fundamental paradox posed by those European states that were simultaneously empires and nations, epitomized by the dual title of Victoria, as Queen of England and Empress of India?

The goal of this course is to bring together related but distinct scholarship on the relation between empire and nation, which complicate temporalities associated with both types of polity. Scholars of empire have demonstrated the integral role of colonies in the making of European nations—establishing difference in the colonies went hand in hand with the establishing sameness in the metropolis. Here, nation time is also empire time. Scholars of postcolonial nationalisms, however, posit a break between time of empire and time of nation, where the postcolonial nation is faced with the task of transforming the rule of difference, the inheritance of empire, into the rule of sameness as rights bearing subjects of a later moment. What are the logics and ambivalences of racialization when time of empire requiring difference is also the time of nation, requiring sameness? What are implications of such an entanglement for postcolonial nations? How do inherited racializations set limits on postcolonial aspirations for homogeneity? How does postcolonial homogeneity also produce difference in demarcation of the rights bearing subject of the nation?

BIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT: is Associate Professor of Anthropology and Asian American Studies at Cornell University. She received her B.A. in Social Anthropology (1985) from Sussex University, England and Ph.D. (1994) from Johns Hopkins University in Cultural Anthropology. She is an historical anthropologist working in the Caribbean (Trinidad) and the Asian Diaspora in the Americas. Her academic interests include cultural and racial mixture (creolization, hybridity, syncretism), race, ethnicity, nationalism, comparison, ethnic studies, postcolonial theory and anthropological theory. Her book, Callaloo or Tossed Salad? East Indians and the Cultural Politics of Identity in Trinidad, (Cornell Press, 2001) explores the question of alternative modernities through the nation form. Her essays have appeared in American Ethnologist, the Journal of Asian American Studies, South Asian Review, Social Analysis and Transforming Anthropology. Her current research analyzes how nations are constituted through projects of comparison.
Members of this seminar will explore temporally specific, yet frequently interconnected iterations of blackness, in an attempt to account for how blackness has been experienced, conceptualized, articulated, practiced, politicized, historicized, and theorized across time and space. From the seventeenth-century West African Sahel, where shifting categories of blackness were articulated long before the advent of French colonial rule, to the twentieth century’s globally interconnected black freedom struggles, we will plot out chronologies of blackness to better understand the historical contexts in which blackness becomes a meaningful, yet ever mutating signifier. As we seek to discern how the material conditions of blackness produced responses like Négritude, Créolité, Pan-Africanism, Black Power, and the Black Consciousness Movement, we will also ask how these ideological movements unleashed new articulations of blackness and restrained others.

In considering how blackness invites us to think about time and periodization, we will confront how the lived experiences of black people in America underscore the prematurity of terms like “post-racial” to describe an America capable of electing Barack Obama as president, while also interrogating the limits of modernity as a universal temporality in light of the continuing disregard for black life globally. What, moreover, are we to make of the fact that time itself has become increasingly racialized through the emergence of new temporal categories, like post-Black and post-racial? And what consequences result from these categories getting stuck in time before their time has actually come?

This seminar will also investigate how the black experience has been set in time by the traditional disciplines, like history and anthropology, as well as by more recent interdisciplinary innovations in African diaspora or Black Atlantic studies. Together we will do more than survey the black experience in time, we will probe how time has shaped what it means to be black in theory and practice, and question how blackness and the black body have been used to mark time.

BIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT: Carina Ray is an associate professor of African and Black Atlantic History at Fordham University. A scholar of race and sexuality; comparative colonialisms and nationalisms; migration and maritime history; and the relationship between race, ethnicity, and political power, Carina’s research is primarily focused on Ghana and its diasporas. She is the author of Crossing the Color Line: Race, Sex, and the Contested Politics of Colonialism in Ghana (Ohio University Press, 2015) and co-editor of Navigating African Maritime History (with Jeremy Rich) and Darfur and the Crisis of Governance in Sudan: A Critical Reader (with Salah Hassan). Her articles have appeared in The American Historical Review, Gender and History, and Historical Reflections / Reflexions Historiques. While at the Society, Carina will be working on her new book project, Somatic Blackness: A History of the Body and Race-Making in Ghana.
SHUM 4511  
Musical Timekeeping and the Security State  
(also MUSIC) 
Spring, M: 10:10 – 12:05. 4 credits. Limited to 15 students. S. Potter.

This seminar will draw on continental philosophy, critical theory, musicology and composers’ writings, to investigate the historical relationships between strategies of musical timekeeping (the conductor, the clock, the score, the rehearsal) and forms of political power, such as those Michel Foucault designated as ‘pastoral’, ‘governmental’, and ‘disciplinary’. While we will devote some time to examining singing and the ecclesiastical ‘conducting of souls’ within early Christianity, we will focus primarily on musical resistance tactics over the past 100 years or so, from Schoenberg’s wild expressionism and Stravinsky’s irregular accent patterns to Japanese noise compositions, extremely repetitive music and comedy (Andrew Hamilton, Kristen Schaal), John Cage’s use of ‘chance’ procedures in composing, Miles Davis’ turn to expansive temporalities, Korean kagok’s irregular divisions of time, and composer Cornelius Cardew’s rejection of the institutionalized avant-garde. In the final weeks we will turn to the complex politics of contemporary ventures that reject both the trappings of national or tribal identifications and international avant-garde movements in favor of fictional folk music or music that dramatizes social conflict. Each week of this seminar we will pair close readings of theoretical texts with close listenings of music that is either explicitly discussed in the week’s readings or that may be brought into productive dialogue with them. Readings include: Nietzsche, Adorno, Bataille, Foucault, Agamben, Gilroy, Hegarty, Andriessen, Cage, Cardew, Feldman, Olaniyan, Born, Beckles Willson, and others.

BIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT: Steve Potter is a composer and performer, and associate lecturer in music composition at Goldsmiths University of London. He focuses on interrelationships between continental philosophy and critical theory, and creative work in the performing arts. He is interested in how, creatively and ethically, to respond to processes of global capitalism. He has created performances on technology and ubiquity; the reality of other possible worlds; sense and nonsense; and Marx in America. His performances incorporate live music and cultural theory, as well as notions of interpassive theater, arts and crafts, and noise. His compositions include Music for the Sleepy (2015, performed at the Infancy, History and the Avant-Garde festival at Omnibus, London); Krono-Metre: Catalogue Out of Time (2010, with Kélina Gotman; performed at the Making Sense Colloquium, IRI-Centre Pompidou / Institut Télécom /NYU in Paris); PLAY (2013, performed by the London Sinfonietta Academy conducted by George Benjamin at LSO St. Luke’s); Quartet More & More (2010, Arditti String Quartet at the Darmstadt summer courses); Old People in the Wrong House Dancing With Robots (2011, Nouvel Ensemble Moderne at the Domaine Forget festival, Quebec); and The Officers (2008, New York City Opera VOX showcase). He also curates and produces performances.
SHUM 4512  
The Aesthetics of Time  
(also ROMS)  

Changing circumstances can affect our individual perception of time – sadness can stretch out days, joy seems fleeting, wonder can seem to suspend the world – but can the those effects be experienced collectively? Are there ways to objectify and share the apparent malleability of time? This course will explore time itself as an artistic material, concentrating on examples from French literature, architecture, and cinema of the last two centuries.

We will spend the first weeks examining the aesthetic experience of time, its sensuality, concentrating on the sense of smell and beginning with Etienne de Condillac’s 1754 Treatise on Sensations and then moving to Proust’s Swann’s Way and writings by Walter Benjamin. We will then turn to the sense of touch, especially the feel of another’s skin, and the plasticity of language in relation to memory by reading Claude Simon’s La Route des Flandres (The Flanders Road). We will close this section with an analysis of erotics, anomie, and pain as they shape and are shaped by cinematic time in Godard’s Weekend.

A second section will explore the relations between technology and animal life in relation to time, focusing on the early twentieth century. We will begin with writings by Heidegger that situate the human relation to time in a complicated zone between technology and animality. We will then explore the tension between animal, human, and mechanical time in contemporary urbanist movements, notably Le Corbusier’s theoretical work. Human time, in these readings, emerges as a complicated negotiation between two alienations: the animal and the machine.

Over the last weeks of the course, we will consider “granular time,” or time as it is articulated around the finitude of the now. To this end, we will focus on Guillaume Apollinaire’s writings, especially the visual poems or “calligrams” that he composed just before and during the First World War. Here, the issues of memory, nostalgia, and identity play out in the tension between two temporalities and politics of representation: on the one hand visual and on the other textual. His concerns and approaches to framing these questions seem to have been affected by recent technological developments, in part the mechanization of war, but also by innovations in the arts and daily life, notably cinema, the phonograph, and radio. His writings also resonate with contemporary philosophical texts about time, and so to help tease out their theoretical implications, we will read passages from Edmund Husserl and Derrida’s deconstruction, in Voice and Phenomenon, of Husserl’s concept of the living now.