

History 2738
The Time Kitchen

Spring 2022

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Welcome to The Time Kitchen!

For the next three months together, we are all historians. (Not in a disciplinary sense, not in terms of institutional identities or academic goals and constraints: we are all artisans, in the space of this semester, working with time as a material part of our craft.)

We will be paying equal attention to two aspects of our creative respiration: breathing in, breathing out. We will read together, think together, and we will make together. If a division between form and content existed - if we accepted that as a dyad, and I'm not sure we should - then this course would be equally interested in both of them.

Together, we will be exploring a number of key questions: How does time inhere in materials and material experience? How do material and conceptual technologies and our relations with them produce and constrain our experiences of time? How do particular conceptions of time determine particular kinds of historical experience? How do they constrain us into particular kinds of historical practice? How might thinking time differently create opportunities for us to experience time differently, and thus to expand our craft as storytellers?

Why is this a kitchen?

This is a kitchen because the course is meant simultaneously as discussion space and as practicum. Just as one comes into a kitchen informed by reading and recipes and experience to combine ingredients and make a meal, we will be coming together to make work informed by our readings and discussions. And just as a spirit of creativity and experimentation can infuse some of the best kitchen experiences, so will that spirit infuse our work together. And just as joyful hungry failure is a natural part of how we learn to feed ourselves, so it will be a welcome part of how we learn to feed our craft as writers of and with the past.

On the pandemic and course meetings.

For at least the first 2.5 weeks of classes, we will be meeting online (Wednesdays from 10 am – 12.25 pm) via the following Zoom link: [Zoom link deleted]

After that, we will keep abreast of the pandemic situation and make a decision about how to proceed (either online, or in-person in 3701 Posvar Hall) in order to maximally care for the collective and individual safety and wellbeing of the members of our class community. If and when we move to in-person meetings, please put your health first: if you're feeling ill or have been exposed to COVID, stay home and rest and we'll find ways to keep you caught up remotely.

Please be kind and compassionate with yourselves this term: we are still living through a pandemic, and things will be difficult that might not have seemed difficult before all of this *waves hands around*...pandemic stuff. If you need accommodations of any sort at any point during the term, for whatever reason: just reach out, any time. No need for doctor's notes, no need to disclose anything about the reason unless you'd like to. We'll work together to find a path forward.

On office hours.

Contact me any time to set up an office hour appointment! The schedules of my students tend to be so different one from another that I find it best to schedule office hours by appointment rather than setting aside a specific hour or two for that purpose each week. Email me any time you'd like to chat. And in any case, we'll have a chance to talk one-on-one multiple times over the term.

On the readings and other course materials.

While the syllabus you have before you contains the basic architecture of the course, in order to provide ample opportunity for adaptation and adjustment, I will provide weekly recipe cards to supplement this syllabus. These recipe cards will add texture and flesh to these bones: they will contain information on the readings, assignments, and suggestions for how to approach them each week. In order to stay maximally flexible and adaptable, in other words, the details of each week's readings and assignments will gradually unfold over the semester. We will be adding recipes to our cookbook as we go. I will post the recipe cards and other materials on Canvas for you the week before we meet, and I will let you know when they're up.

The pedagogy appropriate to a time when we are in the midst of a climate crisis and a pandemic – the pedagogy of and for right now – is different from what may have come before. Now is not a time when it seems reasonable or helpful to design meticulous plans and careful structures that assume or depend on assumptions about the future: what will be useful to us five weeks from now, what we will be capable of nine weeks from now, what we will care about 6 months from now, how we will be living in 5 years, in 10 years. Ours is a pedagogy of encounter in the moment. What we have is this moment together, and this class will proceed according to that fundamental anchor.

In addition to the readings available on Canvas, please purchase a copy (in any format) of *Slaughterhouse Five: The Graphic Novel*. If you cannot find or access it, let me know and I'll make other arrangements for you.

On the course requirements.

In addition to thoughtfully preparing for and participating in the class discussions, there will be three main requirements:

- (1) Short, drafty weekly writing check-ins, in the form of either a reflection on the reading and theme for the week, or a constraint assignment based on the week's materials in which you will write or rewrite something from the major project you're working on this term;
- (2) Co-leading the discussion twice-ish during the term by signing up on the Google sheet;
- (3) Contributing to a workshopping process throughout the term where we will look carefully at each other's draft work and offer generous feedback; and
- (4) Completing some form of writing that helps you make progress on a major research project that you're working on: your dissertation, your manuscript, etc.

The latter writing component should be something that is most useful for you, in the context of your ongoing work and research/writing program. You and I will tailor that specifically to your needs. It might look like a final piece of writing that takes some part of your major graduate project and reimagines/rewrites it using a particular form that is inspired by, and that is a way of materializing, a particular kind of temporality. Or it might look like a final portfolio of the writing throughout the term. It might look like a chapter of your manuscript- or dissertation-in-progress. In any case, we will find a final writing assignment that works best for your needs.

On grading.

Grading is absurd in a graduate seminar. The default in this class is that everyone who completes the coursework (attends the class sessions, prepares for them by doing the reading, submits writing when assigned) receives an A. At the end of the term, if you feel that your work has merited something above or below that - an A+, an A- - you will have an opportunity to adjust the final grade accordingly. If you have trouble completing the course requirements (attending the class sessions, preparing for them by doing the reading, submitting writing when assigned) please reach out and we'll work together to arrange whatever accommodations would help you get the most out of the course.

On the syllabus elements that Pitt requires that I include on this syllabus.

You can find Pitt's [Academic Integrity Statement at this link](#), and [Pitt's Disability Resource Statement at this other link](#).

Weekly Plan

Over the course of the semester, we'll be exploring several kinds of time that have each shaped work about the past in important ways. The following is a sketch of the architecture of our semester together, but The Management reserves the right to adjust it as we go, in order to maximize general awesomeness.

Week 1 (Wed Jan 12)	mise en place
Week 2 (Wed Jan 19)	the moment
Week 3 (Wed Jan 26)	sedimentary time
Week 4 (Wed Feb 02)	the space of time
Week 5 (Wed Feb 09)	evolutionary time
Week 6 (Wed Feb 16)	ghostly time
Week 7 (Wed Feb 23)	rhythm
Week 8 (Wed Mar 02)	fluid time
Week 9 (Wed Mar 16)	queer time
Week 10 (Wed Mar 23)	nonlinear time
Week 11 (Wed Mar 30)	vegetal time
Week 12 (Wed Apr 06)	grief
Week 13 (Wed Apr 13)	fermented time
Week 14 (Wed Apr 20)	crisis