

CAT3: Alien Worlds
Spring 2017 University of California, San Diego

Course: TTh 12:30-1:50; Peterson 110

Professor: Joseph Hankins; office hours by appointment; SSB295; jdankins@ucsd.edu

“We might be able to imagine it, if our imaginations were rich enough”

- Grace Lee Boggs

DESCRIPTION:

You are an alien trying to infiltrate and transform life at UCSD. You see life not in terms of individuals but in terms of patterns. Patterns of human bodies, patterns of objects, patterns of behaviors, patterns of movements – patterns of how these humans who seem to be everywhere relate to each other and to the objects, spaces, and other life forms around them.

Your **mission** is to make better life forms.

Encounter - Your first task is to learn to identify these life forms. Look for patterns. Are there patterns in how bodies move or what sounds they make or what they do to each other? Are objects arranged in patterned ways – are trees here but not there; flat asphalt there but stacked concrete blocks here? Are there different, patterned expectations about how thinking should be done – something called physics that gathers humans and objects over here, but something called bioengineering that places a different set of demands on humans and objects over there? Some of the patterns have life spans that last centuries. Other patterns are so fleeting it is hard to even register them. Some patterns are easily visible, others are obscured and take some serious digging.

Analyze - Your second task is to figure out the objectives and side effects of these life forms. What functions are they set up to fulfill? What do they need to stay alive? What kinds of human behavior do they require, what kinds of behavior can they not tolerate? What do they require or prohibit of objects or other life forms? What are the side effects of accomplishing their goals?

Redesign - Your third and final task is to design a better life form. What life form can you engineer that will fulfill beneficial functions while minimizing harmful side effects? Can you simply modify current life forms, or add a prosthesis, or do you have to totally re-engineer them from the ground up?

This class will prepare you to see and transform patterns in our very human world. It is an exercise in enriching your imagination, in hopes that you might then be able to build a better world. Each week we will focus on a particular pattern life form, think about how it sustains itself, and then look at ways people have attempted to improve or redesign it. You will be asked to conduct weekly experiments on your own patterns as a human at UCSD and report back your findings. For our final project, you will team up with a small group of fellow aliens to identify, analyze, and redesign a life form at UCSD.

REQUIRED TEXTS (at the bookstore):

Kate Bornstein. *My New Gender Workbook*.
Grace Lee Boggs. *The New American Revolution*.

Otherwise, all material will be on TritonED.

ASSIGNMENTS:

Alien Encounter blog posts (25% of grade)

Each week, you will be given a prompt to help you identify a pattern and think about how it might be transformed. Follow the instructions for each week and then post a 250-word response to your discussion section blog describing and reflecting on this experience. The post can include **images** and **sounds** that you think are relevant and is due by noon the Sunday following the assignment. You must also read the posts of everyone else in your section and respond to the post of someone else in your discussion section by midnight that same Sunday. Your sections will serve as a location to discuss these experiences and brainstorm ideas. The blogs are a means of fostering group accountability and conversation.

First Paper (25% of grade)

Your first paper will take one of your weekly encounters and expand it into a longer research paper that identifies, analyzes, and proposes a redesign for the life form you have encountered. The paper must use at least one reading from the course and one reading that you find through independent research. It should be between 1200 and 1500 words.

Timeline:

Week 4: Draft due on Tuesday April 25th. Submit two hard copies: one for peer review in section and one for your TA.

Week 5: TAs return drafts with comments Tuesday May 2nd.

Week 6: Students revise and resubmit assignment Tuesday May 9th.

Final Project (50% of grade – 25% for the group portfolio, 25% for the individual paper)

For the final project, you will work in small groups to identify, analyze, and redesign a life form of your own discovery. You should provide full documentation of the life form you have encountered, an analysis of its objectives and side effects, and then a speculative prototype of a redesign of this life form. You must have experimented with this prototype and be able to provide a thorough sketch of how it functions and stays alive, along with an analysis of its potential unintended consequences.

You will be divided into small groups in your discussion section and will work with this group to design, implement, and document your redesign. Each group will submit a project portfolio for its project that includes the full documentation of the encounter, the analysis, and the prototype redesign. Each group member will submit an individual written critical assessment of the encounter and redesign. It must draw from at least two readings in class and two readings you find through independent research. Your final project will be submitted as a small group, and will be due during the Final Exam time scheduled for our class. (There is no other final exam.) The project portfolio should be approximately 500 words (plus documentation and prototype diagrams) and the individual paper should be between 1500 and 2000 words.

Timeline:

- Week 2:** Sections will divide into three subgroups of about five people each. These groups will start to brainstorm their redesign.
- Week 6:** By week 6 you should have identified and documented your life form.
- Week 7:** By week 7 you should have a thorough analysis of that life form, its objectives, and its side effects. What does this life form need to stay alive?
- Week 8:** By week 8 you should have a redesign of the life form. This week you should be experimenting with this new life form to determine its viability and unintended consequences. Document this experimentation.
- Week 9:** Pre-draft workshop of individual papers in section. Presentations of redesigns during class time.
- Week 10:** Presentations of redesigns during class time.
- Final draft of individual paper due **Monday June 12th** via TritonED and in hard copy IN THE LECTURE HALL 3:00-4:00

SCHEDULE:

Week 1. Seeing Strange

Encounter: An everyday normal activity.

Exercise: Think like an alien. Take something about life on UCSD that otherwise seems normal or commonplace and make it strange. Two steps: identify and document (words! pictures! recordings!) a pattern of your everyday experience, something you may not have even noticed as important before, and describe it in a way that makes it seem not quite so natural.

T 4/4 – Introduction to Class: Building Alien Worlds

Radiolab. 2009. “New Normal?” mp3 online: <http://www.radiolab.org/story/91693-new-normal/> 1hour. (Listen to before section this week.)

Th 4/6

Grace Lee Boggs. 2011. *The Next American Revolution* “Preface” pxiii-xxiii and “Chapter One: These are the Times to Grow our Souls” p28-51.

Week 2. Space

Encounter: Patterns of space on campus.

Exercise: Track everywhere you go. What spatial patterns do you notice? What kinds of spaces do you pass through? How might space make certain demands on humans or objects? How does it demand, limit, or allow for certain activities and not others? What happens when you violate the expectations of how space should be used? Pick one particular spatial arrangement and analyze why it does what it does. What are its functions and side effects? What does it require or prohibit of humans, other animals, or objects? Pictures, maps, sound or video clips are welcome.

T 4/11

Foucault, Michel. “Panopticism.” 15pages. Useful summary at:

<http://www.sparknotes.com/philosophy/disciplinepunish/section7.rhtml>

Th 4/13

Alternative Tour of Campus

Week 3. Food

Encounter: The food you eat.

Exercise: Every day we eat other life forms. Sometimes we know where they came from, sometimes we don't. More often than not, they are delivered to us by large food systems that make it very hard to trace back the origin of the food we put in our bodies. For this exercise, identify one food item for sale on campus and trace back the different steps until you find out where it comes from. Under what conditions was it produced? What kinds of labor went into it, by whom? How easy or hard was this to find out? What does our eating habits say about who we are? Your blog post this week is an analysis of the food system that delivers this one food item to make it available at UCSD.

T 4/18

Grace Lee Boggs. 2011. *The Next American Revolution*. "Chapter Four: Detroit, Place and Space to Begin Anew" p105-134.

Th 4/20

Film: *The Garden*.

Week 4. Gender

Encounter: The way you inhabit, express, and defy your gender.

Exercise: Humans make much of gender as a way to differentiate each other. Clothes, behaviors, language, space – all of these are, in different ways, inflected by human gender. Whyever is this the case and how do these patterns get perpetuated? How do they change? What does gender as a life form need to survive? How has this life form changed over time? How is it different in different locations? See handout for selected exercises from *My New Gender Workbook*. Spend one day this week being reflexively aware of the ways in which you express gender: how you carry your body, how you use words, how you take up space, how much you talk. Which of these things are related to the gender(s) you present and how? For extra credit, spend that day presenting a gender you do not typically present. What is easy/challenging about that experience? Again, photos, recordings, etc. are all encouraged.

T 4/25

Bornstein, Kate. *My New Gender Workbook*. Work through first half: selections.

Th 4/27

Bornstein, Kate. *My New Gender Workbook*. Work through remainder: selections.

Film: *Kate Bornstein is a Queer and Pleasant Danger*.

Week 5. University Fetish

Encounter: Chains of labor.

Exercise: Every day at the university you throw away trash, you turn on lights, you eat food, you go to clean classrooms and listen to lectures and participate in discussion sections. All of these activities are services provided by the university, for which you are paying. These services require labor. They require workers, many of whom you never see and never recognize, even though they provide you with your day-to-day needs. Spend the week (Mon-Fri) keeping track of all the services and products you consume as you lead your daily life with the university. Then try to identify who is producing those services and meet them, talk to them, tell them about yourself, learn about them (if you're not too much a bother). If this life form is an invisibilized pattern of labor, how would you redesign this life form to make it more visible? What would the effects of that be? Photos and other images and recordings are very welcome.

T 5/2

Ehrenreich, Barbara. 2001. *Nickel and Dimed*. Introduction and “Chapter 1: Serving in Florida” p1-49.

Th 5/4

Grace Lee Boggs. 2011. *The Next American Revolution*. “Chapter Five: A Paradigm Shift in our Concept of Education” p135-158.

Panel: Labor Organizing

Week 6. Bodies in Borders: The Prison Industry Complex

Encounter: Prisons.

Exercise: Humans build spaces to confine each other. These spaces are frequently justified as punishment or educational. In the United States, there are a disproportionate number of people of color in these confining spaces. These spaces take more money than actual institutions of education like schools. What is going on here? This week, figure out where the prisons and jails closest to campus are. Do research into two such life forms – what are their histories, what are their purported and actual functions, who do they hold, who works there, how do they organize activities and space, how much do they cost? Speculate on an alternative that might achieve similar aims but with different side effects. What do you make of the argument for abolition of prisons rather than reform?

T 5/9

Levi, Robin and Ayelet Waldman. 2011. *Inside this Place, Not of It*. Foreward and Introduction, p11-23.

Davis, Angela. 2003. *Are Prisons Obsolete?* “Chapter 1 Prison Reform or Prison Abolition?” p9-21 and “Chapter 6 Abolitionist Alternatives” p105-116.

Th 5/11

This American Life. 2014. *Cops See it Differently*. Two-part podcast (2hours total; you can also listen to it through a podcast app)

1. Part One: <http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/547/cops-see-it-differently-part-one>
2. Part Two: <http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/548/cops-see-it-differently-part-two>

Film: *Visions of Abolition*

Week 7. Family.

Encounter: Family.

Exercise: Humans place great stock in the notion of family. Family can get us to do things other people cannot. They can make demands on us in ways others cannot. We plan our lives around them in ways we do not plan our lives around strangers or friends. This week, we will examine the functions and side effects of “family” (providing a sense of support, reproduction) and see if we can imagine other ways of achieving these goals that might come with the same force, obligation, and joy. Following the handout on TritonED, draw two maps of how you are related to other people. What kinds of obligations attach you to other people and why? How might you organize kinship (reproduction as well as the joys and obligations of connection) otherwise?

T 5/16

Blank, Hanne. 2012. *Straight*. Chapter 1 “The Love That Could Not Speak its Name” p1-22.

Foucault, Michel. “Friendship as a Way of Life” 4 pages.

Th 5/18

Spade, Dean and Craig Willse. 2013. "Marriage Will Never Set Us Free" at <http://www.organizingupgrade.com/index.php/modules-menu/beyond-capitalism/item/1002-marriage-will-never-set-us-free>

Week 8. The Human.

Encounter: The Human (not individual humans, but The Human as a categorization of life.

Exercise: How we treat forms of life depends on how we have categorized them. Being human brings with it a set of rights and opportunities different from other categories of life. But "human," as a legal and social category of life, has not always existed, nor is it everywhere the same. This week we will investigate this life form called "human." What are the functions of this legal and social categorization? Where did it come from, how has it changed? How does it treat those who exist at its boundaries? Approach these questions by identifying and exploring one boundary case, one life form or entity that is only marginally human, or that has transitioned from human to non or the reverse. Use that boundary case to show what it means to being human. Finally, if you had to redesign this life form called "human," this categorization of life, how would you do it? Again, photos, videos, recordings all encouraged!

T 5/23

Safran Foer, Jonathan. *Eating Animals* "Chapter 1: All or Nothing or Something Else." p21-41.

Radiolab. 2012. "Killer Empathy." mp3 online:

<http://www.radiolab.org/blogs/radiolab-blog/2012/feb/06/killer-empathy/> 20minutes.

Th 5/25

Film: *Project Nim*

Week 9. Final Project Presentations

T 5/30 – group presentations

Th 6/1 – group presentations

Week 10. Final Project Presentations

T 6/6 – group presentations

Th 6/8 – final lecture

POLICIES:

- 1. ATTENDANCE**
- 2. CLASS PARTICIPATION**
- 3. ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSION**
- 4. CAT GRADING CRITERIA**
- 5. ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**
- 6. UCSD'S PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY**

1. ATTENDANCE

On-time attendance in lecture and section is required. Please notify your TA if you must be absent for illness or family emergency. Excessive absence (more than three class sessions, either lectures or sections) may be grounds for failing the course. Excessive tardiness will also impact your grade and may be grounds for failure.

2. CLASS PARTICIPATION

Contributions to class discussions and active participation in small group work are essential to both the momentum of the course and the development of your ideas. This requires that you come to class prepared (having completed assigned reading and writing) and ready to participate in class activities. Because CAT 3 is based on collaborative, project-based learning, you are also expected to contribute as a responsible member of a group. See the participation evaluation rubric below for more information.

3. ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSION

A. Due Dates

An assignment may receive an F if a student does not participate in **every** phase of the development of the project and **meet all deadlines** for preliminary materials (proposals, drafts, etc).

Failure to submit **any** of the graded course assignments is grounds for failure in the course.

If a final draft, plus required addenda, is not submitted **in class on the date due**, it will be considered late and will lose one letter grade for each day or part of a day past due (A to B, etc.). Assignments are due in hard copy as well as via Turnitin. You must submit your assignments directly to your TA; you will not be able to leave papers for your TA at the Sixth College Offices. Any late submissions must be approved by your TA and/or faculty instructor well in advance of the due date.

B. Turnitin

Final drafts must be submitted to Turnitin via TritonED **BY MIDNIGHT** on the day it is submitted in class. A grade will not be assigned to an assignment until it is submitted to Turnitin via TritonED. Failure to submit an assignment to Turnitin via TritonED is grounds for failure of the assignment.

4. CAT GRADING CRITERIA – PARTICIPATION

Here is a description of the kind of participation in the course that would earn you an A, B, C, etc. Your TA may use pluses and minuses to reflect your participation more fairly, but this is a general description for each letter grade.

A – Excellent

Excellent participation is marked by near-perfect attendance and rigorous preparation for discussion in lecture and section. You respond to questions and activities with enthusiasm and insight and you listen and respond thoughtfully to your peers. You submit rough drafts on time, and these drafts demonstrate a thorough engagement with the assignment. You respond creatively to the feedback you receive (from both your peers and TA) on drafts, making significant changes to your writing between the first and final drafts that demonstrate ownership of your own writing process. Finally, you are an active contributor to the peer-review and collaborative writing processes.

B – Good

Good participation is marked by near-perfect attendance and thorough preparation for discussion in lecture and section. You respond to questions with specificity and make active contributions to creating a safe space for the exchange of ideas. You submit rough drafts on time, and these drafts demonstrate thorough engagement with the assignment. You respond effectively to the feedback you receive (from both your peers and TA) on drafts, making changes to your writing between the first and final drafts. You are a regular and reliable contributor to the peer-review and collaborative writing processes.

C – Satisfactory

Satisfactory participation is marked by regular attendance and preparation for discussion in lecture and section. You respond to questions when prompted and participate in classroom activities, though you may sometimes be distracted. You are present in lecture and section, with few absences, and have done some of the reading some of the time. You submit rough drafts on time and make some efforts toward revision between the first and final drafts of an assignment. You are involved in peer-review activities, but you offer minimal feedback and you may not always contribute fully to the collaborative writing process.

D – Unsatisfactory

Unsatisfactory participation is marked by multiple absences from section and a consistent lack of preparation. You may regularly be distracted by materials/technology not directly related to class. You submit late or incomplete drafts and revise minimally or only at a surface level between drafts. You are absent for peer-review activities, offer unproductive feedback, or do not work cooperatively in collaborative environments.

F—Failing

Failing participation is marked by excessive absences, a habitual lack of preparation, and failure to engage in the drafting, revision, and collaborative writing processes.

5. ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

UCSD has a university-wide Policy on Integrity of Scholarship, published annually in the General Catalog, and online at <http://students.ucsd.edu/academics/academic-integrity/policy.html>. All students must read and be familiar with this Policy. All suspected violations of academic integrity will be reported to UCSD's Academic Integrity Coordinator. Students found to have violated UCSD's standards for academic integrity may receive both administrative and academic sanctions. Administrative sanctions may extend up to and include suspension or dismissal, and academic sanctions may include failure of the assignment or failure of the course. Specific examples of prohibited violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, the following:

Academic stealing refers to the theft of exams or exam answers, of papers or take-home exams composed by others, and of research notes, computer files, or data collected by others.

Academic cheating, collusion, and fraud refer to having others do your schoolwork or allowing them to present your work as their own; using unauthorized materials during exams; inventing data or bibliography to support a paper, project, or exam; purchasing tests, answers, or papers from any source whatsoever; submitting (nearly) identical papers to two classes.

Misrepresenting personal or family emergencies or health problems in order to extend deadlines and alter due dates or requirements is another form of academic fraud. Claiming you have been ill when you were not, claiming that a family member has been ill or has died when that is untrue are some examples of unacceptable ways of trying to gain more time than your fellow students have been allowed in which to complete assigned work.

Plagiarism refers to the use of another's work without full acknowledgment, whether by suppressing the reference, neglecting to identify direct quotations, paraphrasing closely or at length without citing sources, spuriously identifying quotations or data, or cutting and pasting the work of several (usually unidentified) authors into a single undifferentiated whole.

Receipt of this syllabus constitutes an acknowledgment that you are responsible for understanding and acting in accordance with UCSD guidelines on academic integrity.

6. UCSD's PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY

The CAT program affirms UCSD's Principles of Community, and expects all students to understand and uphold these principles, both in their daily interactions and in their spoken, written and creative work produced for CAT classes:

The University of California, San Diego is dedicated to learning, teaching, and serving society through education, research, and public service. Our international reputation for excellence is due in large part to the cooperative and entrepreneurial nature of the UCSD community. UCSD faculty, staff, and students are encouraged to be creative and are rewarded for individual as well as collaborative achievements.

To foster the best possible working and learning environment, UCSD strives to maintain a climate of fairness, cooperation, and professionalism. These principles of community are vital to the success of the University and the well being of its constituents. UCSD faculty, staff, and students are expected to practice these basic principles as individuals and in groups.

- We value each member of the UCSD community for his or her individual and unique talents, and applaud all efforts to enhance the quality of campus life. We recognize that each individual's effort is vital to achieving the goals of the University.
- We affirm each individual's right to dignity and strive to maintain a climate of justice marked by mutual respect for each other.
- We value the cultural diversity of UCSD because it enriches our lives and the University. We celebrate this diversity and support respect for all cultures, by both individuals and the University as a whole.
- We are a university that adapts responsibly to cultural differences among the faculty, staff, students, and community.

- We acknowledge that our society carries historical and divisive biases based on race, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion, and political beliefs. Therefore, we seek to foster understanding and tolerance among individuals and groups, and we promote awareness through education and constructive strategies for resolving conflict.
- We reject acts of discrimination based on race, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion, and political beliefs, and, we will confront and appropriately respond to such acts.
- We affirm the right to freedom of expression at UCSD. We promote open expression of our individuality and our diversity within the bounds of courtesy, sensitivity, confidentiality, and respect.
- We are committed to the highest standards of civility and decency toward all. We are committed to promoting and supporting a community where all people can work and learn together in an atmosphere free of abusive or demeaning treatment.
- We are committed to the enforcement of policies that promote the fulfillment of these principles.
- We represent diverse races, creeds, cultures, and social affiliations coming together for the good of the University and those communities we serve. By working together as members of the UCSD community, we can enhance the excellence of our institution.

Receipt of this syllabus constitutes an acknowledgment that you are responsible for understanding and acting in accordance with UCSD's principles of community.