The course explores the genealogy and range of theories of affect, foregrounding anthropology's distinctive contributions to and critiques of the study of affect. We'll discuss ways that centralizing affect might disrupt dichotomies of structure/agency, opening up modes of analysis that are not centered on cultural meaning-making, and enabling us to explore forms of life that exceed human subjects and socialities. Readings will tack between more theoretical essays and ethnographic representations of affect, sensuality, mobility, and emotion. Weekly experimental/experiential sensoria, designed to attune us to the world, are a central component of the course.

Course Readings
All essays are available on the course Moodle & also as a course pack via your portfolio. We will choose one or two books to read together in the last few weeks of the semester.

Course Assignments
- (Attendance and) Participation – 15%
- 10 Sensoria Workshop/Writing Exercises – 35%
- Discussion Leading – 15%
- Final Paper/Project (~10 pages) – OR – Two (~5-page) Papers -- 35%

Participation. This is an intensive, reading-heavy course designed for an active learner. You will get out of it what you put in to it; your participation is crucial to its success. We will be reading challenging theoretical essays, so participation in this course means coming to class ready to ask questions, to think about what is at stake, and to begin to forge your own analysis. Your participation should be grounded in the reading; pointing us to relevant sections of an article or to a particular quote is most productive. Remember, participation does not just talking, it means contributing to our collective learning – asking questions and expanding others’ insights is often as useful as (maybe even more useful than) making declarations.
**10 Sensoria Workshop/Writing Exercises.** Each week you will be doing an ethnographic sensorium workshop or writing assignment, sometimes during class, sometimes before class. The projects will give you a practical, embodied, ethnographic way to approach the core concepts we are exploring that week. You’ll get detail about each Sensoria as we go along. **This aspect of the course is ungraded, as it is experimental—meant to give you a chance to try things out and experiment without fear of evaluation. Grading is based on completion.**

**Discussion Leading.** Once during the semester, you will lead ~15 minutes of our discussion on the readings for that day through a combination of presentation and discussion questions. You’ll turn in a Memo for your discussion, which should have:

1) two passages from the readings that you think are especially interesting, important, provocative, challenging, or that will otherwise prompt meaningful discussion about the core issues at hand. Please type them out; a passage can be anywhere from 1 sentence to 1 paragraph. Along with the passages, include some brief notes, comments, or questions about each of the passages.

2) two discussion questions for the class. You will likely need a few sentences to explicate your questions; make sure you give enough information for your question to be generative (aim for questions you think link to other important ideas or topics, get at the heart of some theoretical issue, or open up a new way of thinking).

While you should take the time to read carefully and reflect on the course material, you are decisively **not** expected to master it before our session—whether you are leading discussion or not. Instead, the Memo will allow you to raise questions you have about the theories and approaches we are considering, try out ideas, and direct our discussion in ways conducive to your learning and interests.

**Final Paper/Project – OR – Two Papers.** You pick your track: either a final paper (or other substantive ethnographic project) of ~10 pages, or two 5-page papers due at the midterm and the last day of classes. Either way, you have the choice of exploring any aspect of affect + anthropology; papers can be more conceptual/theoretical, more ethnographic/descriptive, or a combination of both. They can build on Sensoria projects, or take up a new topic entirely. You'll want to meet with me at least once to discuss both your plan for track and the particular directions you are considering for your paper(s).

**A Note on Our Seminar:** Let’s pledge to be patient and kind with each other in these challenging times. One of the best things about a Wesleyan seminar is being able to think together, learn from and challenge each other. This kind of space doesn’t just happen; it is something we need to build together, proactively. So if there are things that are not working for you –format, class dynamics, work or reading load – and/or if you have ideas for making our class better, please bring them to me!

**Policy on Absences:** You may miss 1 class without explanation or penalty: think of this as a sick (or health) day, and take it when you see fit. There is no need to email me unless you are dealing with something serious, in which case we should have a more detailed conversation that might
include your Class Dean. Missing 3 or more classes is grounds for No Credit.

**Policy on extensions:** I have found that extensions can be worse for the procrastinators and anxious among us (myself included), and a crappy draft of a paper that you can go back to is often better than a “perfect” one that is never turned in. Therefore, in a typical semester, I discourage extensions (except for emergencies or as accommodations). However, this semester there is the small matter of the Global Pandemic. So, if you are having any difficulty with deadlines, please be in touch.

**Office Hours:** I have set office hours Mondays and Tuesdays both on Zoom and in person; schedule an appointment using my online calendar: [http://calendly.com/margot-weiss](http://calendly.com/margot-weiss). If you cannot make any of my available times, email me and we will work out an alternative time to meet. You can talk to me about course material or any concerns or ideas you might have – or sign up just to chat so we can get to know each other!

**Students with Disabilities:** I am including the official Wesleyan statement below, but please know that I want to work with you on access issues that might fall outside of these "official" channels. If there is anything that might make our class more accessible for you, let me know.

Wesleyan University is committed to ensuring that all qualified students with disabilities are afforded an equal opportunity to participate in, and benefit from, its programs and services. To receive accommodations, a student must have a disability as defined by the ADA. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible. If you have a disability, or think that you might have a disability, please contact [Accessibility Services](mailto:accessibility@wesleyan.edu) in order to arrange an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. Accessibility Services is located in North College, room 021, or can be reached by email (accessibility@wesleyan.edu) or phone (860-685-2332).

**Religious/Spiritual Observance Resources:** If you anticipate that your religious/spiritual observance may conflict with academic obligations such as attending class, taking examinations, or submitting assignments, you can work directly with me to make reasonable arrangements. Should you require additional support or guidance, please feel free to reach out to Rabbi David Teva, Director of the Office of Religious and Spiritual Life at [dleipziger@wesleyan.edu](mailto:dleipziger@wesleyan.edu) or any of the chaplains in the [Office of Religious and Spiritual Life](mailto:). 

**Title IX Resources:** If trauma inhibits your ability to fully participate in class, please contact Debbie Colucci, Title IX Coordinator, at [dcolucci@wesleyan.edu](mailto:dcolucci@wesleyan.edu), or your class dean. Additionally, if you are comfortable, you can work directly with me to make reasonable arrangements.

**Honor Code:** All work must be done in compliance with the Honor Code. If you need help with proper citations or you have questions on how to avoid plagiarism, let me know or contact the Writing Workshop: [https://www.wesleyan.edu/writing/writingworkshop/index.html](https://www.wesleyan.edu/writing/writingworkshop/index.html)
Course Schedule

Tuesday, Sept. 7: Course Introduction: The Affective Turn (WTF affect)
- Gregory Seigworth and Melissa Gregg (2010), “An Inventory of Shimmers” The Affect Theory Reader
SENSORIUM #1 in class

(Re)theorizing Affect I: Communitas and Collectivity

Tuesday, Sept. 14: “Collective Effervescence” & Communitas
- Émile Durkheim (1915), excerpts from The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life
- Deborah Gould (2009), “The Pleasures and Intensities of Activism; or, Making a Place for Yourself in the Universe” Moving Politics
(rec) Nomi Stone (2017), "Living the LaughscREAM: Human Technology and Affective Maneuvers in the Iraq War" Cultural Anthropology
SENSORIUM #2 in class

Tuesday, Sept. 21: Collectivity, Diffusion, Attunement
- Sara Ahmed (2004), “Collective Feelings, or, the Impressions Left by Others” Theory, Culture & Society
SENSORIUM #3 do before class

(Re)theorizing Affect II: Emotions vs. Affect

Tuesday, Sept. 28: Affect vs. Emotion?
- Brian Massumi (2002), “The Autonomy of Affect” in Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation (read the “Introduction” too if you have time)
- Julie Soleil Archambault (2016), “Taking Love Seriously in Human-Plant Relations in Mozambique: Toward an Anthropology of Affective Encounters” Cultural Anthropology
(rec): Catherine Lutz, “What Matters” *Cultural Anthropology*

**SENSORIUM #4 in class**

**Tuesday, Oct 5: Language, Culture, Emotion: Cross-Cultural Affect**

- Renato Rosaldo (1989), “Grief and a Headhunter's Rage” in *Culture and Truth*


(rec) essays on emotion, culture, and translation, esp. on “depression”


**SENSORIUM #5 do before class**

(Re)theorizing Affect III: Structures of Feeling / Affect and Capitalism

**Tuesday, Oct 12: Structures of Feeling / The Feeling of Capitalism**

- Raymond Williams (1977), “Structures of Feeling,” in *Marxism and Literature*
- Walter Benjamin (1927-40), selection from *The Arcades Project* (+ video)
- Sianne Ngai (2004), “Introduction” to *Ugly Feelings*
- Karen Engle and Yoke-Sum Wong, *Feelings of Structure: Explorations in Affect*

**SENSORIUM #6 do before class**

**Tuesday, Oct 19: Economies of Affect / Affect and Precarity**

- Yarimar Bonilla (2020), "Postdisaster Futures: Hopeful Pessimism, Imperial Ruination, and La futura cuir" *Small Axe*

(rec): Sarah Luna (2018), "Affective Atmospheres of Terror on the Mexico–U.S. Border: Rumors of Violence in Reynosa’s Prostitution Zone" *Cultural Anthropology*


SENSORIUM #7 in class

Paper 1 due: Friday, Oct 22

Tuesday, Oct 26: No class, FALL BREAK

Tuesday, Nov 2: Affective Labor
• Andrea Muehlebach (2011) “Affective Labor in Post-Fordist Italy” Cultural Anthropology
SENSORIUM #8 do before class

(Re)theorizing Affect IV: Sensation / Sensuality

Tuesday, Nov 9: Intensity and Sensation, Place and Memory
• Giles Deleuze (1996), “Percept, Affect, Concept” in What is Philosophy?
(rec): Spinoza, Book III, Prop. 2 in Ethics
SENSORIUM #9 do before class

Tuesday, Nov 16: Anthropology of the Senses
• Paul Stoller (1989) “Introduction” to The Taste of Ethnographic Things: The Senses in Anthropology
• Read one from at least 3 senses:
  Sound:
  o Rayya El Zein (2020), "To Have Many Returns: Loss in the Presence of Others" World Records


**Smell**

Kath Weston (2012), “Politics Ecologies of the Precarious” *Anthropological Quarterly*

Martin Manalansan (2006), “Immigrant lives and the politics of olfaction in the global city” *Smell Culture Reader*


**Touch**

- Elizabeth Povinelli (2006), “Rotten Worlds,” in *The Empire of Love*
- Eva Hayward (2010), “Fingeryeyes: Impressions of Cup Corals” *Cultural Anthropology*

**Taste**

- Harris Solomon, ”The Taste No Chef Can Give”: Processing Street Food in Mumbai” *Cultural Anthropology*


SENSORIUM #10 in class

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**Conclusion: Ethnography’s Affect**

**Tuesday, Nov 23: Representing Affect**
TBD

**Tuesday, Nov 30: Representing Affect**
TBD

**Tuesday, Dec 7: Course Wrap up and Ethnography’s Affect**
- Ruth Behar (1996), excerpts from *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology That Breaks Your Heart* ("The Vulnerable Observer" and "Anthropology that Breaks your Heart"

**Paper 2 due: Dec 10**

**Final paper/Project due: Dec 18 by 5pm (last moment of exam week)**