English 4351: Capstone: 
Looking Across & Thinking Between: 
Juxtaposing Theoretical Approaches to Visual & Literary Cultures

Professor Jennifer Sorensen
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Course Meets 5:30 pm - 6:45 pm Mondays & Wednesdays in CS 103
Office: FC 258  Office Phone: (361) 825–3002
Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 4 - 5 pm and Tuesdays 2:00 – 5:00 pm & by appointment

Course Description:
In this capstone course, we will learn to read words and images through a range of theoretical approaches. We will consider how representation works across a variety of media and genres. We’ll push across boundaries, think outside frames, and read across margins. We will read between theoretical approaches and consider how visual theory can be productively combined with theories of genre, work on book history and print culture, theories of gender, race, and sexuality, and media theory. Each cluster of theoretical models will be read alongside 19th- and 20th-century literary texts and visual objects. This historical period was marked by an explosion of visual technologies, of artistic experimentation, and of the daily modern experiences of surveillance, sensory overload, and gazes from everywhere. We will be immersing ourselves in this historical messiness and learning to apply a range of theoretical approaches to the texts and images that we encounter. We will be learning how to read across and between; by the end of this course, you will be sophisticated and skilled readers of words, images, and the intersections between them.
Course Texts: *The vast majority of materials will be made available online and will need to be printed and brought with you to class—Thus, please be sure to factor in this printing cost into your course budget.

Available at the TAMUCC Bookstore: (or order online but be sure to get these editions)

Available on Blackboard (will need to be printed out and brought to class):
Susan Sontag, “In Plato’s Cave” and “A Brief Anthology of Quotations” from *On Photography* (1973)
Katherine Mansfield, “Bliss” (1918)
Oscar Wilde, *Salome* with Aubrey Beardsley illustrations (1894)
Charlotte Perkins Gilman, “The Yellow Wallpaper” (1892) (Blackboard)
Beyoncé *Lemonade: A Visual Album*
Toni Morrison, “Recitatif”
Ta-Nehisi Coates & Brian Stelfreeze, *Black Panther: A Nation Under Our Feet* (Blackboard)

And a large selection of additional theoretical and critical texts on Blackboard

Course Goals:

I have designed the course to help you develop and hone the following skills:

*The ability to closely and persuasively analyze a variety of genres and media; we’ll be analyzing words *and* images and exploring a diverse and genre-bending group of texts including: poems, a novel, a play, a mixed genre book, short films, and short stories.
*The ability to think critically and to argue (verbally and in writing) about both the micro and macro levels of texts and images (i.e. at the level of the sentence, the paragraph, the chapter, and the structure of the whole book or story and at the level of the line, the stanza, the poem, and the volume and at the level of visual details and whole compositions for illustrations).
*The ability to engage with literary criticism and visual theories and to use these materials to deepen your engagement with primary texts and to enhance your ability to think about texts in complex ways and from multiple perspectives.
*The ability to combine and fuse interpretive strategies to open up texts and images.

I aim for you to emerge from the semester with a complex understanding of visual and literary theories and how to apply them to build nuanced analytical arguments about words and images.

Student Learning Outcomes:
Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

- apply professional standards in argumentation, research and documentation
- evaluate various uses of genre
- create an independent research project by applying the skills of literary and cultural analysis

English Department Goals for the Capstone Class:

- Explore course readings and issues with your peers in open and engaged discussions
- Expand and share your knowledge of literature, contexts and genres in relation to our thematic focus
- Organize and reflect upon a portfolio of your college writings in four different discourse genres
- Engage in sustained research that you will use to develop your own individual project.

**Assessment:**
Your final grade for this course will be determined by the following breakdown of the percentage weighting of each course component:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capstone Portfolio</td>
<td>150</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Close Analysis Practice Posts (to Blackboard)</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Looking Across: Creative Assignment Working Between Media</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theoretical Dialogue Assignment</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Project: Thinking Between</td>
<td>450</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance &amp; Participation</td>
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**Course Grading Scale:**
890-1000: A  
790-890: B  
690-790: C  
590-690: D  
590 or below: F

**Assignments and Policies:**

_Capstone Portfolio_ (150 points): This assignment will be graded on its completeness, and the quality and pertinence of the reflective letter/essay. Please use the final page of this syllabus as your cover sheet.

_Close Analysis Practice Posts_ (50 points): This semester you will practice and develop your analysis skills working with texts and images by submitting 2 short responses to our course blackboard site. These short (1-2 page) responses will be directed by more specific instructions (i.e. you will respond to a question or prompt that I post) and will always be submitted electronically via the Discussion Board area on our course Blackboard site. These short writes encourage you to write-to-learn and the emphasis is placed on the process of closely engaging with course materials. They will all be graded on a √ (for fulfilling the expectations of the assignment), √ + (for exceeding expectations through an exceptionally thoughtful and interesting response), or a 0 (for failing to post a response or for posting a response that fails to fulfill the expectations of the assignment). If you receive a √ or √ + on both of the postings, then you will be awarded full credit for this 50 points of your final grade (each will be worth 25 points). Each posting assignment will specify more precisely the expectations for successful completion in that particular case. Late responses (after the due date and time but within 24 hours) will receive ½ credit. Any response posted later than 24 hours after the due time will not be read and will receive a 0.

_Looking Across: Creative Assignment Working Between Media_ (100 points) (Due Sunday October 22 by midnight on Blackboard): Here you will produce a creative response to one of our course texts in a different media form. You could choose to create a graphic narrative or short film responding to a scene or moment from one of our course texts. Alternatively, you could create a narrative or poem inspired by one of our visual course texts. The goal here is to think creatively about the meanings created by different media and perform an act of transformation as you move between media formats. You will write a 2-3 page reflection about your creative response that draws from and cites at least one of our critical texts. An assignment sheet with more specific guidelines, advice, expectations and grading criteria will be handed out in class.

_Theoretical Dialogue Assignment_ (3-4 pages) (100 points) (Due Sunday November 12 by MIDNIGHT on Blackboard): This assignment will allow you to develop ideas for the final project in a different format: a
dialogue. You will select one particularly intriguing moment from one of our primary materials and then create a dialogue drawing from two critical perspectives from 2 distinct theoretical/critical texts that we’ve read. You will not need a thesis statement for this assignment, but will instead build up a series of questions and moments of analysis through a conversation between these two critical perspectives that open up your chosen text/object in dynamic ways. Think of it as a very creative way to draft and develop your ideas for the final project—and practice the central skills we’ll be honing of looking across and thinking between. An assignment sheet with more specifics will be handed out in class.

**Final Project: Thinking Between** (450 points total) Due Monday December 11th by 4:30 pm on Blackboard:
- **Research Process Portfolio (50 points)** (You will turn in a proposal, draft, and annotated Bibliography in the weeks leading up to turning in the final essay)
- **Research Presentation (100 points)**
- **Research Essay (300 points)**

This research essay will be an extension of the earlier papers and will allow you to develop and extended critical argument by placing one of our course texts/objects in conversation with two theoretical approaches. This project will build from the ideas that you develop in the Theoretical Dialogue, but will culminate in a formal argumentative paper that engages with one literary or visual text and at least two theoretical approaches. (You cannot write on the same text/object that you chose for the first paper assignment but you can choose to build from the Theoretical Dialogue). An assignment sheet with more specifics will be handed out in class.

**Attendance & Participation** (150 points): Your participation grade will be based on your active engagement with class materials, your frequent and thoughtful contributions to class discussions of all shapes and sizes, your active listening to your classmates and to me, your productive work in frequent in-class small group activities, your reflections upon and completion of the assigned reading, and your coming to class prepared (with materials, thoughts, questions, and assigned work) every day. In order to engage actively with these texts and to promote lively discussions, you will need to prepare diligently for class each day—I encourage you to thoroughly mark up your texts (write all over them, use post-it notes, keep a reading journal on a separate page if you prefer), flag key passages that interest you, jot down questions as they occur to you, and come to class ready to discuss and to contribute questions and themes, passages, and patterns that you find particularly intriguing and worth talking about. For our frequent Blackboard readings (i.e. the electronically circulated ones), **you will need to print them out**, follow all the instructions for marking up your texts as above, and **bring them to class with you in order to effectively participate on those days (and to earn full points for each class day)**.

As you will see, I keep records of participation every single class meeting so that these grades are fair and able to be documented: I keep a huge spreadsheet of each day’s grade (assessed using a 4 point grading scale from 4 (an A for outstanding, engaged, thoughtful participation) to a 0 (total non-participation)) and the semester’s participation grade is an average of all of these daily marks (thus local highs and lows get evened out). Also, participation in this course can also extend beyond the boundaries of the classroom and efforts to engage more fully with the reading and writing in the course during office hours also contributes to good participation (I also record frequent office hours attendance and will bump up one or more of the daily marks to reflect this alternative, valuable form of engagement). I will give everyone mid-term participation grades so that you can see how you are doing in this area of the course. If you are concerned about your ability to effectively participate, please come and talk with me in office hours and we can develop strategies to improve your active participation.

You are responsible for obtaining all of the class readings for the course (including printing out any electronic resources assigned and accessible through Blackboard), for reading them carefully prior to class, and for bringing them to class with you as we will work actively with the assigned readings every single class session. If you do not bring your reading materials assigned for a given class meeting to
class with you, then you will receive a zero for that day’s participation. We will work actively with the
texts every single day and thus you need to have them with you in order to actively contribute and even to
keep up with our discussions.

Please turn off all cell phones before class begins. No electronic devices—including computers—are
to be used during class sessions. If you have your cell phone or any other electronic device out during
class, you will receive a zero for that day’s participation.

Attendance Policy and Lateness: This course will be very discussion-intensive—so if you miss a class
meeting, you are missing a lot any day that you miss. But obviously I understand that life sometimes gets in
the way and so you may have two absences with no penalty. For each absence after the first two, your
course grade drops 1/3 of a letter grade (i.e. from B to B-). So please use those two permitted absences
wisely, they are to be used for times when you absolutely cannot make it to class (illnesses, family or
personal emergencies, planned trips, etc.) and not for sleeping in, work for other courses, etc. Being more
than fifteen minutes late to class constitutes a full absence and each day that you are even slightly late will
deduct from that day’s participation grade. Please be right on-time to class every day as we will start
promptly at 5:30 pm.

Late work: Late assignments will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade for each 24 hour period that they are
late (i.e. if it was due on Sunday at Midnight it will be marked 1/3 grade down if it is turned in after then but
before Thursday by Midnight; if it is turned in after Midnight on Thursday, it will be marked down an
additional 1/3 of a letter grade and so on). Please make every effort to have all your assignments in on time!
I do not accept papers or read drafts over email.

The 24-Hour Rule: Please wait 24 hours after I return your graded paper before you come to discuss that
paper with me. If you would like to discuss your paper with me, please come to my office hours or schedule
an appointment (I often require several days notice if you need to make an appointment outside of office
hours). Please come prepared with a short paragraph write-up of your response to my comments on your
paper.

Academic Integrity:
University students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic
honesty. Violations of academic integrity include cheating, plagiarism (failure to acknowledge via
appropriate citation the sources for written, visual, on-line, and other sorts of material), fabrication, illicit
possession of examinations or examination materials, falsification, forgery, complicity, and multiple
submissions (e.g., submitting the same or substantially the same paper for two or more courses without prior
approval of all instructors). In this class, any assignment found to violate the TAMUCC guidelines for
academic integrity will receive a zero grade and will be reported to the college dean and the Office of
Student Affairs in accordance with university policy. Please read “Academic Integrity” guidelines
carefully and ask me if you have any questions: these guidelines are posted at
http://catalog.tamucc.edu/content.php?catoid=6&navoid=177#Academic_Integrity
I have also included the link below to the procedures for student academic misconduct cases. Please read the
information found here as well:
http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/13.02.99.C0.04_student_academic_misconduct_c
ases.pdf

Plagiarism: Definition: In an instructional setting, plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately uses
someone else’s language, ideas, or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging
its source. Plagiarism is a violation academic expectations, but it is sometimes difficult to understand what
plagiarism actually is. Often, students commit unintentional plagiarism (not citing sources properly, for
example), because they are unaware of the standards that apply. Plagiarism includes:
* Using the work of another as your own,

* Downloading or purchasing ready-made essays off the web and using them as your own,

* Using resource materials without correct documentation,

* Using the organization or language of a source without using quote marks and proper citation.

* Turning in a researched project without citing sources in an appropriate documentation style.

When you are confused about citation of quotes or ideas, please visit the Writing Center or me to get help. Information on MLA documentation rules and APA documentation rules is available at Purdue University’s OWL: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/, and from our local Writing Center at CASA.

**Classroom/Professional Behavior**

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi has a diverse student population that represents the population of the state. Our goal is to provide you with a high quality educational experience that is free from repression. You are responsible for following the rules of the University, city, state and federal government. We expect that you will behave in a manner that is dignified, respectful and courteous to all people, regardless of sex, ethnic/racial origin, religious background, sexual orientation or disability. Behaviors that infringe on the rights of another individual will not be tolerated.

**The Writing Center**

You will be doing a lot of writing in this course and the TAMUCC CASA Writing Center is an excellent resource to help you. The Writing Center offers one-on-one tutoring sessions with experienced student writers to help you with a whole range of skills—getting started, building arguments, grammatical issues, organization, and many more—and I highly recommend using this resource. They offer appointments (easy to schedule with their online system) and also walk-ins during their open hours. See their website for more details: http://casa.tamucc.edu/wc.php

**Disabilities Accommodations:**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall 116.

If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.

**Academic Advising**

The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. Degree plans are prepared in the CLA Academic Advising Center. The University uses an online Degree Audit system. Any amendment must be approved by the Department Chair and the Office of the Dean. All courses and requirements specified in the final degree plan audit must be completed before a degree will be granted. The CLA Academic Advising Office is located in Driftwood #203. For more information please call 361-825-3466.

**Religious Observances:**

If a class meeting conflicts with a religious holiday, please notify me within the first two weeks of the semester so that we can make alternate arrangements. In most cases, I will ask you to turn in your
assignment ahead of your scheduled absence, but, in accordance with the TAMUCC policy on Religious/Academic conflicts, your absence will not affect your grade in the course.

**Statement of Academic Continuity:**
In the event of an unforeseen adverse event, such as a major hurricane, if classes could not be held on the campus of Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi, this course would continue through the use of Blackboard and/or email. In addition, the syllabus and class activities may be modified to allow continuation of the course. Ideally, University facilities (i.e., emails, web sites, and Blackboard) will be operational within two days of the closing of the physical campus. However, students need to make certain that the course instructor has a primary and a secondary means of contacting each student.

**Dropping a Class:**
I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. Please consult with your academic advisor, the Financial Aid Office, and me, before you decide to drop this course. Should dropping the course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class. Friday April 5th is the last day to drop a class with an automatic grade of “W” this term.

**Grade Appeals Process:**
As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.03, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.03, Student Grade Appeals. These documents are accessible online at: http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/13.02.99.C0.03_student_grade_appeals.pdf. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean’s office in the college in which the course is taught. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal in CLA, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, http://cla.tamucc.edu/about/student-resources.html.

**Communication:**
The best way to get in touch with me outside of class and office hours is by email. During the semester, I check my email regularly every weekday. I probably will not be able to respond as promptly on weekends or late at night (I will most likely not respond on the same day if you email after 6 pm). Email is a great way to ask a question, share a comment, or make an appointment to talk in person. If you have a long, complicated question, please come visit during office hours or make an appointment so that we can talk it over in person. All conversations about grades and comments on written work should take place in person.

I will email the class if class should be cancelled due to extreme winter weather or other emergency, or if I want to circulate course information to the class so please check your own email regularly.

If you must miss a class, please do not email me asking what you missed. It is your responsibility to check in with a classmate to find out what was covered and to obtain the notes from that day. You should exchange email addresses with at least two of your classmates so that you can contact them if you have to miss class.
I reserve the right to make minor changes and to adjust this syllabus if necessary for the improvement of the course.
Weekly Schedule: All Readings are due on the date that they appear.

Introduction to Visual Theory and Reading Images

Week 1:


Week 2:
M January 21: Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday

W January 23: Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida* (Part II: 63 – 119) & Visit to Weil Gallery (We’ll walk over together to the Art Building during class).

Visual Theory & Critical Theories of Gender and Sexuality & Theories of Genre

Week 3:
M January 28: Katherine Mansfield, “Bliss” and Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” and *Capstone Portfolio Due in Class*


Friday September 22nd: Post #1 Close Reading Analysis due by MIDNIGHT

Week 4:


Week 5:

W February 13: Charlotte Perkins Gilman, “The Yellow Wallpaper” (1892) (Blackboard)

Sunday February 17th: Post #2 Close Looking Analysis due by MIDNIGHT to Blackboard

Visual Theory & Critical Theories of Race

Week 6:
M February 18: Jean Toomer, *Cane* pp 5–37 (Section 1) & OPTIONAL Martha Jane Nadell, “Race and the Visual Arts in the Works of Jean Toomer and Georgia O’Keefe”

W February 20: Jean Toomer, *Cane*, pp 41–81 (Section 2) & Sara Blair, “A Riot of Images: Harlem and the Pursuit of Modernity” & “Looking Back: Toni Morrison and the Return to Plato’s Cave”

Week 7:

W February 27: Beyoncé, *Lemonade: A Visual Album* (to be posted in one pdf on Blackboard and watched once before class) & Selections from Claudia Rankine, *Citizen: An American Lyric* (Blackboard)

** Sunday March 3: “Looking Across: Creative Assignment” due by MIDNIGHT posted to Blackboard

Week 8:

W March 6: Dorothea Lange’s and Ansel Adams’s Photographs of the Japanese internment camps & Critical Selections on Blackboard

Week 9: Spring Break No class on March 11 or March 13

Week 10:

W March 20: *Luke Cage: Moment of Truth (Episode 1)* (TV show screened in class and then discussed) & Critical Readings on Blackboard

Week 11:
M March 25: Selections from Joe Sacco’s *Footnotes in Gaza & Palestine* (Blackboard) & Critical Readings on Blackboard

W March 27: Selections from *Tales from La Vida: A Collection of Latinx Comics* (Blackboard) & Critical Readings on Blackboard

Sunday March 31: Paper 2: Theoretical Dialogue Assignment Due at MIDNIGHT to Blackboard.

Visual Theory & Media Theory

Week 12:
M April 1: E.M. Forster, *A Room with a View* (1908) (Part One – Chapters I – VII)

W April 3: E.M. Forster, *A Room with a View* (1908) (Part Two – Chapters VIII – XIV)

Week 13:
M April 8: E.M. Forster, *A Room with a View* (1908) (Part Two – Chapters XV – XX) & Henri Matisse paintings of rooms with views (Blackboard and in class)

W April 10: Screening & Discussion of *A Room with A View* (1985 Merchant & Ivory Film) & Discussing the novel and film adaptation

Week 14:
M April 15: Continued Screening & Discussion of A Room with A View (1985 Merchant & Ivory Film) & Discussing the novel and film adaptation

W April 17: Critical Readings on Blackboard and In class Research Workshop for Final Projects

Juxtapositions
Week 15:
M April 22: Presentations

W April 24: Presentations

Week 16:
M April 29: Presentations

W May 1: Presentations

Final Meeting:
W May 8th 4:30 – 7:00 pm: Final Project Due at Start of Scheduled Exam Time: Due by 4:30 pm Wednesday May 8th (submitted electronically through Blackboard or slid under office door) We will meet and have a final class wrap up day with Activities & Conclusions & Retrospectives
CAPSTONE PORTFOLIO

Throughout the semester we have discussed fiction and non-fiction genres. In addition, you have worked in different genres (literary/theoretical analysis, descriptive narrative, and research project). Your task for this assignment is to choose four pieces you have created over the course of your career as an English major and write a critical reflection of them. Your portfolio is due on Monday, January 28. Whatever portfolio binding you use, make it simple and flat (so when stacked the portfolios won’t topple over).

Your portfolio must contain:
1) Four writings that you have done for classes in college. Clean copies (without teacher commentary/grade) are preferred. The pieces should display or exemplify a different discourse genre (drama, poetry, prose fiction, non-fiction etc.).
   • The selected pieces must display or exemplify at least three different discourse genres.
   • One piece must be a literary analysis from an upper-division English class.
   • One piece must be a documented research paper from an upper-division English class.
   • One piece must show your ability to analyze a written text from historical, social, and/or theoretical perspectives (this selection must be identified by an asterisk).

2) Introductory essay or letter, approximately three pages long, in which you discuss and analyze your use and understanding of genre as illustrated by the pieces in your portfolio. Your discussion might include characteristics and purposes of each genre, and how choice of genres depends upon context, purpose, and audience. Note: the bulk of your portfolio grade in this class will be based on this essay.

3) Data sheet—please submit this page with the information below filled out.

Academic genres may include, but are not restricted to
Fiction: short story, poem, novel chapter, scene from a script
Nonfiction: biography, autobiography, argument, research paper, analysis, report, proposal, letter memorandum, editorial, printout from a PowerPoint created for an oral presentation.

Writings Submitted:
*Place an asterisk by the number of the piece you are submitting as evidence of your ability to analyze a text from a historical, social, and/or theoretical perspective.

Name: __________________________________________

Class (circle one) First-year Sophomore Junior Senior

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<th>Short Title</th>
<th>Genre-type</th>
<th>Course / Level</th>
<th>Semester / Year</th>
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