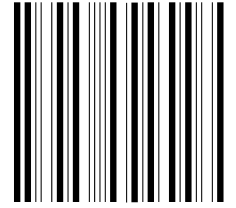
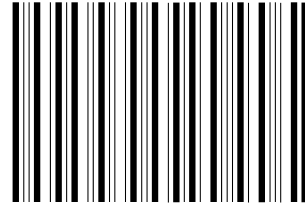


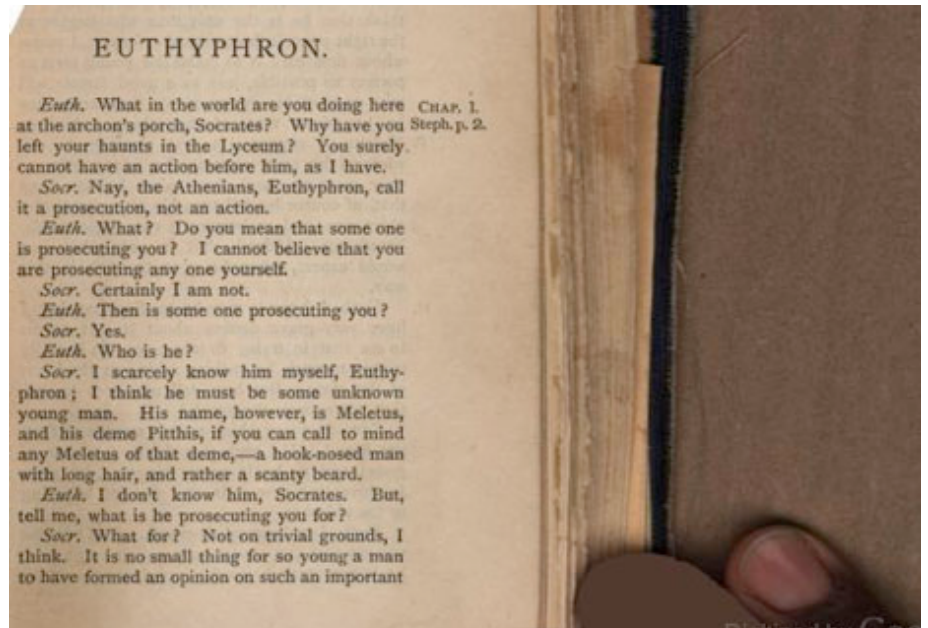
Typing Monkey, *Wikipedia.com*

Reading Literature,



READING MEDIA

Tuesday/Thursday 5:30-6:50pm
Anderson Classroom 27
Professor Paul Benzon
pbenzon@temple.edu



Human Fingers on Plato's *Euthyphron*, *Google Books*

Contact Information

Office: Anderson Hall 1127

Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday, 12:00-1:15pm and by appt.

Office Phone: 215-204-7349

Mailbox: Anderson Hall 1029

Course Description

We often think of literature as solely an imaginative art—as a collection of ideas, characters, and images in language that just happen to exist on paper. But literature is also a form of media that exists alongside other media forms and in dialogue with them. Contemporary writers who acknowledge this condition transform and reconceptualize the aesthetic and social meaning of literature. In this course, we will explore this transformation by considering what it might mean to read contemporary literature as part of a larger media ecology. How does contemporary literature represent and respond to other technological forms? In what ways does it resemble or converge with those forms, and in what ways is it distinct from them? If we can see literature as media, can we also find aesthetic meaning in other media forms—a text message, a playlist, even a hard drive—in the same way that we do in literature?

In order to pursue these and other questions in this course, we will explore a wide range of contemporary texts in both print and digital forms. In order to establish the broad scope of our study, we'll begin by reading a selection of “conventional” print literature that takes technology as a central thematic and philosophical subject. Then we will turn to print and digital literature for which technology plays an integral role at both the thematic and material levels. Finally, we will reverse the perspective of our initial literary inquiry by studying digital phenomena including spam, computer viruses, and search engines as literary forms in order to rethink the nature of literature under the influence of technology. Throughout the semester, we will support our discussion of these literary texts with readings from a number of key figures in the field of media studies.

Required Texts

Ellen Ullman, *The Bug* (ISBN 1400032358)

Hitori Nakano, *Train Man* (ISBN 0345498690)

Selected other literature and articles (marked with an asterisk and available on Blackboard or online as noted)

The book versions listed above are available at the Temple University bookstore. If you choose to order books elsewhere online, be sure that you order versions with the ISBN numbers listed above, and that you allow time for all the books to arrive before we will be using them in class.

Materials on Blackboard should be printed out and brought to class on the days we will be discussing them. I recommend that you print this material out at the beginning of the semester and keep it all together so that you will have it in hand well before it is due.

Grading

You must complete all of the following course assignments in order to pass the course:

Mascot Naming	1%
In-Class Participation	17.5%
Course Blog	17.5%
Short Analytical Paper 1	20%
Short Analytical Paper 2	20%
Final Paper	24%

Mascot Naming

The typing monkey on the cover of this syllabus is our class mascot, our guide through the complex world of contemporary literature and media. He/she will appear frequently throughout the course—on the course blog, on assignment sheets and handouts, and in other as-yet unknown locations. He/she is also the subject of a semester-long contest in our class to name the mascot. There is a separate thread on our course blog to post suggestions—everyone must post at least one suggestion over the semester, although you may post as many suggestions as you like at any time. The student who suggests the best name will receive a 2% bonus to his/her participation grade. Entries will be judged on the basis of originality and relevance to the subject matter of the course.

Attendance

Consistent attendance, preparation, and participation are crucial to your success in this course. I will expect that you come to class on time and ready to work. **More than three absences will have a negative impact on your final course grade, and more than five absences will result in your failing the course. I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences.** More than two latenesses of more than 15 minutes will be considered equal to one absence (however, even if you are more than 15 minutes late, you should still always come to class). If you miss class, it is your responsibility to keep up with the work—make sure to turn in any written work that was due for the day, and check the course blog and course website on Blackboard or come see me during my office hours to see what you might have missed in class.

Preparation, Participation, and Class Structure

We will spend our class time each day on a variety of different activities, including full-class discussions, small-group discussions, presentations, screenings, and in-class writing. While I may occasionally give short lectures, the bulk of our time will be spent talking and engaging together with the course material and with each other's ideas. In order to do this, it is essential that you come to class prepared to address the day's material. This means completing all reading before class, bringing the reading to class, and being prepared to discuss the reading thoughtfully. You should have interpretations, questions, and responses to share with the class, and you should be prepared to offer these and to be called on in our conversation. Discussion and work in class are important parts of this course, so active, thoughtful participation will have an impact on your final grade. More generally, the more each of you brings your own thinking to the discussion, the more all of us will get out of class—I encourage you to offer perspectives, ideas, examples, oppositions, questions, and other contributions as much as possible. If you are uncomfortable with speaking in class, please let me know or come see me at the beginning of the semester so that we can work together to make things easier for you.

Although I will lecture rarely, if ever, that does not mean that you should not take notes on what the class has to say about the material we are discussing, just as you would in a lecture course. On the contrary, even when it seems as if we are “just talking” about a reading, a piece of culture, or something else, you should still be actively thinking and writing—do not let the discussion just pass you by without actively engaging it, even if only as a listener at certain moments. Having a record of the class' comments, opinions, debates, etc., will be extremely valuable to you in preparing to develop topics and arguments for further writing and thinking in the course.

All phones, iPods, and other technological devices should be turned off and kept in your bag or pocket for the duration of class. Sleeping, texting, listening to music, talking outside of class discussion and other similar behaviors are disrespectful to me and to your classmates and disruptive of our work in class. Students who engage in such behaviors may be asked to leave class and marked absent for the day.

This course is open to all students who meet the academic requirements for participation. Any student who has a need for accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately to

discuss the specific situation as soon as possible. Contact Disability Resources and Services at 215-204-1280 in 100 Ritter Annex to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

Course Blog

Over the course of the semester, we will all post regularly to a course blog focused on the texts and issues we will be discussing in class. This work will serve three purposes: firstly (and most immediately), it will give you a chance to think critically about some of the course material before we discuss it in class and to gear our discussion towards issues and questions that are important to you. Secondly, it will give us all first-hand experience with a central form of contemporary technological culture. Finally, by giving you the opportunity to bring new material and new areas of concern into our conversation, it will help you to generate topics and ideas for the final paper.

Note that the blog is located at <http://readinglitreadingmedia.wordpress.com/>, **not on Blackboard** (although we will use Blackboard for email, papers, and other elements of the course). You are not required to register with WordPress in order to post on the blog, but you must subscribe to the blog so that you receive notifications of new material that I post. The most recent main post will appear at the top of the page—click on the comments link for that post to read what others have written and post your response.

Content. Your work on the blog will take different forms at different points in the semester. Sometimes I will post a prompt for you to respond to, while at other times your posts can be more open-ended; sometimes I will ask you to address a particular passage or other element from the reading, while at other times I will ask you to think about a broader literary, cultural, or technological phenomenon. The blog is a space for us as a group to be reflective about the material we are discussing, and to begin to air initial responses, interpretations, and reactions before we pursue them more fully in discussion. In this spirit, your posting to the blog should be thoughtful and analytical—you should offer interpretations and questions rather than summaries. Because a blog allows discussion to happen over time, you should always read what has already been posted to the blog on a given week before you make your own post, and you should try to address that material in what you say—thoughtful responses that oppose, expand, rethink, complicate, or otherwise complement what others have written are as helpful and meaningful as “standalone” comments (if not more so). I will participate in conversations as they develop as well as posting opening threads.

Each post should be at least 300 words—you might write and edit your post in Microsoft Word or a similar program so that you know the length of your post and so that you have a backup of it on your computer. I will often ask you to include images, links, video clips, and other media elements in your posts—this is fairly easy to do and we will discuss it in class at the beginning of the course.

Scheduling. Unless I specify otherwise, there will be a blog post due before each Tuesday class. In order to ensure that everyone has a chance to read comments and absorb the online discussion before we meet on Tuesday, your posts are due by **midnight on Monday night**. Because of the time-sensitive nature of the blog, late posts will not receive credit.

Grading. I will grade your blog posts on a \surd , $\surd+$, $\surd-$ basis each week. I will decide your grade based on the your engagement with the text and your consideration of and response to other students' posts.

Short Analytical Papers

This course requires two short analytical papers, each four to six double-spaced typed pages in twelve-point font. These papers are intended to give you an opportunity to apply the skills of literary interpretation we will develop in class in a larger context, both in terms of particular texts and in relation to the broader themes and questions of the course. These papers should go beyond summary or evaluation to make a larger argument about the text you are discussing based on close readings of multiple passages: beyond just tracing

a character or theme at a general level, you should consider carefully **how** the author represents those things through the language of the text and advance an interpretive viewpoint about **why** he or she does that and the larger significance of that act. The strongest papers will offer original, individual arguments that add to or go beyond the ideas and examples raised in class discussion.

Final Paper

This course requires a final paper of eight to ten double-spaced typed pages in twelve-point font. This paper will ask you to make an argument about the nature and limits of literature as shaped by media technology, and will require some outside academic research. A proposal for this paper is due at the beginning of class on March 30. I will hold conferences with each of you regarding your proposals during the week they are due, and we will workshop drafts of your papers on April 20. The final draft of the paper will be due electronically by 5:00p.m. on Friday, April 30.

I will grade all papers based on the rubric at the end of this syllabus. Late work on papers will be marked down one grade level for each class period after the due date (for example, from a B+ to a B for one late day). Extensions will only be granted in the case of an emergency documented by a college dean.

Technology Policy

Technology is not only a subject of this course, but also a frequent tool in our work together: in addition to posting on the class blog, you will be handing in papers electronically, and many of the texts we will read are available online (some of them only online). As such, you are responsible for making sure that you have the technological tools and access necessary to keep up with the reading and writing for the course. Expect that you will have technological problems at some point in the semester, and plan accordingly: back up your work, make sure you have access to alternate computers and printers (a friend's or roommate's, a lab in the library or TECH Center, etc.), and leave time to use these resources rather than relying on everything working perfectly at the last second. If you have questions about how to use any of these resources (or anything else technology-related), don't hesitate to come ask me.

Office Hours and Additional Help

I want each of you to be successful in this class. Helping each of you develop as students of literature and media is important to me, and I want to do what I can to help you achieve those goals. If you have any questions, problems, or things you want to discuss—about the course, the readings, writing assignments or paper ideas, or anything else at all—or if you simply want to talk more about what we're doing in class, please come see me. My office hours are Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:00-1:15pm in Anderson Hall 1127. If you aren't free during that time, get in touch with me before or after class or by email and we can set up a time that is more convenient. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you are having trouble or feel you need help.

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

Independent thinking is a crucial component of your work in this course. **If you plagiarize, you will fail the course.** If you are uncertain about anything, ask **before** you hand in the work. The following rules cover several basic concerns involving plagiarism. If you are in any way uncertain about what constitutes plagiarism, do not hesitate to consult me.

- a) The language in your paper must be either your own or a direct quote from the original author.
- b) Changing a few words or phrases from another writer's work is not enough to make the writing your own. The writing is either your own or the other person's; there are no in-betweens.
- c) In-text citation and an accurate bibliography acknowledge that the fact or opinion expressed comes from another writer. If the language comes from another writer, quotation marks are necessary, in addition to a correct citation.

Course Schedule

The schedule of readings below may change over the course of the semester. It is your responsibility to keep abreast of these changes by attending class, checking your email and the class blog regularly, and contacting me or coming to my office if you have any questions.

Literature About Technology: Narrative, Language, and the Limits of the Human

- Tuesday, Jan. 19 Course Introduction
- Thursday, Jan. 21 *Arthur Conan Doyle, "A Case of Identity"
*Jorge Luis Borges, "The Library of Babel," "Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*"
- Tuesday, Jan. 26 Ellen Ullman, *The Bug* ix-83
- Thursday, Jan. 28 Ellen Ullman, *The Bug* 84-153
- Tuesday, Feb. 2 Ellen Ullman, *The Bug* 154-257
- Thursday, Feb. 4 Ellen Ullman, *The Bug* 258-351
- Tuesday, Feb. 9 *Friedrich Kittler, "There Is No Software," "Protected Mode"

Literature Through Technology: Print and Digital, Networks and Assemblages, Media and Memory

- Thursday, Feb. 11 Hitori Nakano, *Train Man* 1-124
Short Analytical Paper 1 Due
- Tuesday, Feb. 16 Hitori Nakano, *Train Man* 125-245
- Thursday, Feb. 18 Hitori Nakano, *Train Man* 245-403
- Tuesday, Feb. 23 *Andy Warhol, *a: a novel* (selections)
- Thursday, Feb. 25 *Typing Explosion, "Presskit," Selected Poems
Takumi Endo, "TypeTrace Demonstration" (Video Part 5) <http://tinyurl.com/typetracedemo>
- Tuesday, Mar. 2 *Samuel Beckett, *Krapp's Last Tape*
- Thursday, Mar. 4 *Samuel Beckett, *Krapp's Last Tape* continued
- Tuesday, Mar. 9 **No Class: Spring Break**
- Thursday, Mar. 11 **No Class: Spring Break**
- Tuesday, Mar. 16 *William Gibson, "Agrippa" <http://www.williamgibsonbooks.com/source/agrippa.asp>
- Thursday, Mar. 18 *William Gibson, "Agrippa" continued
*Matthew Kirschenbaum, "Preface" to *Mechanisms* and "Text Messaging: The Transformations of 'Agrippa'"

- Tuesday, Mar. 23 Young-Hae Chang Heavy Industries, “Dakota,” “Résumé I?” <http://www.yhchang.com/>
- Thursday, Mar. 25 Young-Hae Chang Heavy Industries, “Operation Nukorea,” “Traveling to Utopia”
<http://www.yhchang.com/>
Short Analytical Paper 2 Due
- Tuesday, Mar. 30 Electronic Literature Directory – One Text of Your Choice <http://eld.eliterature.org/>
*N. Katherine Hayles, “Print is Flat, Code Is Deep: The Importance of Media-Specific Analysis”
Final Paper Proposal Due

Technology as Literature?: Spam, Search, Status and More

- Thursday, April 1 **Conferences for Final Paper**
- Tuesday, April 6 *Eve Edelson, *Scamorama: Turning the Tables on Email Scammers* (selections)
- Thursday, April 8 *Alan Liu, “Destructive Creativity: The Arts in the Information Age,” “‘Ethical Hacking’ and Art”
Digital Art TBA
- Tuesday, April 13 The AOL Search Data Leak, <http://www.aolstalker.com/>
Bill Kennedy and Darren Wershler, “Status Update,” <http://www.statusupdate.ca/>
Additional Texts TBA
- Thursday, April 15 *Sandy Baldwin, “Ping Poetics”
<http://www.electronicbookreview.com/thread/electropoetics/circulatory>
- Tuesday, April 20 **Draft Workshop for Final Paper**
- Thursday, April 22 Open Day/TBD
- Tuesday, April 27 *Matthew Kirschenbaum, “Extreme Inscription: A Grammatology of the Hard Drive”
- Thursday, April 29 Conclusions

Academic Freedom Policy: Freedom to teach and freedom to learn are inseparable facets of academic freedom. The University has adopted a policy on Student and Faculty Academic Rights and Responsibilities (Policy# 03.70.02) which can be accessed through the following link: www.policies.temple.edu