



Society for the Study of Affect Summer School

Subjection/Cosmology/Authority/Realism

August 6 to 8, 2025 (Wednesday to Friday)

University of New Mexico, Albuquerque

affectsociety.com/scar

Seminar #1

The Shit Show

Katie Stewart and Greg Seigworth

We're all *differently feeling our way through* the transitional immediacy of a charged present—unstable, damaging, luring in the bandwidth of a moment's coherence. The present is too much and too close—a strange intimacy with worldings, becomings, or a stray sign or attachment. Diffuse and atmospheric forms loosen into thought experiments that might create a line of action, magnetize themselves to an overpromise, deflate, or dig into a singularity, an event, the crazy. Attunements to what's happening speed up and slow looking for traction; we're in a state of alert, nimble or skittish. Materializations, never just neutral, are now weird, random, insensible, and deformed. Collectives, unmoored and in solution, skim and churn and abduct themselves in wild fictions.

Thought is mimicking, involuntary, hallucinatory. Its dissociation is a voluptuous, flooding panic whiplashing its tendrils in all directions, flicker-sampling and retracting from the present's too muchness—syncing/un-syncing, sinking/floating, sometimes waving, too often drowning. Perhaps that's one reason why a capacity to dissociate—as a viscerally endured phase-shift that arrives as a misshapen survival response to the tempos of transitions in shuffle-mode—seems, in addition to a psychosocial state, also a critical maneuver to hone: now more than ever. In the



politics of the real and irreality—what’s real and what’s not—things are disoriented, disintegrating, dis-aggregative and dismissed.

The wobbling and haphazard distribution of the sensible/insensible/nonsensical on display in all of the above necessitates experimenting with more malleable and improvisational ways to approach the generativity, instability, and brokenness of ordinary practices, forms, and performances that make worlds if only for a minute. Methods of thought might include modes of description, rethinking the subject and the object, and expansive elaborations rather than shorthand concepts that simplify—through reduction—into what’s believed to be most readily manageable. how do we also account for what’s thoroughly unmanageable, ungovernable, illogical, the upside down, the latest convulsion of the shit show? How does a body grasp the content and contours of its own ghosting under the fraught conditions of perpetual (and ‘executive’) gaslighting? What’s in and around the worldly [im]precisions in a bodily affect, the tilt of a hat, a violence felt, an atmospheric surge? How do the composition and decomposition of forms of living persist in the potentials of a situation or commotion (or the sheer vacuum of their absence)? How is experience that’s weighted with what surrounds it made generative?

This summer school seminar with Katie and Greg will be organized into three sessions devoted to experimenting with languages/concepts/practices/atmospheres/landscapes for living through and on:

- 1) inventing conceptual personae: a small group-collaborative exercise in loosening concepts from their definitional and methodological moorings, hybridizing their affects and their relative functionings and, then, plopping them onto a plane of immanence to see what they can do, what they might reveal about operative assumptions regarding some specific aspect of the contemporary shit show.
- 2) worldly composition: everyone brings 500 words (no more no less) to a writing workshop. We read aloud in batches of 3 while the others listen compositionally to create concepts out of what they hear. Thought is improvisational, associative, performative, collaborative. We write to feel out what’s happening, or could be happening, in a scene, a character, a



sensation dilating, a tendency suspended in a look, scoring over the singularities of what might be emergent or immanent in a form.

- 3) falling into and out of sync: attunements, singularities, dissociative poetics. Getting out of yourself into densities, intensities, forms, performances, collective practices around pattern-[mis]matchings. Walking and composing briefly together in response to a prompt (concerning speculative thought, what is experience, performance, unforgetting, slowed or jagged attunement).

APPLICATION TO THE SEMINAR

To apply to take part in the seminar, please email a 250 to 300 word brief writing to hello@affectsociety.com by Sunday, June 1st, 2025 that describes your interest and the intersection of your work (writing, art practice, etc.) with the thematic focus of the seminar. If, instead, you would like to send a short sample of other recent writing of yours (no more than 1000 words), this is also fine.

BIOS

Katie Stewart is Professor Emeritus of Anthropology at the University of Texas, Austin. She writes on affect, the ordinary, and modes of attunement from a speculative curiosity. *A Space on the Side of the Road: Cultural Poetics in an 'Other' America* (Princeton, 1996) portrays a dense and textured layering of sense and form laid down in social use. *Ordinary Affects* (Duke, 2007) maps the force of present moments lived as immanent events. *The Hundreds* (with Lauren Berlant, Duke 2019) is a writing experiment in dwelling in a history of the present. Her current work, *Worlding*, approaches generative ways of collective living through sensing out what happens.

Gregory J. Seigworth is a professor of Digital Communication and Cultural Studies within the Department of Communication and Theatre at Millersville University of Pennsylvania. He is co-editor of *The Affect Theory Reader* (Duke UP, 2010) and *The Affect Theory Reader 2* (Duke UP, 2023). Most recently, he co-edited *Capacities To: Affect Up Against Fascism* (IMBRICATE! Press, 2025). Greg is a founding member



and managing editor at *Capacious: Journal for Emerging Affect Inquiry* and among the founders of the Society for the Study of Affect.

Seminar Readings (will be provided to accepted registrants)

baer, hannah (2021). *trans girl suicide museum* (selections). Los Angeles: Hesse Press.

Barad, Karen (2015). TransMaterialities: Trans*/Matter/Realities and Queer Political Imaginings. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 21, no. 2-3: pp. 387-422.

Belcourt, Billy-Ray (2020). An Alphabet of Longing & Notes from an Archive of Injuries. *A History of My Brief Body*. Columbus, OH: Two Dollar Radio, pp.79-86 & 99-101.

Berlant, Lauren (2022). On Being in Life Without Wanting the World: No World Poetics, or, Elliptical Life. In *On the Inconvenience of Other People*. Durham: Duke University Press, pp.117-147.

Halperin, Richard (2023). Microperceptions, The *Je Ne Sais Quoi* and the Leibnizian Unconscious, The Mind is a Liquid, and The Confused and the Distinct, (Chapters 13-16). *Leibnizing: A Philosopher in Motion*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp.135-166.

Kasmani, Omar (2023). Migration: An Intimacy. In *The Affect Theory Reader 2: Worldings Tensions Futures*, edited by Gregory J. Seigworth and Carolyn Pedwell. Durham: Duke University Press, pp.214-230.

Lingis, Alphonso (2015). Irrevocable Loss. In *Non-Representational Methodologies: Re-Envisioning Research*, edited by Phillip Vannini, New York and London: Routledge, pp. 165-176.

Martin, Chris (2022). A Place Where Islands Touch. In *May Tomorrow Be Awake: On Poetry, Autism, and Our Neurodiverse Future*. New York: HarperCollins, pp.50-77.



- McKittrick, Katherine (2021). The Smallest Cell Remembers a Sound and Consciousness (Feeling like, Feeling like This.). In *Dear Science and Other Stories*. Durham: Duke University Press, pp.35–70.
- Pelling, Jamie Heather (2025). Capacity to Dissociate. In *Capacities To: Affect Up Against Fascism*, edited by Gregory J. Seigworth, Mathew Arthur, Wendy J. Truran, and Chad Shomura. Lancaster and Vancouver. Imbricate! Press. pp.7–14.
<https://imbricate.press/book/capacities-to-affect-up-against-fascism/>
- Seigworth, Gregory (2025). All That is Solid Melts into Aerial Karate: Environmentality, Strange Intimacy, and the Banal Unconscious. *Angelaki*, Vol 30 Number 3, pp.tbd
- . (2012). "Reading Lauren Berlant Writing." *Communication and Critical Cultural Studies*. Vol 9. 4, pp.346–352.
- Simondon, Gilbert (2020/1964). Individuation and Affectivity." In *Individuation in Light of Notions of Form and Information*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp.272–291.
- Stengers, Isabelle (2005). Introductory Notes on an Ecology of Practices. *Cultural Studies Review* 11 no. 1, pp. 183–96
- Stengers, Isabelle, Brian Massumi, and Erin Manning (2009). History through the Middle: Between Macro and Mesopolitics – an Interview with Isabella Stengers. *Inflexions: A Journal of Research Creation* 3.
http://www.inflexions.org/n3_stengershtml.html.
- Stewart, Katie (2017). In the World that Affect Proposed. *Cultural Anthropology*. 32, no. 2: pp. 192–198. <https://doi.org/10.14506/ca32.2.03>.
- . *Worlding*. (ms)