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ENG 3601-001: Special topics: The gothic manual

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AMERICAN TRIUMVIRS: JOHN CAGE, CHARLES OLSON, AND JACK KEROUAC

The composer John Cage, poet Charles Olson, and novelist Jack Kerouac were central figures in the transformation of American culture after the Second World War. They could be considered America's first postmodernists, calling into question academic segregation of artistic disciplines and the view that art and life were separate realities. Although in their times, each of these figures was regarded -- and typically disparaged -- as a revolutionary outsider, their influence has been so pervasive that today that we take for granted many of their radical innovations in music, writing, and the visual arts.

TEXTS
John Cage, Silence.
Robert Creeley, Ed. Selected Writings of Charles Olson.

SCHEDULE

January
7 Introductory
9 – Cage, The Future of Music: Credo; Experimental Music (Silence 3-12)
11 – Cage, Forerunners of Modern Music; History of Experimental Music in the United States (Silence 62-75)
14, 16, -- Cage, Composition as Process (Silence 18-56)
18 – The Music of Change
21 – MLK day, no class
23 – Cage, Four Statements on Dance (Silence 87-97); Cunningham video
25 – Cage, On Robert Rauschenberg, Artist, and his Work (Silence 98-107)

28 – Cage, Lecture on Nothing (Silence 108-127)
30 – Cage, Lecture on Something (Silence 128-145)
Feb. 1 – Cage, Indeterminacy (Silence 260-274)

February
4, Cage, Foreword to M; 36 Mesostics Re and Not Re Marcel Duchamp; X. Writing for the Fourth Time through Finnegans Wake; Notations.
6, 8 – Student work (Concrete/aleatory composition; Yijing, visual art; dance Mesostics and diaries)

11 – Interlude: Martin Duberman, Black Mountain College (on reserve)
13 – Olson, Human Universe (Creeley 53-66)
15 – No Class

18, 20, Olson, Mayan Letters (69-130)
22 – Olson, Projective Verse (15-30)

25 – Olson, La Préface (160-161), Merce of Egypt (165-166)
27 – Olson, As the Dead Prey Upon Us (205-212)
29 – Olson, The Kingfishers (167-173)

March
5 – Olson, The Songs of Maximus (230-233) Letter 6 (234-238)
5 – Olson, Tyrian Businesses (239-244), Maximus, to Himself (245-246)
7 - Olson, Letter 22 (263-265), Maximus to Gloucester, Sunday, July 19 (275-277)
(10, 12, 14 Spring Break)
17, 19, 21 – Kerouac, On the Road
24 – View Pull My Daisy
26, 28 – Kerouac, Mexico City Blues (excerpts)
31 April 2, 4 – Kerouac, Dharma Bums
7, 9, 11 – Kerouac, Subterraneans
14, 16, 18 – Kerouac Tristessa
21, 23, 25 – Lonesome Traveler

REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION

This course deals with avant-garde materials that you are likely to find new and challenging. This is a reading intensive course. I expect you to come to class prepared to discuss the day’s material. In addition to class assignments, you will need to complete three projects and a final examination. Your final grade will reflect your performance on these, as well as your contribution to our conversation in class.

PROJECTS

cage
mesotich
concrete music
Use of Yijing as structuring principle

Olson
Exercise in projective verse
Group presentation of a poem

Kerouac
Stylistic analysis
‘spontaneous bop prosody’