

New Course:

AMES 495 Collaborative Research Project

AMES 495 is a new research initiative that is designed to enable collaborative research projects in small groups of students and one or more faculty members. The AMES department currently has four projects in which students can participate:

ASIA, CONFLICT, CULTURE, and GAMING

What does gaming in general and war games in particular teach us about war? How do such games shape our understanding of violent conflicts in general and wars in particular? And what do they teach us about the geographical space in which such conflicts take place?

In this project we explore the intersection of four “vectors”: geographical, historical, analytical and pedagogical. Our geographical coordinates are present-day “Asia” from the Mediterranean to the Pacific; historically, we probe the conflicts, both local and global, that shaped and molded present day Asia; analytically, we employ modes of inquiries specific to the humanities (i.e. which underscores “culture,” both elitist and popular, as a crucial category); and pedagogically, we wish to focus on war games, to highlight both its growing importance in our perception of the world and as a means of learning in the classroom.

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ART OF DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION

We (miriam cooke and Ellen McLarney) have received a one-year Partnership in a Global Age Mellon grant for our project on the “Art of Democratic Revolution.”

Resistance movements from Tunisia’s Sidi Bouzid to Turkey’s Gezi Park have deployed discourses of democracy, dignity, rights, freedom, and equality. Disseminated through social media, satellite, and cell phones, these movements have created a public sphere that is at once local and transnational. This project attends to the role of art in shaping a new understanding of people power aka democracy. What is the relationship between politics and aesthetics? The Palestinian cartoonist Najj al-‘Ali once said, “The function of a political car-

toonist is to provide a new vision.” Our project examines art, film, theater, graffiti, music, and literature from post-revolutionary countries in the Middle East for this vision out of the current chaos.

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ISLAMIC MEDIA and MUSLIM PUBLICS

We (Ellen McLarney, Negar Mottehedeh, and Ebrahim Moosa) have received a one-year Humanities Writ Large Emerging Networks grant on Islamic Media.

Our project explores how contemporary technologies reawaken the sense of the sacred in daily life, rather than destroy it. Technologies—new and old—not only circulate the word in its multiple incarnations, but also help cultivate modes of communal identification. More specifically, we seek to understand how Islamic media transform not only the social and political landscape, but also the human sensorium—the way we see/ feel/ and perceive the world.

Rather than being interrupted by secular modernity, religion has been further intensified, diversified, and inflected by the information age. Others go as far as to argue that this media constitutes the very experience of religion. Through the process of representation, the material production of culture gives expression to the spirit; its signs give voice to the soul; and its images help make visible the invisible.

This project involves meeting once a month or so with a small group of faculty and students, both undergraduate and graduate, to present and discuss our research, as well as read and collectively discuss other relevant essays and materials.

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Humanities Lab on Audiovisualities

The Audiovisualities Laboratory aims to provide a structure for encouraging teaching and research in the booming field of sound studies, complementing and challenging the existing primacy of visual studies. It offers a privileged space for research gathering of undergraduate and graduate students, and faculty, around a series of topics approached through specific classes, seminars, and workshops. Housed at the Franklin Humanities Institute, Audiovisualities is directed by Duke faculty Guo-Juin Hong and Jacqueline Waeber.

Sound studies have now emerged as a major area of research in cultural and social studies. Omnipresent yet transient and ephemeral in our daily environment, sound poses issues in that it cannot be “seen” — only heard, and felt. The ineffable nature of aurality as well as the variety of sound origins — whether originating from nature, or from human technology, explains why its study is necessarily grounded in interdisciplinary approaches and methodologies. By situating sound studies and visual studies together at the center of a pluridisciplinary nexus, this Humanities Laboratory engages with film theories and moving image practices, musicology and ethnomusicology, media studies, literature, philosophy and history, cultural anthropology, as well as cognitive psychology and neuroscience, ecology and environmental studies—to name just a few. These are not done in search of any neat but forced “synergy.” Rather, we hope to lay the grounds for future studies and practices that understand image and sound together as two major sensoria whose interconnected and sometimes contentious relationships shed new light on human experience.

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To apply, students should contact an AMES research faculty and submit a proposal to the DUS. For more information and for forms, please check our website <http://asianmideast.duke.edu/academics/independent-research>