

ENG 4936: Honors Seminar – “Electronic Poetry & Poetics”

Professor Terry Harpold

Fall 2013, Section 3123

Tu, 11:45 AM – 1:40 PM (periods 5–6), Th 12:50–1:40 PM (period 6)

CBD 1108

office hours: Tu, 2–4PM & by appt. (TUR 4105)

voice: (352) 294-2808 (*email is usually better*)

email: <tharpold@ufl.edu>

home page for Terry Harpold:

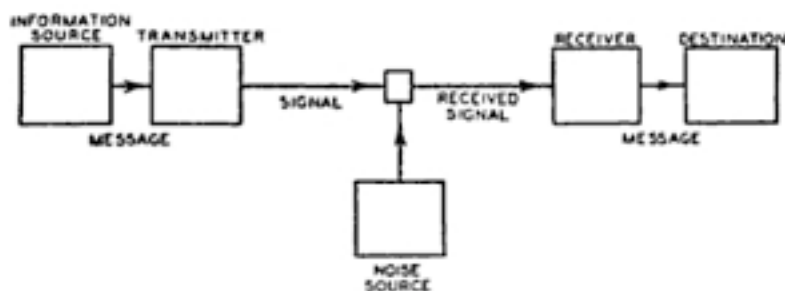
<<http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/tharpold/>>

home page for ENG 4936:

<<http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/tharpold/courses/fall13/eng4936/>>

e-Learning site & course wiki for ENG 4936 (*registered students only*):

<<https://lss.at.ufl.edu/>>



Claude Shannon's diagram of a general communication system. "The fundamental problem of communication is that of reproducing at one point exactly or approximately a message selected at another point. Frequently the messages have meaning; that is they refer to or are correlated according to some system with certain physical or conceptual entities. **These semantic aspects of communication are irrelevant to the engineering problem.** The significant aspect is that the actual message is one selected from a set of possible messages. The system must be designed to operate for each possible selection, not just the one which will actually be chosen since this is unknown at the time of design."¹

In this seminar, we will read closely and intensively from the emerging, vibrant canon of electronic poetry – poetry composed with and readable or performable only with computers and related programmable and/or network media. Our investigations will begin

¹ Shannon, C.E. "A Mathematical Theory of Communication." *The Bell System Technical Journal* 27(3–4) (1948): 379–423, 623–56. Emphasis added.

with the field's "prehistoric" forms (Christopher Funkhouser's evocative label) of the 1950s and 1960s (e.g., the work of Jackson Mac Low, Emmett Williams and others), up to the work of contemporary poets and artists working with varied digital interactive technologies and forms (e.g., Giselle Beiguelman, John Cayley, Angela Ferraiolo, Mary Flanagan, Loss Pequeño Glazier, Nick Montfort, Jim Rosenberg, Stephanie Strickland, and others). Our aim will not be to determine how – *if* – electronic poetry differs fundamentally from poetry in other media, so much as to (merely, materially, generatively) encounter and reflect on new conditions of poetic composition and expression in the digital field.

Graded course requirements include a take-home midterm exam, three critical readings and in-class presentations on e-poems we will read together, and two responses to other students' readings. All writing for the course will take place in a collaborative wiki environment. Basic knowledge of WWW- and image-editing applications may be to students' advantage for some assignments but is not required.

Required texts

The following texts are available at the UF Bookstore and from the usual online vendors. I encourage you whenever possible to buy from independent booksellers. If you choose to buy your texts online, I recommend sources such as Abebooks.com and Alibris.com that serve independent booksellers.

Funkhouser, Christopher T. *Prehistoric Digital Poetry: An Archeology of Forms, 1959–1995*. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2007. ISBN 978-0817354220. Print.

———. *New Directions in Digital Poetry*. New York: Continuum, 2012. ISBN 978-1441115911. Print.

Glazier, Loss Pequeño. *Anatman, Pumpkin Seed, Algorithm*. Norfolk (UK): Salt Publishing, 2003. ISBN 978-1844710010. Print.

———. *Digital Poetics: The Making of E-Poetries*. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2002. ISBN 978-0817310752. Print.

Other assigned and recommended readings for the course will be made available in digital formats in the course wiki, via the WWW, or via the course's electronic reserves (Ares, <<https://ares.uflib.ufl.edu/>>)

A note on the poems we will read. All assigned electronic poems are compatible with current versions of the Mac and Windows operating systems. Some poems require an active Internet connection, some require up-to-date Flash, Java, QuickTime, and Shockwave browser plugins (depending on your system configuration, you may also be

required to assign these plugins permission to run), and some require that you install an application or additional files on your computer before the poem can be viewed. No software required for this course makes permanent alterations to your computer setup or violates UF's Mobile Computing and Storage Devices Standard.²

Attendance, grading & assignments

Attendance & lateness. The texts we will analyze are frequently complex and challenging. You cannot reasonably expect to master them if you do not keep up with required reading assignments and come to class prepared and on time. Moreover, our discussions in class may include review of materials not among the assigned readings. For these reasons, your presence in class is essential and is required. After **four missed class periods**, I reserve the right to lower your final course grade by five points for each additional class period that you miss.³ I treat excused and unexcused absences alike in this regard. It is your responsibility to keep track of your absences and to make sure that you complete all required work. If you must miss class, make sure that you turn in any assignments due for that day, and that you are ready if another assignment is due on the day you return to class. In the event of a prolonged illness or other emergency you should notify me as soon as possible so that we may make provisions to insure that you do not fall behind.

Lateness is disruptive to others in the classroom, and is strongly discouraged. If you are more than 15 minutes late to class, this will be considered an absence.

If you have special classroom access, seating, or other needs because of disability, do not hesitate to bring those to my attention so that I may make appropriate accommodations.

If you are unable to attend any part of a class meeting or work on a course assignment because these coincide with the timing of religious observances, you must notify me of this conflict well in advance, so that we may make appropriate adjustments to relevant assignment deadlines.

The use of computers and other electronic devices in class. You may use personal computers and other electronic devices in class for purposes related to class discussion and collaboration. Casual WWW browsing, emailing, chatting, texting, etc., unrelated to classroom activities will not be tolerated. In the event of a violation of this policy, I reserve the right to prohibit your use of all electronic devices in class. Apart from those times when I have approved their use in advance, cell phones, pagers, and other

² See < <http://www.it.ufl.edu/policies/information-security-and-compliance/mobile-computing-storage-devices/standard/>>.

³ Our course meets on a Tu/Th schedule: two class periods on Tu, one class period on Th. If you miss a Tuesday meeting, therefore, it counts as much as two missed Thursday meetings.

communication devices may not be used during class meetings, and must be turned off at the start of class.

The course wiki. The written work of this course will take place in a *wiki*, a WWW site that supports collaborative editing of shared documents by a defined group of users. In this course, we will use a wiki hosted within the course's e-Learning (Sakai) site, which you can access at this URL:

<<https://lss.at.ufl.edu/>>

The course wiki is *not* open to the general public, i.e., visible on the open Internet. Only students registered in this course, and the course guest speakers, are able to access documents posted on it.

You are probably familiar with large and complex wikis like Wikipedia. Wikis can also be used for smaller projects such as the collaborative reading and writing exercises of this course. Writing in a wiki is no more technically difficult than writing in a word processor, but learning how to collaborate with others in such an environment presents distinct challenges and opportunities. We will devote several class meetings to effective uses of the wiki before the first graded writing assignments are due.

Grading scheme and graded assignments. Grades are calculated on a numeric scale, as below:

A	90–100	A–	87–89		
B+	84–86	B	80–83	B–	77–79
C+	74–76	C	70–73	C–	67–69
D+	64–66	D	60–63	D–	57–59

A grade of 56 or below is a failing grade (E). If you do not complete an assignment, you will receive a grade of 0. If you feel that you've been unfairly graded on an assignment, you may make a case in writing for a better grade. I will consider no grade changes without this written rationale.

You may turn in an assignment late without penalty only if you have a written medical excuse from a doctor, a signed letter from a judge or law enforcement officer (if you are called for jury duty or to testify in court, for example), or if a death or serious illness or injury occurs in your family. You should contact me as soon as possible when you anticipate a delay in submission of graded work.

Your final grade will be determined by the average of six assignments:

- Midterm exam: 30% of final grade...
- Individual critical readings (2): 15% + 15%
- Critical responses (2): 10% + 10%
- Collaborative critical reading: 20%

Five of these assignments are completed individually by each student, one is the collaborative endeavor of a workgroup comprised of 3–4 students. I will notify you early in the semester to which workgroup you have been assigned. I strongly recommend that workgroups members meet and/or correspond with each other early in the semester to decide on divisions of labor for their collective assignments, and that groups begin work on their projects as soon as possible after the requirements of each have been made clear.

There are no other graded assignments in this course. I do not give make-up or extra-credit assignments.

Format, topics, & due dates of writing assignments. All written assignments must follow guidelines regarding format and citation methods that I will post on the wiki and discuss in class.

The midterm exam is open-book and cumulative to the date it is posted to the wiki. You may not collaborate with any other person while working on the exam. Because the exam is intended to be a time-limited review of your understanding of course readings and discussions, the penalty for an exam completed after the deadline is severe: for each day that your completed exam is late, ten points will be deducted from the grade for that exam. I will not accept any exam that is turned in later than three days after its due date, in which case a grade of 0 will be given for the exam.

The exam will require that you respond to one of two prompts, producing a completed essay of 1200–1700 words in length. The essay prompts will be posted to wiki and are due on these dates:

	<i>posted</i>	<i>due date (close date)</i>
Midterm exam	26 Sept	1 Oct (8 Oct)

In keeping with the collaborative and revisionary ethos of wiki practice, the submission of your midterm takes place in two phases. An initial draft of your completed exam must be posted to the wiki before the beginning of class on the *due date*. Your exam wiki page(s) will remain editable by you up until the beginning of the class on the *close date*.

What this means in practice is that you can continue to revise and rework your essay up until the close date. As you will during this time also be able to read other students' draft essays, you can see how others have responded to exam prompts and you are free to draw

upon their work to inform and improve your own. I will in fact encourage you to acknowledge and cite other students' work in your completed exam, and to comment constructively on their contributions to our conversations around the exams. When citing other students' writing, you will be required to adhere scrupulously to correct citation practices.

On the close date, I will reset editing permissions of your exam pages in the wiki, preventing you from revising them further. Your grade on the assignment will be based on the version of the exam posted to the wiki as of the close date.

Other writing assignments for the course will follow much the same two-phase submission scheme.

This method of writing, revising, and sharing scholarly work, and how it can be effectively realized in the wiki environment, are likely to be new to most of you. We will review requirements and best practices of the scheme in detail prior to the first graded assignment.

Critical readings & responses. This course is an upper division *seminar*. We will take seriously the opportunities and obligations for scholarly dialogue that this distinction presents. Accordingly, I've modeled our collaborations on a course structure that you would be likely to encounter in a first year graduate course in the humanities.

The nonfiction – historical and critical – reading load in this course is substantial but not onerous. Most of this material will be read in the first half of the semester. Similarly, in the first half of the semester the entire class will read and discuss a number of significant electronic poets and some of their works. The second half of the semester, and the bulk of your reading and writing for the course, will be comprised of individual and collaborative critical readings of works of electronic poetry, assigned responses to other students' readings, and in-class presentations of your research. Your research interests will determine the arc of our discussions.

You will complete two individual critical readings, each of an electronic poem of your choice selected from a directory of e-poetry that I will distribute to the class. (You must have my approval of the poem you have selected, and I may intervene to minimize duplications of readings and presentations across the class.)

For each critical reading, you will write an essay of 900–1200 words presenting a close reading and analysis of the operations, forms, and aesthetic significance of the poem. This essay must be posted in the wiki at least seven days in advance of the date of your in-class presentation. (This seven-days-ahead deadline is the writing assignment *due* date.) On the date of your presentation, you will give a 10 minute (that's a hard limit) in-class presentation of your analysis of the poem. Your written essay will remain editable in the wiki for three days following your in-class presentation. After the third day (the writing

close date), I will reset permissions on that page and your essay can no longer be edited. Two-thirds of your grade for this assignment will be determined by the written portion, and one-third by the presentation.

Each individual critical reading will be paired with a written and oral response by another student. It is the second student's obligation to also read the poem in question and to write a 500–750 word response to the first student's essay. The response must be posted in the wiki no later than two days before the in-class presentation by the first student. On the day of the presentation, immediately following the first student's presentation the second student will give a 5 minute (again, this is a hard limit) in-class summary of her or his response. The response will remain editable in the wiki for seven days after the presentation, giving the second student the opportunity to revise the response based on any changes the first student has made to her or his essay before it was closed. After the seventh day (the *close date*), I will reset permissions on that page and the response can no longer be edited. Two-thirds of your grade for this assignment will be determined by the written portion, and one-third by the presentation.

You will also participate in a collaborative critical reading and in-class presentation with the members of your workgroup. These will also be based on a poem which the group has chosen in consultation with me. The scheme of these presentations differs from the individual presentations in that there will be no respondents. Seven days in advance of the presentation date, your workgroup must post a first version of a 900–1200 word essay on the poem assigned to that group. (This is the *due date*). The group's essay will remain editable in the wiki for three days following the in-class presentation. After the third day (the *close date*), I will reset permissions on that page and the group's essay can no longer be edited. Two-thirds of your grade for this assignment will be determined by the written portion, and one-third by the presentation.

I will poll students early in the semester to determine the best dates for their individual and group critical readings, and their responses. These assignments will, when possible, be staggered such that you will have ample time to prepare for your presentations and will not be called upon to give a presentation and response in successive class meetings. Note that I haven't noted the overlapping due and close dates for the critical readings and responses in the course calendar below, because this would considerably clutter the entries for the class meetings. I will post a detailed calendar of these dates in the wiki once the presentation schedules have been determined.

Read and respond to everything. One consequence of this scheme is that the body of material you *must* read – that is, the corpus on which I will grade you – drops off in the second half of the semester. But the seminar model, and in particular the collaborative method of a wiki-based seminar, works best if everyone takes part in the conversation. You will be able – and encouraged – to comment on drafts of other students' critical

readings and responses, even if that material hasn't been formally assigned to you. If you have read the poems, critical readings, and responses of other students before they are presented in class, our discussions will be more informed and generative of new connections and insights.

A note on collaborative assignments. Productive collaborative work is seldom easy. Students often worry that their individual final grades may suffer as a result of breakdowns in communication within groups or the failures of some group members to complete quality work on a project. I have built mechanisms into the course to reduce the risk of this happening. Moreover, the openness of the wiki – everyone in the course can be aware of your contributions to your group's projects or lack thereof – tends, in my experience, to promote students' good faith efforts within their groups and in relation to the class as a whole. The most important things you can do to insure that your workgroup's performance is effective is to define any assigned tasks within the group well in advance, stick to a calendar for your work together, and take full advantage of the wiki's editing and revision features to improve the quality of the group's collective writing.

Keep in mind that the wiki environment includes audit trailing functions that enable me to track the frequency and extent of every student's written contributions. In the event that a student within a workgroup fails to participate in the group's efforts or to otherwise fulfill her or his obligations to the group, I reserve the right to reduce that student's grade on a given assignment and, in some cases, to adjust the rest of the group's grade on the assignment accordingly.

If for any reason you feel that members of your group are not efficiently or appropriately working together, I encourage you to alert me to such difficulties through private emails or conversation as soon as possible.

Privacy of grades and other assessments of your performance. The guiding principal of our uses of the wiki in this course is one of *peer access*: in brief, others in the course will be able to review much of your written work and most of your exchanges with me regarding your work. They will be able – and encouraged – to comment on your work and these exchanges, with the aim of enlarging our shared understanding of the texts and critical-theoretical problems we will discuss.

This public aspect of your contributions to the wiki does not include my grading of your individual performance in the course. I have designed the course grading methods to insure that such evaluations of your work are known only to the two of us, and will be communicated only by channels that will guarantee your privacy in this regard.

Grades for group projects will communicated by way of similarly privileged channels; only the members of each group and I know that group's grade for a given project. Should

it become necessary that I adjust a student's grade because of poor performance in a group project, only that student will be notified of the change.

Our uses of online resources in this course will adhere to the University's posted policies on student data security, confidentiality, and privacy. As a student, you have defined obligations under these policies with regard to your online conduct. See <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/home/privacy/> for a complete description of these policies.

Resolving date conflicts for assignments. It is essential that you notify me immediately after the assignment of the individual and collaborative critical readings and responses, and the in-class presentations, if these will conflict with other commitments you may have. (For example, if the due date falls on a religious holiday.) If you wait to notify me of such conflicts I may not be able to change your assignments and your final grade may be adversely affected as a result.

Policy on academic honesty

The University community's policies and methods regarding academic honesty, your obligations to me and mine to you with regard to academic honesty, are clearly spelled out in the UF Student Honor Code, which is available online at <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php>.

Academic dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated in this course. Examples of academic dishonesty include but are not limited to:

- Possessing, using, or exchanging improperly acquired written or oral information in the preparation of graded assignments submitted for this course.
- Substitution of material that is wholly or substantially identical to that created or published by another individual or individuals.
- False claims of performance or work submitted by a student for requirements of this course.

Collaborative work required in this course does not fall within any of the forbidden categories listed above. Honest completion of collaborative work *does* require that you adhere to well-defined practices that acknowledge the contributions of others in a forthright and precisely documented manner. I will review these practices in class before the first graded assignment is due.

I am obliged to act on any suspected act of academic misconduct. This may include a reduced or failing grade for the course as a whole or other disciplinary proceedings, as per the recommendation of the Dean of Students. If you have any concern that you may not have made appropriate use of the work of others in your research or writing for this

course, please confer with me before you submit the assignment. You should retain all graded materials that you receive from me until you receive your final course grade.

Course calendar

N.B.: This calendar is tentative. I may shuffle some assignments and their due dates in the latter part of the semester. The final schedule should be in place within the first two weeks of the course.

In references to assigned reading, below, these abbreviations are used:

Funkhouser, *Prehistoric Digital Poetry* = PDP

Funkhouser, *New Directions in Digital Poetry* = ND

Glazier, *Digital Poetics: The Making of E-Poetries* = DP

When poems are included in assigned reading for a class meeting assignment, information regarding where the poems may be found are indicated in the syllabus or in the assigned critical reading for that meeting.

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| (Th) 22 Aug | <i>Course introduction</i>
<i>No assigned reading</i> |
| (Tu) 27 Aug | <i>Introduction to course wiki methods</i>
<i>Description of signature reading assignment</i>
<i>PDP, "Introduction"</i>
<i>DP, "Introduction: Language as Transmission," "Sidebar: On Techne"</i> |
| (Th) 29 Aug | <i>Review of course wiki methods & signature reading assignment</i>
<i>No assigned reading</i> |
| (Tu) 3 Sept | <i>PDP, "Origination"</i>
<i>DP, "Jumping to Occlusions," "Our Words," "Sidebar: The 'I' in 'Internet'"</i> |
| (Th) 5 Sept | <i>Poem by... Loss Pequeño Glazier:</i>
<i>White Faced Bromeliads on 20 Hectares (1999) –</i>
<i><http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/glazier/e-poetry/bromeliads/> or</i>
<i><http://collection.eliterature.org/1/works/glazier__white-faced_bromeliads_on_20_hectares.html></i> |

(See also video performance of excerpt by Glazier –
<<http://vimeo.com/12954202>>)

(Tu) 10 Sept *PDP*, “Visual and Kinetic Digital Poems,” “Hypertext and Hypermedia”
DP, “Hypertext/Hyperpoesis/Hyperpoetics”⁴

Recommended reading:

ND, “Case Studies 1: Jim Rosenberg, *Diagrams* 6: 6.4 (2005),” 78–91

Rosenberg, Jim. “The Interactive Diagram Sentence: Hypertext as a Medium of Thought.” *Visible Language* 30.2 (1996): 103–16. Available at: <<http://www.well.com/user/jer/VL.html>>

... and poems by –

Giselle Beiguelman – *Code_UP* (2004) –
<http://container.zkm.de/code_up/>

Jim Rosenberg – *Diagrams Series* 6 (2005) –
<http://collection.eliterature.org/1/works/rosenberg__diagrams_6_4_and_10.html>

Note to Mac users: you must run Diagrams with a more current version of the Squeak runtime environment than is available at the URL indicated above. The current version of Squeak is available at:
<<http://squeak.org>>

(Th) 12 Sept *DP*, “Home, Haunt, Page,” “The Intermedial: A Treatise”

Recommended reading: *ND*, “Case Studies 2: Mary Flanagan, *[theHouse]* (2006),” 149–57

... and poem by...

Mary Flanagan, *[theHouse]* (2006) –
<<http://www.maryflanagan.com/house>>

(Tu) 17 Sept *PDP*, “Alternative Arrangements,” “Techniques Enabled” (finish book)
DP, “Coding Writing, Reading Code,” “Sidebar: On Mouseover”

⁴ Note that this meeting’s reading from *DP* departs from the sequence of the book’s chapters.

... and poem by...

Loss Pequeño Glazier, *Mouseover* (1998) –

<<http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/glazier/viz/mouseover/mouseover.html>>

(Th) 19 Sept

Recommended reading:

Cayley, John. "Inner Workings: Code and Representations of Interiority in New Media Poetics." *dichtung-digital* 3/2003 (2003)

<<http://www.dichtung-digital.org/2003/issue/3/Cayley.htm>>

Poems by...

John Cayley, *Windsound* (2001) – retrieve from the wiki's

"Recommended Reading" page. *Review this page before playing:*

<<http://programmatology.shadoof.net/index.php?p=contents/transliteration.html>>

John Cayley, *This Clock* (2011) –

<<http://programmatology.shadoof.net/index.php?p=installation/thisClock/thisClock.html>> – *Click on the screen capture to play video*

Nick Montfort, *Round* (2013) – <<http://round.newbinarypress.com>> –

Read "a note on this poem" before beginning

Nick Montfort & Stephanie Strickland, *Duels – Duets* – <<http://duels-duets.newbinarypress.com/index.html>> – *Click on "again" to generate new poems, and on "duels-duets.py" to see the code*

(Tu) 24 Sept

DP, "E-Poetries," "Future Tenses/Present Tensions," "Epilogue" (finish book)

... and poem by –

Stephanie Strickland – *V: Vniverse* (2002) –

<http://collection.eliterature.org/2/works/strickland_vniverse.html>

(Th) 26 Sept

Midterm exam posted to wiki

In-class review of midterm questions

(Tu) 1 Oct

First draft of midterm exam due (*due date*)

In-class debriefing of midterm

(Th) 3 Oct

ND, chs. 1 & 2

- (Tu) 8 Oct **Final draft of midterm exam due (*close date*)**
ND, ch. 3
- ... and poem by –
 John Cayley, *Wotclock* (2005) –
 <<http://programmatology.shadoof.net/index.php?p=works/wotclock/wotclock.html>> – *Ideally, this should be run under QuickTime Player 7 (not the current version of the QuickTime Player) for Mac OS or Windows. See this URL to download the software:*
- <<http://support.apple.com/downloads/#quicktime>>
- (Th) 10 Oct *ND*, ch. 4
- ... and poem by –
 Angela Ferraiolo, *The End of Capitalism* (2009)
- (Tu) 15 Oct *ND*, chs. 5 & 6
- ... and poems by –
 Jim Andrews, *dbCinema* (2007)
 Jody Zellen, *Without a Trace* (2008–9)
- (Th) 17 Oct Individual critical readings & responses #1 (*in-class presentations*)
- (Tu) 22 Oct Individual critical readings & responses #1 (*in-class presentations*)
- (Th) 24 Oct Individual critical readings & responses #1 (*in-class presentations*)
- (Tu) 29 Oct Individual critical readings & responses #1 (*in-class presentations*)
- (Th) 31 Oct Individual critical readings & responses #1 (*in-class presentations*)
- (Tu) 5 Nov Collaborative critical readings (*in-class presentations*)
- (Th) 7 Nov Collaborative critical readings (*in-class presentations*)
- (Tu) 12 Nov Collaborative critical readings (*in-class presentations*)
- (Th) 14 Nov Individual critical readings & responses #2 (*in-class presentations*)

- (Tu) 19 Nov Individual critical readings & responses #2 (*in-class presentations*)
- (Th) 21 Nov Individual critical readings & responses #2 (*in-class presentations*)
- (Tu) 26 Nov Individual critical readings & responses #2 (*in-class presentations*)
- (Th) 28 Nov **No class meeting (Thanksgiving holiday)**
- (Tu) 3 Dec **Final class meeting**
Individual critical readings & responses #2 (*in-class presentations*)
Course debriefing
- (Tu) 10 Dec *Final close date for critical readings and responses*