

# ORDERING THE WORLD

RELS 3000-001













Spring 2013

MW 12:30-1:45 in Denny 202





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The development of this course was made possible by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities "Enduring Questions" grant program.




-  News forum
-  Final project thinking space Forum
-  Blog addresses Resource
-  Class glossary
-  Class description and goals Resource
-  Before you commit to this class . . . Resource
-  Seminar rules of the game Resource
-  Required reading Resource
-  Reading Responses Resource
-  Final project Resource
-  Suggested bibliography (coming soon) Resource
-  What does the National Endowment for the Humanities have to do with this class?

Resource

-  Blogger Training Videos 1
-  Blogger Training Videos 2

## WEEK ONE (January 9th and 14th)

### BRAINSTORMING

- 1
-  Italo Calvino on books and bookstores PDF document
  -  PBK video: Mark Bauerlein on The Educational Hazards of Wikipedia, Google, and Laptops"
  -  In Praise of Wikipedia's Category Pages

## WEEK THREE (January 23rd)

### ORDER AND CHAOS

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- “Life is often complicated, sometimes exceedingly so. Much of our everyday experience is unexpected, apparently whimsical, seemingly beyond our control. On the other hand, we also commonly take for granted the long-term, reliable functioning of refrigerators, computers, and communication satellites. How is it that some aspects of our experience are regular, predictable, tamable, while others appear to be the outcomes of some cosmic game of chance?”

Is the universe a crazy patchwork of phenomena, some understandable, some beyond explanation?"

Peak, David, et al. *Chaos Under Control: The Art and Science of Complexity* (W. H. Freeman & Co., 1994), p. 1.

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### READING








Barbara Sproul, *Primal Myths*, pp. 37-40, 122-26, pp. 169 (bottom)-71, pp. 199-200, 268-71, 301-05, 336-37, 346-49.

Recommended: Introduction, pp. 1-30.

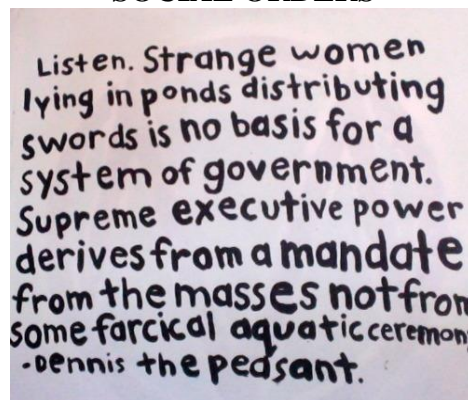
Tips for reading: Try not to pay attention so much to details as to overall structure and/or the sequence of events. Keep in mind that the root of the word "chaos" is the Greek "abyss" or "gap" and that the translators here might have used that word out of convenience rather than loyalty to the original. Focus on creations/births, unions, separations, and the description of how the world moves (or is moved) from "chaos" to "order."

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### RESOURCES

-  Documentary Film: The Secret Life of Chaos
-  Documentary Film: Fractals: The Colors of Infinity
-  On Being (podcast): Who Ordered This?
-  Mitchell and Webb: Stacking
-  TED talk: Theo Jansen on creating new forms of life
-  This American Life show on "Mapping"
-  TED talk: George Whitesides, "Toward a Science of Simplicity"

### WEEK FOUR: January 28th and 30th SOCIAL ORDERS




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"Every society is burdened with the task, under its concrete conditions, of creating an order...."  
Eric Voegelin


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### READING































For Monday. Focus especially on pp. 1-6, 9-13, and 31-50 (page numbers in original text). We will read other portions of this text later in the semester.

 Geoffrey Bowker and Susan Leigh Star, excerpts from *Sorting Things Out: Classification and its Consequences* PDF document

For Wednesday. Please focus on sections 1.1, 1.3, 1.5, 1.6, 1.10, 1.13, 1.16-18, 2.5, and 2.9. We will read other sections later in the semester.

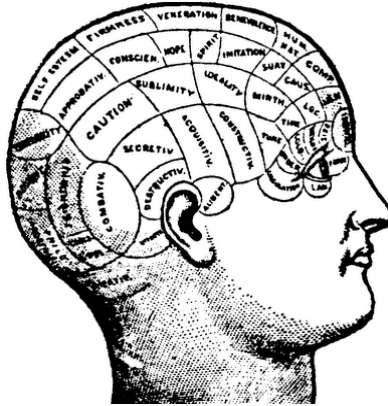
 "Race, Culture, Identity: Misunderstood Connections," by Anthony Appiah PDF document

## RESOURCES

-  Highly recommended: PBS: Race -- The Power of an Illusion
-  Mitchell and Webb: Jesus Teaches About "The Good Samaritan"
-  Key and Peele: Suburban Zombies
-  Monty Python: Witch Village
-  U.K. Demographic classifications (see charts especially)
-  Mitchell and Webb: Women, Sort Yourselfs Out
-  Cameron Russell on looks aren't everything
-  Race globally
-  Historical Index of U.S. Census Questions
-  Portlandia: "Adult Babysitter"
-  50 State Stereotypes in 2 Minutes
-  TED talk: Nate Silver on racism and voting
-  TED talk: Seth Godin on the tribes we lead
-  TED talk: Spencer Wells on building humanity's family tree
-  Taxonomy of Television High Schools
-  TED talk: Cameron Russell on the privilege of being a white model
-  Louis CK on boys and girls (language warning)
-  Portlandia: "Vagina Pillows"
-  Online Social Psychology Studies
-  Interactive documentary: Becoming Human
-  History of Race in Science
-  Game: The Game of Life Experience
-  Global census: What race would you be elsewhere?
-  Who is white? (interactive)
-  Sports and race stereotypes (interactive)
-  New York Times "Class Matters" site
-  How Class Works
-  Type in your zip code to see how marketers segment you
-  Stuff White People Like
-  Human phenotype mixer

## WEEK FIVE: February 4th and 6th





“It's poor judgment', said Grandpa 'to call anything by a name. We don't know what a hobgoblin or a vampire or a troll is. Could be lots of things. You can't heave them into categories with labels and say they'll act one way or another. That'd be silly. They're people. People who do things. Yes, that's the way to put it. People who do things.”


Ray Bradbury, *The October Country*

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## READING

For Monday:

 The New DSM-V PDF document

 Historical Development of Psychiatric Classification and Mental Illness PDF document


For Wednesday:


 Toward a Taxonomy of Ethnopolitical Violence PDF document


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## RESOURCES


 How to be a Pervert PDF document


 Historical IQ Terms PDF document

 Interactive guide to phrenology

 This American Life podcast: Words (on how the APA changed the definition of homosexuality)

 Taxonomy of Cinematic Crying, Blubbering, and Weeping

 Philosophy Bites podcast: Catharine McKinnon on gender crime


 TED talk: Steven Pinker on the surprising decline of violence

## WEEK SIX: February 11th and 13th INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

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### READING


For Monday:

 Crosscultural kinship constructions (will not print) PDF document

For Wednesday:

 Aristotle on friendship PDF document

 Montaigne on friendship PDF document

 Philosophy Bites (podcast): Mark Vernon on friendship


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### RESOURCES

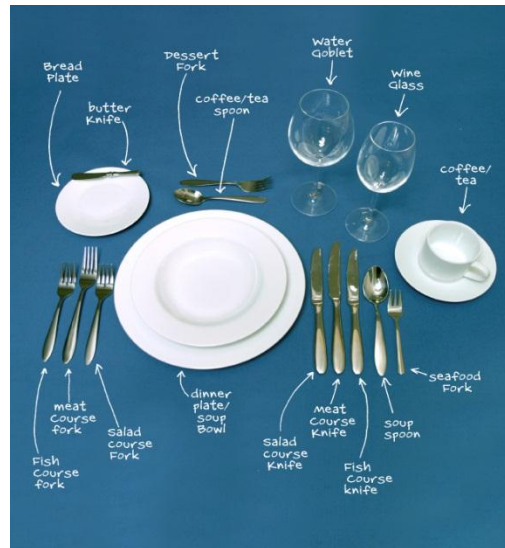
 Friendship (from the encyclopedia of informal education)

 NPR interview: AloneTogether

 Flight of the Conchords: Friendship Graph

-  Flight of the Conchords: Friends
-  Key and Peele: My Best Friend
-  Flight of the Conchords: Carol Brown
-  TED talk: Jeffrey Kluger on the sibling bond
-  This American Life podcast: Classifieds
-  Personal ad acronyms and abbreviations
-  Fora.tv talk: Robin Dunbar on How Many Friends Does One Person Need?
-  TED talk: Sherry Turkle on Connected, But Alone?

## WEEK SEVEN: February 18th and 20th ON FOOD



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"Why shouldn't I eat toothpaste? It's a free world. Why shouldn't I chew my toenails? I happen to have trodden in some honey. Why shouldn't I prance across central park with delicate sideways leaps? I know what your answer will be: 'it isn't done'. But it's no earthly use just saying it isn't done. If there's a reason why it isn't done, give the reason—if there's no reason, don't attempt to stop me doing it. All other things being equal, the mere fact that something 'isn't done' is in itself an excellent reason for doing it."

Derek Parfit, 'The Eton College Chronicle', in Anthony Cheetham and Derek Parfit (eds.),  
*Eton Microcosm*, London, 1964, p.101



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### READING

For Monday:







-  Mary Douglas, Purity and Danger, Introduction PDF document
-  Mary Douglas, Purity and Danger, on "Secular Defilement" PDF document









For Wednesday:

-  Colin McGinn on disgust PDF document
-  TED talk: David Pizarro on The Strange Politics of Disgust

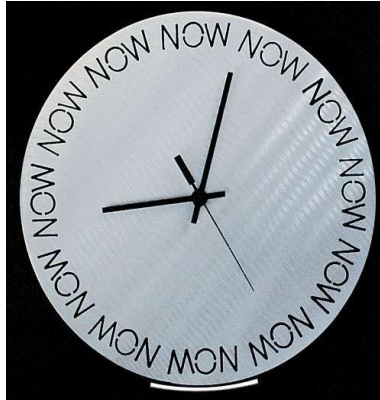
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### RESOURCES

-  Links about food etiquette and table manners
-  Talk of the Nation: Consider the Fork
-  World Food Habits bibliography
-  Insects are Food
-  Head, Yes. Tails, No. (Rats for dinner, anyone?)
-  Eating Dirt

-  Food Taboos: Their Origins and Purposes
-  Geographic Approach to Food Prejudices
-  The Disgust Scale Home Page
-  Key and Peele: Soul Food
-  From Soup to Nuts
-  Podcast: The "Yuk" factor
-  I just can't resist this one: from the journal Meat Science PDF document
-  Worldwide view of food guidelines

**WEEK EIGHT: February 25th and 27th  
TIME, NUMBERS, AND PATTERNS**



“The world is not to be put in order. The world is order. It is for us to put ourselves in unison with this order.”  
Henry Miller

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“There are only patterns, patterns on top of patterns, patterns that affect other patterns.  
Patterns hidden by patterns. Patterns within patterns.

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If you watch close, history does nothing but repeat itself.

What we call chaos is just patterns we haven't recognized. What we call random is just patterns we can't decipher. What we can't understand we call nonsense. What we can't read we call gibberish.

There is no free will.


There are no variables.”


Chuck Palahniuk, *Survivor*

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**READING**

For Monday:

 Time Travel: There's No Time Like Yesterday (focus on beginning through "Einstein's Relative Time" and "Paradox" through the end)


 Podcast: Hugh Mellor on time


For Wednesday:


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**RESOURCES**

















 Mitchell and Webb: Numberwang

 Calendars from different cultures

 Calendars through time

 Time measurement through the ages

 TED talk: David Christian on The History of Our World in 18 Minutes

-  Documentary Film: Through The Wormhole: Does Time Really Exist?
-  RSA Animate: Philip Zimbardo on The Secret Powers of Time
-  TED talk: Aris Venetikidis: Making Sense of Maps
-  TED talk: Benoit Mandelbrot on Fractals and the Art of Roughness
-  TED talk: Geoffrey West on The Surprising Math of Cities and Corporations
-  Documentary Film: The Code: Numbers, Shapes, and Predictions
-  On Being (podcast): Uncovering the Codes for Reality
-  Fibonacci Flowers (video)
-  NIST Physical Measurement Laboratory "A Walk Through Time"
-  Podcast: Adrian More on infinity
-  Podcast: How Zero Works sound
-  Recommended film: Pi: Faith in Chaos
-  The Long Now Foundation
-  Do You Want to Believe?
-  Learn More About African Fractals
-  TED talk: Steven Strogatz on sync

**WEEK NINE: March 11th, 13th, and into the 18th (most likely)  
PATTERNS, NUMBERS, AND KNOWLEDGE**



8 "Criticism consists in uncovering that thought and trying to change it: showing that things are not as obvious as people believe, making it so that what is taken for granted is no longer taken for granted. To practice criticism is to make harder those acts which are now too easy... [A]s soon as people begin to no longer be able to think things the way they have been thinking them, transformation becomes at the same time very urgent, very difficult and entirely possible."







Michel Foucault. (2000) [1981]. "So is it important to think?" In J. Faubion (ed.). Tr. Robert Hurley and others. *Power The Essential Works of Michel Foucault 1954-1984. Volume Three.* New York: New Press, p. 456.

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**READING**

Monday, March 11th:















-  TED talk: Marcus du Sautoy on symmetry
-  The Numbers of Life
-  TED talk: Ron Eglas on the fractals at the heart of African designs
-  Radiolab: Numbers

Wednesday, March 13th: Class cancelled due to plague

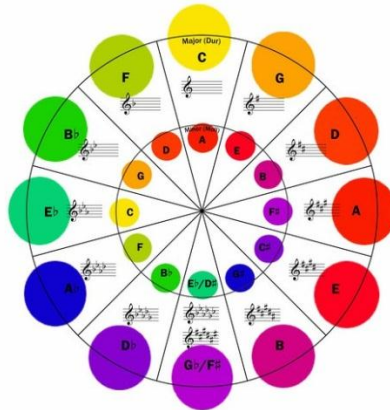
Monday, March 18th: Please meet to start thinking through the class website.

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## RESOURCES

-  How to Read a Call Number
-  Musical Instruments, Culture, and Classification
-  Banned and Challenged Classics (books)
-  Rethinking the Carnegie Classifications (of colleges and universities) PDF document
-  List of college majors
-  Library of Congress Classification
-  Library classifications with emphasis on religion section PDF document
-  Cataloging books by color
-  Medieval helpdesk (video)
-  Interdisciplinary Hype
-  Everything You Wanted to Know About Data Mining But Were Afraid to Ask
-  The Beetle and the Teacup
-  Google's Product Type Taxonomy list text
-  The Discipline of Organizing PDF document

### "WEEK" TEN: March 20th - 25th ART AND MUSIC



**I will not be on campus on Monday, March 18th.  
Please gather and start talking about the class project.**

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## READING

Wednesday, March 20th:







-  Classifications and the Philosophical Understanding of Art PDF document
-  TED talk: Artfully Envisioning Our Humanity

Monday, March 25th:

-  Classification as Culture: Types and Trajectories of Music Genres PDF document

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## RESOURCES

-  Vomit Art (high ICK factor)
-  Museum of Bad Art
-  Philosophy Bites podcast: Derek McTravers on defining art
-  TED talk: Evan Grant on making sound visible through cymatics
-  Louis C.K.: violin scene
-  Where the Hell is Matt?





## WEEK TWELVE: APRIL 3rd COLLECTORS AND COLLECTIONS



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“There are people like Senhor José everywhere, who fill their time, or what they believe to be their spare time, by collecting stamps, coins, medals, vases, postcards, matchboxes, books, clocks, sport shirts, autographs, stones, clay figurines, empty beverage cans, little angels, cacti, opera programmes, lighters, pens, owls, music boxes, bottles, bonsai trees, paintings, mugs, pipes, glass obelisks, ceramic ducks, old toys, carnival masks, and they probably do so out of something that we might call metaphysical angst, perhaps because they cannot bear the idea of chaos being the one ruler of the universe, which is why, using their limited powers and with no divine help, they attempt to impose some order on the world, and for a short while they manage it, but only as long as they are there to defend their collection, because when the day comes when it must be dispersed, and that day always comes, either with their death or when the collector grows weary, everything goes back to its beginnings, everything returns to chaos.”  
José Saramago, *All the Names*



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### READING

Wednesday, April 3rd:

-  Collyer Curiosa: A Brief History of Hoarding PDF document
- Watch a few episodes of Hoarders (you can find it on Hulu).
-  Read an excerpt from Homer and Langley PDF document

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### RESOURCES

-  Look through the 1897 Sears Catalog PDF document
-  TED talk: David Hoffman on Losing Everything
-  Pitt Rivers Museum
-  American Alliance of Museums: About Museums
-  Smithsonian Museums
-  Morbid Anatomy
-  The Umbrella Cover Museum

## WEEK THIRTEEN: April 8th - 22nd TAXONOMIES

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The first thing the intellect does with an object is to class it along with something else. But any object that is infinitely important to us and awakens our devotion feels to us also as if it must be *sui generis* and unique. Probably a crab would be filled with a sense of personal outrage if it could hear us class it without ado or apology as a crustacean, and thus dispose of it. 'I am no such thing,' it would say; 'I am MYSELF, MYSELF alone.'

William James

*The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (1902), 9.

Monsters cannot be announced. One cannot say: 'Here are our monsters,' without immediately turning the monsters into pets.

Jacques Derrida


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### READING


Monday, April 8th: One more chance to meet together without me to think about the website . . .

Wednesday, April 10th:

Aristotle's *Categories* (coursepack)

 Foucault on classifying PDF document


Monday, April 15th:

 Reading: J.Z. Smith, "A Matter of Class: Taxonomies of Religion" PDF document

Wednesday, April 17th:






















 Harriet Ritvo "Out of Bounds," from *The Platypus and the Mermaid, and Other Figments of the Classifying Imagination* PDF document









Monday, April 22nd:

 Reading: *Classifying Knowledge: Curricula, Libraries, and Encyclopedias* PDF document

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### RESOURCES




















-  Encyclopedia of Life
-  Science Intends to Tag All Life
-  Khan Academy: Taxonomy and the Tree of Life
-  Classification of Living Things
-  Go Ahead: Classify a Galaxy
-  Interactive Periodic Table
-  Interactive classification
-  Taxonomy of Logical Fallacies
-  Interactive Classification Game
-  The Unity of Life
-  Species Count Put at 8.7 Million
-  Tree of Life Web Project
-  A Brief History of Naming of the Natural World
-  Curiosities of Biological Nomenclature
-  Documentary Film: The Superior Human?
-  Taxonomy Overview and Exercise
-  Classification: A Life Skill (involving, in this case, shoes)
-  Sesame Street: One of These Things is Not Like the Others (VERY challenging)
-  Sesame Street: We Are All Earthlings
-  Tom Lehrer, The Elements Song (extra credit to those who can recite the entire thing by the end of the semester)
-  Taxonomy of Religious Experiences PDF document

-  Behold the Beauty of the Ant (video)
-  Classification of diseases PDF document
-  Categories online games for kids
-  Portlandia: "Sanitation Twins"
-  Albertus Magnus, Book of Minerals (c. 1260)
-  Boundaries of the Supernatural PDF document
-  Aberdeen Bestiary (contents)
-  Medieval Bestiary





13 The final weeks of class (April 24th and 29th) will be spent developing the class website. This will involve some collaborative work together at class time but will also permit working outside of class. The goal is to have a website ready by May 1st, with revisions made until May 8th. There is no final exam in this class (although we will meet during the finals block -- Wednesday, May 8th, from 11:00-1:30 -- for some intellectual banter with appropriate celebratory food). Details will be forthcoming. □

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### WIKIPEDIA (and a few other) RESOURCES

-  Classification
-  Taxonomy
-  Folk taxonomy
-  Typology
-  Hierarchy
-  Species
-  Breeds
-  Measurement
-  Academic grading systems worldwide
-  Academic ranks worldwide
- 14  Systems of education worldwide
-  Ranking the intelligence of dogs
-  Classification of mental disorders
-  Rating motion pictures
-  Categorization
-  Christian heresies
-  Crime reports, Charlotte, NC, 1985-2005
-  Most popular names worldwide
-  Library classifications

Check sites such as eBay, Pinterest, craigslist, Etsy, and others to see how they organize the data they present.

-  List of generations worldwide
-  Social class categories
-  List of academic disciplines
-  Diversity