

070.436/636 – Vulnerability

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Fall 2018, Thursdays 1:30-3:50 PM, Mergenthaler 426

Many in the contemporary world live in states of acute vulnerability. In another way, vulnerability may be taken as a fundamental aspect of physical and social life; the word itself derives from the Latin *vulnus*, wound, and therefore marks a susceptibility to wounding. In this course, we will consider vulnerability in situations like forced displacement, experience of poverty and injury, environmental devastation, and the politics of social protest. Thinking with ethnography, feminist and antiracist philosophy, and many creative works, we will explore vulnerability as a condition to live with rather than one to overcome at any cost.

Texts. There are multiple books for the course. We will be reading selectively, but you are encouraged to purchase them. All other course readings will be made available to you as needed.

Expectations. We will try to think and work with vulnerability as both a condition to understand and a method of encounter. Of the utmost significance, therefore, is that we work together to develop a shared environment of openness, trust, and mutual awareness and responsibility. My hope is that this process of collective exploration will be much more important for all of us than any specific endpoint. Given that this is a course, however, grades must be assigned, and this is what I ask. Please make sure to attend and take part in each of our seminar meetings (20%). Please fully complete each week's readings, and share via Blackboard, no later than 11am on Thursday mornings, a paragraph reflection (20%). Working in small teams, please help take us through two classroom exercises in thinking and working with vulnerability (20%). Focus on a subject of your own choice, bringing it together as a brief one-page sketch (10%), a process of field investigation (10%), and a final work of writing or some other media form (20%) adequate to the subject you will explore.

Weekly Schedule

<i>Conditions</i>	9/6	Introduction and field visit, Baltimore Museum of Art
	9/13	Martha Fineman, "The Vulnerable Subject" (two essays); Anna Tsing, <i>The Mushroom at the End of the World</i> , excerpts; Ernesto Pujol, "Vulnerability as Critical Self-Knowledge"
	9/20	Adriana Cavarero, <i>Inclinations: A Critique of Rectitude</i>
	9/27	Judith Butler, <i>Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly</i>
	10/4	Christina Sharpe, <i>In the Wake: On Blackness and Being</i>
		Project sketches due in class
<i>Situations</i>	10/11	Shailja Patel, <i>Migritude</i>
	10/18	Kathleen Millar, <i>Reclaiming the Discarded: Life and Labor on Rio's Garbage Dump</i>
	10/25	Alex Nading, <i>Mosquito Trails: Ecology, Health, and the Politics of Entanglement</i>
	11/1	Zoe Wool, <i>After War: The Weight of Life at Walter Reed</i>
<i>Horizons</i>	11/8	Ann Allison, <i>Precarious Japan</i>
		Brief field reports due in class
	11/15	Deborah Bird Rose, <i>Wild Dog Dreaming: Love and Extinction</i>
	11/29	Elizabeth Rush, <i>Rising: Dispatches from the New American Shore</i>
	12/6	Anand Pandian, "Walls for the Body," from <i>Impervious</i> , draft; Paper Boat Collective, "Archipelagoes: A Voyage in Writing"; and conversation regarding student projects.
	12/14	Final projects due