

PHARMAKOMEDIA SEMINAR (DMST 4912 / ARTD 4700.2)

Spring 2012 | Tues 6-9:50pm | Shwayder Art Building 221 (The Node)

Professor: Trace Reddell, DMS / Emergent Digital Practices

Office Hours: Tuesday 3-5pm and by appt. | Office: Sturm 216B

Email: reddell@du.edu | Web: <http://www.du.edu/~reddell/>

This seminar surveys the history of drug literature and media from Plato to the present. We consider the *pharmakon* as a theoretical/philosophical idea-object that expresses our greatest hopes and deepest fears of media and their relationship to embodiment and consciousness. We study key texts by Thomas De Quincey, Charles Baudelaire, Walter Benjamin, William S. Burroughs, Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari, Avital Ronell, Sadie Plant, Richard Doyle, and others.

A central premise of the class is that individual and collaborative writing exercises mobilize aspects of the *pharmakon* as a technology of language-production and deconstruction. Textual experiments will seek to induce, through the written word, what the French poet Arthur Rimbaud called the “systematic derangement of the senses.” Our experiments with and on the written word will extend, through various prescriptions and protocols, into additional media formats in order to expand, contract, and counteract their purported effects on body and mind.

Class Schedule

Session 01 (03-27-2012)

Introductions
Writing games

Session 02 (04-03-2012)

De Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (1821) + *Suspiria De Profundis* (1845)
The palimpsest exercise

Session 03 (04-10-2012)

Baudelaire, *On Wine & Hashish* (1851)
Comparative pharmacology exercise

Session 04 (04-17-2012)

Benjamin, *On Hashish* (1927-34)
Protocols exercise

Session 05 (04-24-2012)

Derrida, “Plato’s Pharmacy” (1968), *Dissemination*
The *pharmakon* exercise

Session 06 (05-01-2012)

Burroughs, *Electronic Revolution* (1970)
Aural hallucinations exercise

Session 07 (05-08-2012)

Ronell, *Crack Wars: Literature Addiction Mania* (1992)
Set & setting exercise

Session 08 (05-15-2012)

Doyle, *Darwin's Pharmacy: Sex, Plants, and the Evolution of the Noösphere* (2011)
Media trip report exercise

Session 09 (05-22-2012)

Strassman et al, *Inner Paths to Outer Space: Journeys to Alien Worlds through Psychedelics and Other Spiritual Technologies* (2008)
Entheomedia exercise

Session 10 (05-29-2012)

Final projects: The Get Experienced exercise

Final (06-05-2012)

Final reports posted on the blog by 7:50pm

Required Texts

Thomas De Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (1821)
Oxford University Press, USA; Reissue edition (January 15, 2009) | ISBN: 0199537933 -or- Penguin Classics (April 29, 2003) | ISBN: 0140439013

Charles Baudelaire, *On Wine & Hashish* (1851)
Hesperus Press (January 1, 2010) | ISBN: 1843916088

Walter Benjamin, *On Hashish* (1927-34)
Belknap Press of Harvard University Press (May 30, 2006) | ISBN: 0674022211

William S. Burroughs, *Electronic Revolution* (1970)*
Pociao's Books; 11th Edition (January 1998) | ISBN: 388030002X

Jacques Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy" (1968)*, *Dissemination*
University Of Chicago Press (February 15, 1983) | ISBN: 0226143341

John Strausbaugh & Donald Blaise, eds., *The Drug User: Documents 1840-1960**
Blast Books (January 13, 1993) | 0922233055

Avital Ronell, *Crack Wars: LITERATURE ADDICTION MANIA (Texts and Contexts)*
University of Illinois Press (February 24, 2004) | ISBN: 0252071905

Rick Strassman, Slawek Wojtowicz, Luis Eduardo Luna, & Ede Frecska, *Inner Paths to Outer Space: Journeys to Alien Worlds through Psychedelics and Other Spiritual Technologies*
Park Street Press; First Edition (April 7, 2008) | ISBN: 159477224X

Richard Doyle, *Darwin's Pharmacy: Sex, Plants, and the Evolution of the Noösphere* (In Vivo, the Cultural Mediations of Biomedical Science)
University of Washington Press (May 20, 2011) | ISBN: 0295990945

*pdf available

Historical survey supplement

Please read at least one of these histories concurrent with the other reading assignments

Sadie Plant, *Writing On Drugs*
Faber & Faber (July 9, 2001) | ISBN: 0571203388

Marcus Boon, *The Road of Excess: A History of Writers on Drugs*
Harvard University Press (March 15, 2005) | ISBN: 0674017560

Online Resources

<http://www.languageisavirus.com/>

<http://www.erowid.org/>

<http://www.maps.org/resources/papers/>

<http://www.electronicbookreview.com/thread/electropoetics/postfuturist>

<http://www.electronicbookreview.com/thread/musicsoundnoise/ethnopsyche>

Online Writing Spaces

Students will receive an invitation via email (gmail account preferred) to join our Google Document group and Blog group. Please follow the directions in the emails.

Organization of Class and Assignments

Structure

Pharmakomedia lectures / presentations

Discussion seminar

Writing / media exercises

Evaluation

Weekly Exercises (80 points): weekly interactive and collaborative media production and experimentation workshops in multiple media formats

Final Report (20 points): 3000 word final report / essay with documentation, posted on the class blog

Scale

A = generally, this grade is reserved for those works that surpass expectations. The grade recognizes:

- sophisticated critical writing skills;
- incorporation of multiple, different concepts and techniques with excellent results;
- outstanding use of source materials, research analysis, and synthesis of own content;
- consistently original and substantial contributions to class discussions and assignments.

B = meets and in some areas exceeds expectations and criteria. The grade recognizes:

- very effective critical writing skills;
- incorporation of multiple, different concepts and techniques, usually with very good outcomes;
- original use of source materials, research analysis, and synthesis of own content;
- frequent original or substantial contributions to class discussions and assignments.

C = fulfills all requirements. The grade recognizes:

- satisfactory critical writing skills;
- a tendency to stick to a one or two familiar concepts and techniques;
- a reliance on untreated source materials, lack of research analysis, and little synthesis of own content;
- infrequent or rushed and unpolished contributions to class discussions and assignments but keeps up with the schedule.

D = fails to fulfill some requirements. The grade recognizes:

- less than satisfactory critical writing skills;
- sticks to one key concept or production technique;
- a reliance on untreated source materials, lack of research analysis, and no synthesis of own content;
- rushed and unpolished contributions to class discussions and assignments, and some inability to keep up with the schedule.

F = fails all requirements. The grade recognizes:

- an inability to master anything more than basic critical writing skills;
- an inability to incorporate multiple concepts and techniques;
- an over-reliance on source materials;
- lack of contributions to class discussions and assignments, and failure to keep up with schedule.

Plagiarism

I expect all assignments to represent the outcomes of your own critical thinking and production efforts. A student found to have plagiarized another's work – that is, represented someone else's written work or other media production efforts as your own – will receive an "F" for the course, and I will report the matter to the AHSS Dean's office and the Office of Community and Citizenship Standards.

Bibliography of Recommended Primary & Resource Texts

David Aldridge & Jorg Fachner, eds., *Music and Altered States*

Jessica Kingsley Pub (January 29, 2009) | ISBN: 1843103737

David Lenson, *On Drugs*

University of Minnesota Press (March 1, 1999) | ISBN: 0816627118

Louis Lewin, *Phantastica* (1924)

Park Street Press (May 1, 1998) | ISBN: 0892817836

Robert C. MacDougall, ed., *Drugs & Media*

Continuum (December 1, 2011) | ISBN: 1441134921

Dale Pendell, *Pharmako/Poeia: Plant Powers, Poisons, and Herbcraft*

North Atlantic Books; Updated edition (September 28, 2010) | ISBN: 1556438052

Dale Pendell, *Pharmako/Dynamis: Stimulating Plants, Potions, and Herbcraft*

North Atlantic Books; Updated edition (September 28, 2010) | ISBN: 1556438036

Dale Pendell, *Pharmako/Gnosis: Plant Teachers and the Poison Path*

North Atlantic Books; New edition (September 28, 2010) | ISBN: 1556438044

Richard Evans Schultes, Albert Hofmann, & Christian Ratsch, *Plants of the Gods: Their Sacred, Healing, and Hallucinogenic Powers*

Healing Arts Press; 2nd edition (November 1, 2001) | ISBN: 0892819790

Charles Tart, *States of Consciousness*

iUniverse (January 9, 2001) | ISBN: 0595151965

Roger Walsh & Charles Grob, *Higher Wisdom: Eminent Elders Explore the Continuing Impact of Psychedelics*

State University of New York Press (September 30, 2005) | ISBN: 0791465187