

Lecturer: Rieke Jordan

Tuesdays, 2-4 pm

Room: SH 2.107

MA Seminar: The New, The Now, The Novel

To study the truly contemporary is to attempt to make sense of a present that is still unfolding and evolving. But what do we talk about when we talk about the now, the new, and the novel today? How can we conceptualize the idea of the present moment (and its cultural expressions), which is on the one hand ever-updatable and instagram-able, while in the same breath expresses a weird, maybe even tedious longing for the past and tradition? This class aims at familiarizing students with theories about and cultural expressions of our present moment. We will read and discuss recent theoretical texts on topics such as slowness, nostalgia, and the contemporary in order to contextualize what we talk about when we talk about literature and culture in the 21st century. In the second half of the class, we are going to discuss a selection of texts that we might label as decisively contemporary: by turning to a wide range of media, such as the graphic novel (Chris Ware's *Building Stories*), the visual album (Beyoncé's *Lemonade*), or the novel (Jennifer Egan's *A Visit from the Goon Squad*), among others, we will identify recent cultural transformations that are largely an expression of contemporary cultural practices and the digital age. Toying with immediateness, vastness, and instantaneity, the texts we will discuss seem to simultaneously incorporate and reject digital forms and practices. They might feel so distinctly contemporary because they both draw upon and work against expectations of interactive art in the digital age.