

Reading Ourselves - JNST OOOI

Tues. and Thurs. 2:30-3:50

Daniel Kiefer

Let's investigate how we engage with what read, how we involve ourselves in other lives on the page and thereby discover ourselves as we go. What secures our sympathy with radically different characters, cultures, ethnicities, genders, sexualities, factions, and beliefs? How do we fashion ourselves and our intents in reply to those differences?

The literature we study may include memoir, fiction, poetry, drama, and polemic. We might choose among these authors: James Baldwin, Otessa Mosfegh, Tommy Orange, Yuri Herrera, Ocean Vuong, Han Kang, Jane Austen, Sarah Kane. We may read analytical pieces, too, by writers like Alexander Chee and Martha Nussbaum.

I would ask you to write frequent reflective and critical papers in reaction to what we read. Those papers may be autobiographical, analytical, experimental, or creative—as you wish. Then I'll urge you to transform those writings into longer essays requiring careful argument.

Speaking up in class is our best way to learn from each other. Every time we meet, please contribute something helpful, whether by suggestion, quarrel, question, or complaint. We want to hear what you have to say.