English 7000. Experimental Forms
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This semester we shall ask ourselves a deceptively straightforward question: How, if at all, can we write the contemporary rather than naively rewriting or abandoning the past? To begin to begin to answer, we shall keep in mind Heidegger’s observation that not-being-at-home is a more fundamental human condition than being-at-home as we investigate how the possibility space called innovative writing may become richer by living alongside, in, and/or among several art forms and genres at once. What might happen, for instance, at the intersection(s) of fiction/poetry/nonfiction and photography, collage, music, architecture, painting, literary theory, new-media composition, book arts, critifiction, the lyric essay? In other words, our goal will be to explore the productive energies of liminal zones, hybridization, pla(y)giarism, the permeability of formal and generic boundaries that might give rise to interesting and illuminating configurations. I shall invite us, along the way, to move away from the tired contemporary mode of mounting critiques of every text we read (those by our peers and by other writers) and to look instead for ways to love them, celebrate them, learn from them, unlearn from them, enjoy their various blisses of language, allow them to put us into a generative state of unknowing. In other words, I shall invite us to treat texts just as we do flesh-and-blood human beings we meet and interact with in the non-paginal world. Along the way, I shall also invite us to professionalize ourselves (after all, that’s what this graduate program in creative writing is in good part about), even as I shall urge us to resist, rethink, and/or expand such notions as “the workshop” and “the workshop critique”; “narrativity”; writing’s “past,” “present,” and “future”; and the pragmatics of the current literary marketplace—all in order to bring into greater relief why and how we do what we do.

evaluation methods. At least two extended textual projects; weekly narratologically amphibious creative responses to readings; one 60-minute oral presentation & conversation on an experimental text from those listed below, with emphasis on the how and why of specific techniques at work within it; remarkably active class participation; reading and responding thoughtfully and respectfully to your fellow students’ work and to that of established writers and theorists. PLEASE NOTE: You may NOT put up work here that has appeared in any other workshop, anywhere, ever, cross your heart.