

The Artist's Institute
Fall 2018 Graduate Seminar

Instructor: Sasha Frere-Jones

Week One: Line

Thelonious Monk + John Coltrane, “[In Walked Bud](#)”

[Anne Carson](#), “[The Glass Essay](#)”

Constance DeJong, “[On A Street](#)”

Annie Dillard, “[Total Eclipse](#)” (1982)

Norman McLaren, [Loops](#) (1940)

Eileen Myles, “[Peanut Butter](#)”

Find the line in these pieces. What is the line and why is it the line? How many lines are there? Write a piece where line is primary. Define line as you see fit but don't indicate the line.

Week Two: Scale

Roland Barthes, “[Cy Twombly: Works on Paper](#)”

[Fred Moten](#), “[The Case of Blackness](#)” + Maggie Nelson, “[On Black and Blur](#)”

[William Gass](#), “[And](#)”

Williams Gass, [Omensetter's Luck](#)

What is the metric being used here? What is the fullness against which a thing is being measured? Write a piece that expresses a concept of fullness, extension, and plenitude; and then measure something else by the parameters of that concept.

Week Three: Detail + Field

Joan Mitchell, “[Untitled \(1960\)](#)”

Glenn Gould + Leonard Bernstein, “[Bach's Keyboard Concerto No. 1 in D minor](#)”

Miles Okazaki, “[In Walked Bud](#)”

Ryuichi Sakamoto, “[hwit](#)”

Luciano Berio + Pierre Boulez, “[Sinfonia](#)”

Roland Barthes “[Punctum and Studium](#)” from [Camera Lucida](#) (read this entire book)

What is in the foreground and what is in the background? Why does there need to be a background? What does it do? Write a piece that establishes a key detail and a distinct field, and make sure there is a clear relationship between the two. Define detail and field as you see fit.

Week Four: Rallies

Renata Adler, “[The Perils of Pauline](#)”

Frank O’Hara, “[Song](#)” (read this whole book maybe)

Rachel Kushner, “[Earth Angel](#)”

E.M. Cioran, “[A Bouquet of Heads](#)”

Watch enthusiasm work. Is there a difference between enthusiasm and agitation? If so, what is it? Get entirely wound up and write something—don’t revise it.

Week Five: Couples and Triptychs

Danny Hart + two unknown announcers, “[Beyond Reason](#)”

Gilles Deleuze, “[Couples and Triptychs](#)”

Robert Motherwell, “[Elegy to the Spanish Republic, No. 57 \(1957\)](#)”

Fernando Pessoa, “[Alberto Caeiro, Álvaro de Campos and Ricardo Reis](#)”

How do pairings of two and three work? Is there still a one if there is also a two and a three? Write something that deals with at least three elements. Determine “element” as you see fit.

Week Six: Narration

“[Ladies and Gentlemen, Mr. Leonard Cohen](#)”

Richard Ben Cramer, “[What Do You Think of Ted Williams Now?](#)”

James Fox, “[A History of Art In Three Colours](#)”

SFJ, “[All About Yves: The Story of International Klein Blue](#)”

Rachel Kaadzi Ghansah, “[A River Runs Through It](#)”

How does a voice above a subject—be it topic or person—work? Can things be explained without a narrator? Write something that makes use (positively or negatively) of a narrator.

Week Seven: Ideas

Adrian Piper, “[Art Criticism Essay Suggested Guidelines](#)”

Kodwo Eshun, “[Further Considerations on Afrofuturism](#)”

Stuart Hall, “[Cultural Identity and Diaspora](#)”

John Akomfrah, “[On Stuart Hall](#)” — “exquisitely differentiated” “the practice”

Lisa Robertson, “[Pure Surface](#)”

SUPPLEMENT: [Volume One](#) and [Volume Two](#) of Stuart Hall’s *Essential Essays*.

How do you express a complex idea? Write something that attempts to explain a dense thought that matters to you but has also vexed you for some time.

Week Eight: Signal Path

Michel Foucault, “[Lives of Infamous Men](#)”

Lisa Robertson, “[Time In The Codex](#)”

Wayne Koestenbaum, “[Hotel Theory](#)”

Teju Cole, “[Far Away From Here](#)”

How does it help, in a piece of writing, to extend and vary an argument? Write something that goes on longer than you think it should.

Week Nine: Frame

[John Berger](#), “Manhattan”/*The Sense of Sight*

Mobb Deep, “[Shook Ones](#)”

Elizabeth Hardwick, *Seduction and Betrayal: Women and Literature*

Cecil Taylor, [Les Grands Repétitions](#)

SFJ, “[I Thought I Was Taking Medicine](#)”

Raymond Carver, “[A Storyteller’s Shoptalk](#)”

How do you set out an idea and then expand it? How do you set up a thing and then handle it? Write something that posits one theory, and then goes on to elaborate it.

Week Ten: Proportion and Silence

Manny Kirchheimer, [Claw](#) (1968)

Gordon Matta-Clark, [Day's End](#) (1975)

Dub Syndicate, “[Pounding System](#)”

What happens when you leave things out? Write something and leave the most important part out. (Do this in two separate steps. Don't decide before step two what the most important part is.)

Week Eleven: Study

Angela Carter, “[The Latest Thing](#)” (1985)

Greil Marcus, *Lipstick Traces*

[Fred Moten](#), “[Debt and Study](#)”

[Michel de Montaigne](#), “[Of Drunkenness](#)”

How can you set up a conceptual area for future study? How can a piece of writing live beyond its immediate points? How do these pieces of writing do that? Write about something you wish you knew more about.

Week Twelve: Lives

Arthur Jafa, “[In Your Face](#)”

Zadie Smith, “[Speaking In Tongues](#)”

Joe LeSueur, *Digressions On Some Poems By Frank O'Hara*

How do you put your life into a piece not primarily about your life? Write about something you care about, but don't yourself do, using your life.

Week Thirteen: Point

T.J. Clark, [Farewell to an Idea](#) (1999)

Freestyle. Grapple with this magnificent book and see what happens.

Week Fourteen: Vernacular

Denis Johnson, *Jesus Son*

**Grapple with this magnificent book and then write something entirely in the vernacular.
Doesn't necessarily matter if it seems like an essay.**