

GERMAN 280 – Selfishness, Soulmates, and Sacrifices: Being Romantic Today

Instructor: David Takamura

Course Description:

In the track titled “New Romantics” from her 2014 album *1989*, Taylor Swift declares that we are the new romantics, engaged in activities such as hopeless waiting, the outward display of wounds, and the pursuit of self-destruction. But how have these pop sentiments of being “romantic” evolved from the term’s namesake in the historical romantic movement of 18th and 19th century Europe? By comparing our modernity’s ordinary use of “romantic” with actual texts and trends from this vastly influential movement, this course seeks to understand what makes romance, the romantic, and romanticism categories through which we still see ourselves and can apply to a world of technology and new media forms that the romantics themselves could scarcely have imagined. To this end we will explore a variety of modern media bearing ties to and hallmarks of romanticism (including the lyrics of Taylor Swift, films by F.W. Murnau, Werner Herzog, Wes Anderson, and Robert Eggers, the anime works of Satoshi Kon, and the video game series *Dark Souls*) and bring these works into discussion with seminal texts and images of romanticism by historical figures such as Novalis, Caspar David Friedrich, E.T.A. Hoffmann, Mary Shelley and Charlotte Brontë. A range of theoretical texts by thinkers such as Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Gilles Deleuze will facilitate this joining of worlds as we work together to define our age’s inheritance of this most mystical and complicated of terms.

Required Course Materials:

On the Genealogy of Morals by Friedrich Nietzsche, translated by Michael A. Scarpitti

Wuthering Heights by Charlotte Brontë

Frankenstein by Mary Shelley

The Sandman by E.T.A. Hoffmann, translated by Peter Wortsman

Other materials will be provided on Sakai as PDFs and, permitting library operations, available for free streaming.

Meeting will take the following forms:

Class meetings:

75 minutes long, 4 times a week. Synchronous meetings will take the form of the instructor’s presentation of material, group breakout work, and full class discussion. Group exercises include synopsis and arranging information from the course’s primary works for presentation.

Reading responses and discussion boards:

Students must complete two activities on the Sakai discussion board. These include posting daily reading responses to the works covered in class as well as posting weekly

comments upon one another's reading responses as a form of online discussion. Each of these assignments should take students 30 to 60 minutes per week.

Group Projects:

In the second half of the semester, students will be asked to complete group work outside of as well as in class. In small groups, students will prepare brief presentation slides that introduce a given work from the syllabus in terms of its author's biography, its historical context, and its central themes. These will then be presented to the class and posted on Sakai for further discussion.

Office hours:

Each student is required to meet the instructor for a minimum of 1 hour of office hours over the semester. Students are not to begin writing either their midterm or final papers before first introducing topic ideas to the instructor. Students are free to schedule additional hours by appointment.

Course Assignments and Assessments

Participation and attendance 10%

Quizzes 15%

Sakai posts 25%

Midterm paper 25%

Final paper 25%

Sakai Reading Responses:

You are expected to engage with all the works assigned. For each day of assigned reading or viewing, you should pick one work to be discussed and post a reading response to Sakai no later than 11:59pm the night before that work or section of work is to be discussed in class. A good reading response can do a number of different things. It can pose questions, describe relevant personal experiences, or delve into similarities with other artworks and ideas, but in general it should move towards relating to and understanding a given work. These responses can take a variety of forms and styles but should be no shorter than **150 words**. Additionally, as part of both this grade and your participation grade you will be expected to briefly comment on at least two other Sakai posts by the end of each week Sunday (see note in **Participation and attendance**).

Quizzes

To improve overall understanding of the texts and films we interact with in this course you will be required to complete weekly at-home quizzes. Questions will focus on material covered by lectures, the narrative content of our literary and cinematic works, as well as the content and structure of the arguments we encounter in the theoretical works we engage with.

Participation and attendance:

Class discussion is essential to the kind of exploration and learning that is central to a humanities seminar. You are expected to attend class regularly and to participate in class discussions by asking questions to the instructor and to each other. For small group exercises in and outside of class you are expected to contribute to the group effort and to take turns presenting the results to the class. You are strongly encouraged to ask questions to clarify and to probe; no question is a bad question if it is asked out of genuine curiosity and is posed in a manner that is respectful to all members of the classroom community.

Thoughtful discussions can take place out of as well as inside of class. As part of your participation grade, you will comment on at least two of your peers' posts by the end of each week. These comments need not be as long as the reading responses themselves, but they should engage directly with the positions and ideas of your peers. Potential comments can voice agreement or respectful disagreement with one another, tie a position to the larger themes of the course, or otherwise continue discussion beyond class time.

Midterm Paper:

In order to facilitate your understanding of the texts we cover in class as well as to integrate any outside questions you may have, your midterm assignment will take the form of a 4-6 page essay. When complete, your essay should provide an exploration of **one classically romantic text** and **one modern text or film** discussed in the first half of this course. This essay should work towards proving a thesis or otherwise answering a question regarding your chosen modern work as it relates to romanticism. You are required to discuss potential paper topics with me in office hours before beginning writing.

Final Paper:

Your final paper tasks you with defining what the legacy of romanticism (or at the very least the word "romantic") means for the modern age. You will choose from a select number of prompts to use as the basis for your paper. These prompts will focus on groupings of the texts covered in class, though there will also be the option for you to choose any post-romantic text, film, game, etc. should you wish to do so. Throughout your essay, you should draw connections from your chosen post-romantic item to at least **one** of the themes we have discussed in class and that are listed on this syllabus. Your essay should be 4-6 pages in length. You are required to discuss potential paper directions with me in office hours before beginning writing.

Class Meetings:

Theme 1: The Value of Otherness

Week 1

Course Introduction
Taylor Swift, selected lyrics
Athenaeum Fragments, selections, by Friedrich Schlegel
Moonrise Kingdom by Wes Anderson
Eckbert the blond by Ludwig Tieck

Week 2

The Runenberg by Ludwig Tieck
The Novices of Sais by Novalis
Aguirre, Wrath of God directed by Werner Herzog

Week 3

Theme 2: Sublime Annihilation

"Analytic of the Sublime" from *The Critique of Judgment* by Immanuel Kant
"An Apocalyptic Fragment" by Karoline von Günderrode
On the Genealogy of Morals, third essay by Friedrich Nietzsche
"The pre-War French School" from *Cinema 1* by Gilles Deleuze.
Nosferatu directed by F.W. Murnau
Midterm discussion

Week 4

Theme 3: Fragments, Ruins, and the Supernatural

Paintings by Caspar David Friedrich:
The Monk by the Sea (1810)
The Abbey in the Oakwood (1810)
Wanderer above the Sea of Fog (1818)
Evening Landscape with Two Men (1830)
The Dreamer (1840)
Dark Souls opening and ending cinematics by Hidetaka Miyazaki
Frankenstein by Mary Shelley

Week 5

Theme 4: The Romantic Psyche

Wuthering Heights by Charlotte Brontë

The Sandman by E.T.A. Hoffmann

Week 6

Paprika directed by Satoshi Kon

Paranoia Agent, Episode 1 directed by Satoshi Kon

The Lighthouse directed by Robert Eggers

"Prometheus" by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe