

Seminar Applicant Example #1:

Through my studies in literature at Haverford, I have become increasingly interested in the extra- and internarrative identities of authors and readers of texts, primarily focusing on the divergent identities of authors upon the act of authorship, and the role and significance of being a reader, whether this reader is a character within the text or the reader of the text itself. I would like to bring this question to the seminar in the form of the stories/novels "Borges and I" (Jorge Luis Borges), *The New York Trilogy* (Paul Auster), "Paul Bereyter" (W.G. Sebald) and *House of Leaves* (Mark Danielewski). Authors and readers' relationships to their texts in these documents address questions such as that of external parasitic forces' impact on identity, dissolution of identity, and the necessarily fictionalized associations of identity, memory, and narrative. In *House of Leaves*, the in-text reader, Johnny Truant, becomes disjointed from his "sense of self" as he becomes obsessed with and *filled* with Zampano's embedded text. The text – or at least, Zampano's text – houses itself and chronologizes itself by means of Johnny's obsession, and thus Johnny becomes a tool for the text to acquire a sense of order as well as its reality through external recognition. Thus the text actualizes itself through Johnny in its consumption of him: but what becomes of him once the text acquires reality? In "Borges and I", Borges (...but which one?) acknowledges the division within himself into Borges as writer of texts and Borges as the narrative voice in the text. These two identities echo one another but share a sense of mediation and distancing, as the ambiguous narrator remarks, "I like hourglasses, maps, eighteenth-century typography, the taste of coffee and the prose of Stevenson; he shares these preferences, but in a vain way that turns them into the attributes of an actor." How do these two identities interact with and transform one another?

In order to pursue these questions through dialogue and through the lenses of thinkers such as Searle and Beckett, I would like to join "Fashioning the Self" for the 2009-2010 school year. In addition to my interest in the subject matter of this seminar, I am also intrigued by the readings on the syllabus and would love to engage in an exploration of these texts in the atmosphere of a small student-run group. In regards to the engagement of the question of narrative identity, I am curious to see how the student participants read (see? My language is narratologically charged already...) and understand the seminar, and how Bennett will conduct the seminar if not as a narrative, especially on the first meeting and the last...

Seminar Applicant Example #2:

Three factors attract me to the "Disney as Cultural Pedagogy" seminar. First, I'm always envious of courses that combine theoretical perspectives with an engagement of tangible cultural machinery or institutions, both because they allow me to contextualize the theoretical perspectives I learn in the context of philosophy, and because the resulting re-interpretation of the object of study (e.g. Disney) satisfies my collegiate urge to re-conceptualize my world in the context of radical discourse (I'd love to better understand how power and the norm operate in Disney). Second, I'm more broadly suspicious of the manner in which media, television, and movies create and inscribe the normative in American society, and I'd love to use the case of Disney to make connections to other media in society (for example, I've been considering writing a piece about scar-imagery and moral character in 'Batman: The Dark Knight'; I'm extremely disturbed by Batman's claim that Joker aims to prove that 'deep down, we're all as *ugly* as you'). Finally, I'd like to find more opportunities to engage in academic discussions with other students, and I feel that a student seminar would effectively meet this desire.

I hope to bring two perspectives to the seminar. First, as an intended philosophy major, I hope to bring a theoretical background to discussions of culture and the normative. Second, as an individual who has grown up perpetually suspicious of Disney (with, I might add, a high-school band director who completed seven trips to Disney World in one year), I hope to bring a critical perspective on Disney as an institution. While I have no specific

recommendations of texts for the course, I'd love to focus on the texts listed under 'theoretical approaches,' and particularly would enjoy spending time on Baudrillard and Freud (I've wanted to read them for a while, especially Baudrillard). I also like the design of the middle seminars of the course as focusing on specific 'thematic or formal issue[s]' (e.g. sex, gender, race), and think spending a seminar on the inscription of each would be extremely effective (though I'd prefer to contextualize all of these discussions in some of the theoretical works that are listed). I'd prefer to de-emphasize some of the 'pop' literature on the syllabus (particularly *Fast Food Nation*), because I think there seems to be a more than adequate amount of academic literature available. I'm excited about the suggested readings and format for the course, and would greatly enjoy the opportunity to participate in this seminar.

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