

Kenneth Kidd
LIT 6856
Summer B 2003

Office: Turlington 4214
Hours: T/R 6 & by apptment

Everyday Theory

Texts

Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (1957)
Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1974)
Sigmund Freud, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1901)
Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959)
Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life* (1947)
Evan Watkins, *Everyday Exchanges* (1998)

And a small packet from Xerographic Copy Center (927 NW 13th St.)
Books are at Goering's on campus.

Overview

Hegel called everyday life “the prose of the world.” How do we read that prose – why should we try? This summer seminar addresses the everyday as a reality and concept, as something at once experiential and theoretical, lived yet formalized. Put another way, I want to think about theory as an everyday event or experience, as well as theorize the everyday. To that end, we'll look very selectively at twentieth-century projects/genres that address theory and/as the everyday, chief among them psychoanalysis and the largely French, largely Marxist-materialist critical discourse of "everyday life." In and around such, we may touch upon phenomenology, ethnography, structuralism, post-structuralism, and cultural studies. You'll develop individual explorations of everyday theory, in keeping with your own interests as well as our collective concerns. No experience with critical theory is necessary, only some familiarity with everyday life, alongside a willingness to read and think critically about the material.

The course is meant to be at once systematic and flexible, providing a brief survey of critical theory while allowing for the greatest possible range of conversation and individual work. I want the course to be useful to you, whatever your areas of interest and training. I ask that each week you complete all the reading and try to develop questions and observations as if you were planning to teach this material yourself. I may ask you to begin discussion, so please come prepared and ready to roll. We'll read chronologically (more or less) and go from there.

Assignments.

Required are attendance and active participation (25%), one 5-7 pp. paper (25%) and a longer essay of 15-20 pp. (50%).

In the short paper, I'd like you to profile either a theorist or a theory/paradigm of the everyday, providing an overview of key arguments, themes, influences and associations. Some biographical focus is fine, but the paper should be analytical in spirit. Possible theorists include any of the writers featured in *The Everyday Life Reader*, excepting those we're working with in class. Some possibilities from that text (among many others) are Walter Benjamin, Kristin Ross, Raymond Williams, Xioabing Tang, Pierre Bourdieu, Guy Debord, Stuart Hall, and Trinh T. Min-ha. You may also argue for the everyday-relevance of other thinkers or scholars; put another way, you may examine the place of the everyday in their work. bell hooks, perhaps, or Judith Butler? Avita Ronnell? It's your call. If you'd rather focus on a topic, such as "queer theory and the everyday," or "everyday theory and film," that's fine, but keep the paper focused on key issues and give some specific examples, so that your essay is manageable. You might want to provide a short bibliography either way.

The longer essay may develop from the short paper if that's advantageous. It must reckon with everyday theory in some form, addressing at least some of our shared themes and concerns, but beyond that, any topic or approach is fine, provided that the essay is well-developed, reasonably thorough, and sufficiently researched. Let me know if you'd like some help. If you know your thesis or dissertation topic, you might want to use this essay to explore relevant material and/or provide a different angle on your subject(s).

Reading Schedule

July/August

- 1 Introductions
- 3 Highmore, "Introduction" and "Figuring the Everyday"; Phillips, "On Being Bored"; Freud, "The Forgetting of Proper Names" and "The Forgetting of Foreign Words" from *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*
- 8 Freud, *Psychopathology* (finish)
- 10 Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, "Introduction" and Chapters 1-3
- 15 Lefebvre, *Critique*, Chapters 4-6
- 17 Barthes, *Mythologies*
- 22 Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*
- 24 Bachelard, "Nests" and "Shells"; Baudrillard, "Structures of Interior Design"
- Short essay due**
- 29 De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Parts I and III (II optional)
- 31 De Certeau, *The Practice*, Parts IV and V
- 5 Watkins, *Everyday Exchanges*, "Introduction" and Chapters 1, 4, and 5

- 7 Jane Gallop, "Anecdotal Theory," Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay is About You" (to be distributed); course wrap-up

Longer essay due 10 p.m. **August 8.**