HIS/HOS 599: Fall 2012, Princeton University
Special Topics in the History of Science, Technology, and Medicine:

Sensory History / The Senses in History

Professor Emily Thompson
Tuesdays 9:00 - 11:50 AM, Dickinson 211
emilyt@princeton.edu  609.258.8405
Office Hours: Mondays, 12:30-2:30 or by appt., Dickinson 225

This reading course is intended for graduate students engaged in advanced historical studies. Students not enrolled in the History Dept should meet with the Professor to discuss whether or not they have the appropriate level of background in history in order to take the course. The seminar will introduce students to scholarly literature in the history of the senses and sensory history, considering works in cultural history, as well as histories of technology, medicine, and the environment. There are two primary goals: to think about the role of the senses in history; and to challenge historians' emphasis on the textual when identifying primary sources to do historical work. The subjects of our readings will range widely in time and place as well as topic and methodology.

BOOKS AND READINGS:

Readings, which consist mainly of chapters, excerpts, and articles, will either be available as electronic texts via the library's catalogue; posted electronically on Blackboard; or made available as hard copy on reserve in the History Graduate Study Room, Firestone C-4-M.

The syllabus will be a work-in-progress over the course of the semester. Specific reading assignments will attempt to connect to the historical interests of the enrolled students, as well as to build, week-by-week, an overall mastery of this new and growing field. For the most part, assigned readings will be taken from the BIBLIOGRAPHY (also a work-in-progress, but already ample) distributed on the first day of class. Weekly reading assignments may be organized chronologically (Medieval, Early Modern, c19, c20), others topically (religion, medicine, environment, technology, war), or geographically.

FORMAT AND REQUIREMENTS: Each week's reading assignment will be set at least one week ahead of time. All students are required to complete each assignment in full and be prepared to discuss it all in class. Please do not read reviews of assigned books prior to class discussion. A series of short writing assignments will be required, as indicated on the course SCHEDULE. A longer final paper is also required. In most cases this will be a historiographic essay wherein each student explores further the secondary literature on a field/topic of particular interest. History Dept. students may opt for a research paper in lieu of a historiographic essay.
GRADING: In assigning final grades, the following weighting applies:

Seminar Participation 35%
Short Essays (3 @ 10%): 30%
Final Paper: 35%

SCHEDULE:

WEEK DATE TOPIC/ASSIGNMENT

1 18 SEP: Course Introduction
       ESSAY ONE ASSIGNED: SENSORY HISTORY AND YOU (3-4 pp)

2 25 SEP: Getting Started: Roundtable and Forum

3 2 OCT: Building Foundations
       ESSAY ONE DUE: BE PREPARED TO DISCUSS IN CLASS

4 9 OCT: Ways of Sensing/Ways of Knowing: Religion and Cosmologies

5 16 OCT: Print, Vision, Orality, and "The Great Divide"
       ESSAY TWO ASSIGNED: INTERROGATING TEXTUAL SOURCES

6 23 OCT: Space, Self, and the Senses

FALL BREAK

7 6 NOV: The Capitalist Sensorium
       ESSAY TWO DUE: BE PREPARED TO DISCUSS BRIEFLY IN CLASS

8 13 NOV: Sense and Social Order
       ESSAY 3 ASSIGNED: INTERROGATING NON-TEXTUAL SOURCES

9 20 NOV: INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS WITH PROFESSOR THIS WEEK

10 27 NOV: METHODOLOGICAL CRITIQUE: Sense vs. Sensorium
         INFORMAL ASSIGNMENT DUE 30 NOV: IDENTIFY A HISTORICALLY-
         ORIENTED WEBSITE FOR THE CLASS TO EXAMINE AND DISCUSS
         AT WEEK 12 MEETING (email URL to Professor)

11 4 DEC: METHODOLOGICAL CRITIQUE: Sensorium vs. Sense
         ESSAY 3 DUE: BE PREPARED TO DISCUSS BRIEFLY IN CLASS

12 11 Dec: DIGITAL HISTORY AND SENSORY HISTORY:
         Opportunities and Challenges

READING PERIOD:

FINAL PAPER: HISTORIOGRAPHIC REVIEW OF APPROX. FIVE BOOKS (and/or a
larger collection of articles) IN YOUR FIELD OF INTEREST
(10-12 pp). CLASS MAY MEET ONCE DURING READING PERIOD TO
DISCUSS FINAL ESSAYS-IN-PROGRESS.

FINAL PAPERS DUE TUESDAY 15 JANUARY 2013.
READING ASSIGNMENTS:

WEEK 2: 25 SEP: Getting Started: Forum and Roundtable

* American Historical Review 116 (April 2011):
  Forum: The Senses in History
  - read essays by Jay (Intro), Rosenfeld, Jenner, Riskin, and Ferguson

  Journal of American History 95 (September 2008):
  Round Table: The Senses in American History
  - read essays by Smith (Intro), Smith, Fitzgerald and Petrick, Chiang, Rath, Cook, Howes

* ASSIGNMENT: Scrutinize the READING LIST carefully and think about how you would like to organize this material into weekly topics and assignments. Identify five sources of particular interest to you, and be prepared to discuss your own goals for the course in class.

WEEK 3: 2 OCT: Foundations: Intellectual, Social, Environmental History, and Anthropology


  Howes, David. Sensual Relations: Engaging the Senses in Culture and Social Theory (2003), Ch 1: Taking Leave of Our Senses and Ch 2: The Sensual Turn in Anthropological Understanding, pp. 3-58.

WEEK 4: Ways of Sensing/Ways of Knowing: Religion and Cosmologies

* BACKGROUND: Jutta, Part III: From the World of the Senses to the World of Reason (Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries), pp. 126-236.


**WEEK 5: Print, Vision, Orality and "The Great Divide"


McLuhan, Marshall. "The interiorization of the phonetic alphabet transmutes man from the magical world of the ear to the neutral visual world"; Schizophrenia may be a necessary consequence of literacy"; Does the interiorization of media such as LETTERS alter the ratio among our senses and change mental processes?"; "Civilization give the barbarian or tribal man an eye for an ear and is now at odds with the electronic world," pp. 21-33 in *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (1962; Toronto, 2011).


WEEK 6: Space, Self, and the Senses


ADDITIONAL: CHOOSE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:


WEEK 7: The Capitalist Sensorium

Schivelbusch, Wolfgang. The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the 19th Century (1977; California, 1986) Ch 3-5, 10: Railroad Space and Railroad Time; Panoramic Travel; The Compartment; Stimulus Shield: or, the Industrialized Consciousness. Pp 33-44; 52-88; 159-170.


WEEK 8: Sense and Social Order


PHONOGRAPHIC SUB-TOPIC:


WEEK 9: NO READINGS THIS WEEK: INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS WITH PROFESSOR

WEEK 10: Methodological Critique I: Sense or Sensorium?

Thompson, Emily. The Soundscape of Modernity: Architectural Acoustics and the Culture of Listening in America, 1900-1933. (MIT, 2002)

INFORMAL ASSIGNMENT: IDENTIFY A HISTORICALLY-ORIENTED WEBSITE FOR THE CLASS TO EXAMINE AND DISCUSS AT WEEK 12 MEETING. [EMAIL TO PROFESSOR BY FRIDAY, 30 NOVEMBER]
WEEK 11: Methodological Critique II: Sensorium or Sense?


WEEK 12: Digital History and Sensory History: Opportunities and Challenges

WEBSITES:
- Professor Thompson's website-in-progress, "The Roaring 'Twenties"
- Historical websites of interested identified by class participants
  See email for links and brief descriptions

THINK ABOUT:
- Practical matters: Ease of navigation, comprehensibility of structure/organization, aesthetic design
- Rigor: How does it compare to print wrt citations, knowing "what" you are looking at/listening to?
- Agenda: Does the site have an "argument"? What kind of scholarly "work" is it accomplishing (or attempting)?
  - is this work that could not be done in print form?
- IN RE SENSORY HISTORY: Does the web offer particular opportunities for the kind of history we've been studying this term? What are the dangers of web history, sensory or otherwise?
- BIG QUESTION: Does the web (compared to books) offer historians an enriched or impoverished sensory experience?

READING ASSIGNMENT (pdfs posted to Blackboard):


ADDITIONAL MATERIAL (FOR REFERENCE):

Vertesi, Janet. pdf of slide presentation to History of Science Program Seminar, 8 Oct 2012 (a range of URLs exemplifying different approaches to digital humanities - posted on Blackboard)


Find thousands of books to read online and download free eBooks. Discover and read free books by indie authors as well as tons of classic books. Browse categories to find your favorite literature genres: Romance, Fantasy, Thriller, Short Stories, Young Adult and Children’s Books. There are eBooks for everyone. Free eBooks (BookRix only). Online library for easy reading any ebook for free anywhere right on the internet. Listen to books in audio format. Here the incredibly popular Harry Potter books, by J.K. Rowling. In Book 1, a mysterious letter, delivered by the friendly giant Hagrid, wrenches Harry from his dreary, Muggle-ridden existence: We are pleased to inform you that you have been accepted at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.