



A RHETORIC OF ORDINARY OBJECTS

SPRING 2020



A Rhetoric of Ordinary Objects. ENGL 1410. Spring 2020.

Nate Siebert. msiebert@uccs.edu.

Café hours.

M/W. 10-noon. Sanatorium Grounds.

Class meeting times/locations

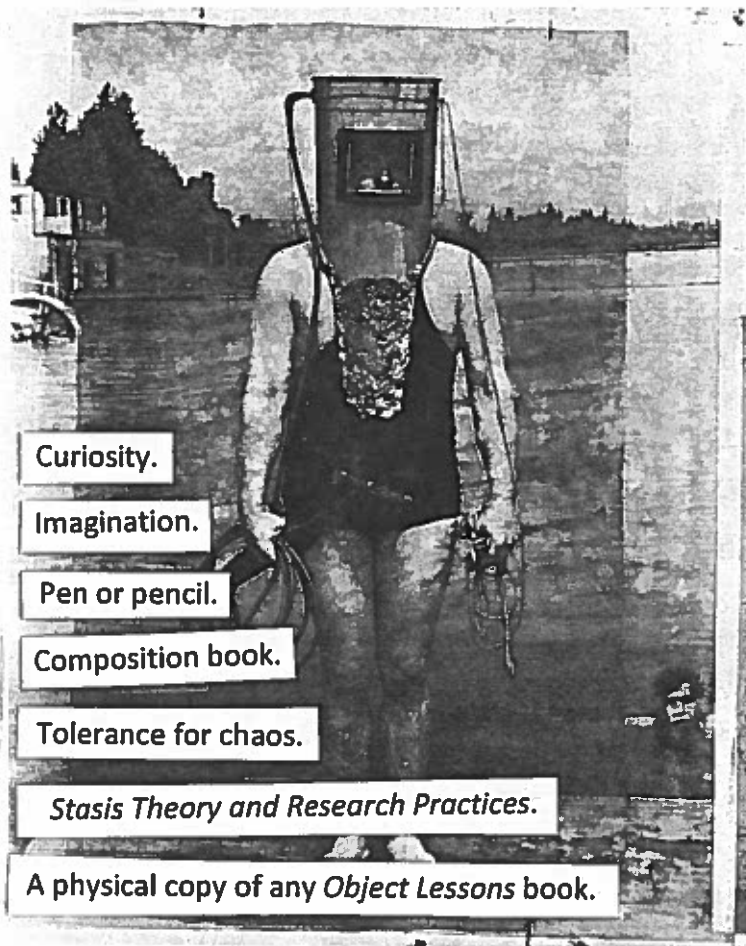
Section 047. T/Th. 9:25-10:40. Columbine 224.

Section 046. T/Th. 10:50-12:05. Columbine 224.

Section 010. T/Th. 1:40-2:55. Centennial 275.

Section 022. T/Th. 3:05-4:20. Centennial 275.

THINGS



Curiosity.

Imagination.

Pen or pencil.

Composition book.

Tolerance for chaos.

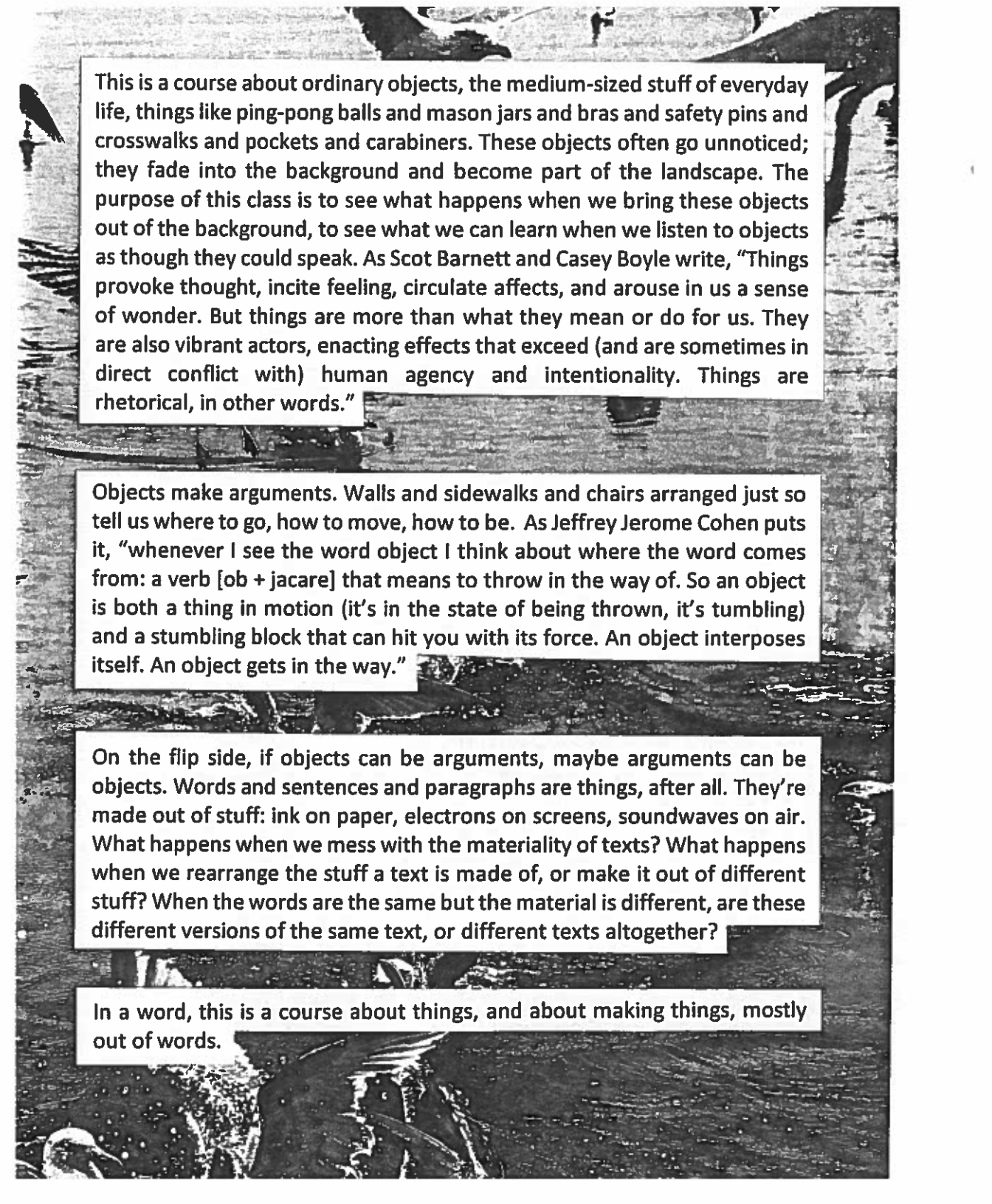
Stasis Theory and Research Practices.

A physical copy of any *Object Lessons* book.



The Thing

**THE
THING**



This is a course about ordinary objects, the medium-sized stuff of everyday life, things like ping-pong balls and mason jars and bras and safety pins and crosswalks and pockets and carabiners. These objects often go unnoticed; they fade into the background and become part of the landscape. The purpose of this class is to see what happens when we bring these objects out of the background, to see what we can learn when we listen to objects as though they could speak. As Scot Barnett and Casey Boyle write, “Things provoke thought, incite feeling, circulate affects, and arouse in us a sense of wonder. But things are more than what they mean or do for us. They are also vibrant actors, enacting effects that exceed (and are sometimes in direct conflict with) human agency and intentionality. Things are rhetorical, in other words.”

Objects make arguments. Walls and sidewalks and chairs arranged just so tell us where to go, how to move, how to be. As Jeffrey Jerome Cohen puts it, “whenever I see the word object I think about where the word comes from: a verb [ob + jacare] that means to throw in the way of. So an object is both a thing in motion (it’s in the state of being thrown, it’s tumbling) and a stumbling block that can hit you with its force. An object interposes itself. An object gets in the way.”

On the flip side, if objects can be arguments, maybe arguments can be objects. Words and sentences and paragraphs are things, after all. They’re made out of stuff: ink on paper, electrons on screens, soundwaves on air. What happens when we mess with the materiality of texts? What happens when we rearrange the stuff a text is made of, or make it out of different stuff? When the words are the same but the material is different, are these different versions of the same text, or different texts altogether?

In a word, this is a course about things, and about making things, mostly out of words.

ANOTHER THING

Minimum requirements and assessment details for each assignment TBA throughout the semester. Final grades based on the scale below.

A 930-1000. A- 900-929.

B+ 870-899. B 830-869. B- 800-829.

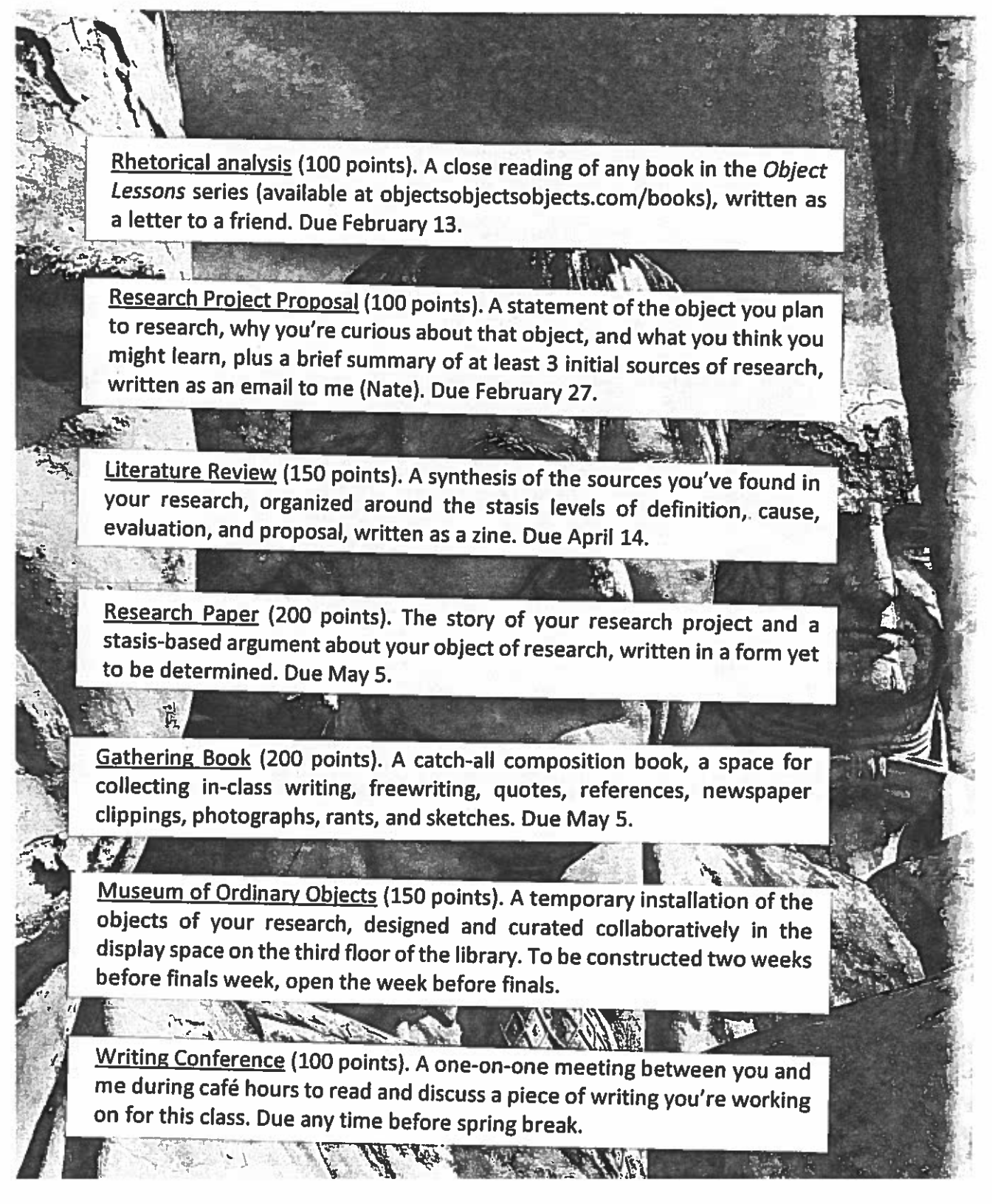
C+ 770-799. C 730-769. C- 700-729.

D+ 670-699. D 630-669. D- 600-629.

F below 600.



Another Thing



Rhetorical analysis (100 points). A close reading of any book in the *Object Lessons* series (available at objectsofobjects.com/books), written as a letter to a friend. Due February 13.

Research Project Proposal (100 points). A statement of the object you plan to research, why you're curious about that object, and what you think you might learn, plus a brief summary of at least 3 initial sources of research, written as an email to me (Nate). Due February 27.

Literature Review (150 points). A synthesis of the sources you've found in your research, organized around the stasis levels of definition, cause, evaluation, and proposal, written as a zine. Due April 14.

Research Paper (200 points). The story of your research project and a stasis-based argument about your object of research, written in a form yet to be determined. Due May 5.

Gathering Book (200 points). A catch-all composition book, a space for collecting in-class writing, freewriting, quotes, references, newspaper clippings, photographs, rants, and sketches. Due May 5.

Museum of Ordinary Objects (150 points). A temporary installation of the objects of your research, designed and curated collaboratively in the display space on the third floor of the library. To be constructed two weeks before finals week, open the week before finals.

Writing Conference (100 points). A one-on-one meeting between you and me during café hours to read and discuss a piece of writing you're working on for this class. Due any time before spring break.



January

21 Greetings / Garbage List
23 Proof of Purchase / Ten Cars

28 Archaeology of Garbage
30 The Feels

To read: "Is the Viral Non-Ad Ad the Future of Advertising?"



February

- 04** Contour Study
To read: Object Lesson (first half)
- 06** Contour Study
To read: Object Lesson (second half)

- 11** Rhetorical Analysis workshop
- 13** Introduction to Research Project Proposal
Due: Rhetorical Analysis

- 18** Library Tutorial 1 (Meet in EPC 237)
To read: ST & RP ch. 6
- 20** Library Tutorial 2 (Meet in the regular classroom)

- 25** Research Project Proposal workshop
- 27** Introduction to Lit-Review Zine and stasis theory
Due: Research Project Proposal
To read: ST & RP ch. 2 (also skim ch. 8) /
"Cupholders are Everywhere"



March

- 03** Intro to arguments of definition
To read: ST & RP ch. 2 / "What is Glitter?"
- 05** Synthesizing definition arguments

- 10** Intro to arguments of cause
To read: ST & RP ch. 3 / "Why Do People Sign Yearbooks?"
- 12** Synthesizing causal arguments

- 17** Intro to arguments of evaluation
To read: ST & RP ch. 4 / "Hot Air Balloons are Useless"
- 19** Synthesizing evaluation arguments

24/26 Spring break. No class.

March/April

- 31** Intro to arguments of proposal
To read: ST & RP ch. 5 / "The Jet Engine...Stuck in the Past"
- 02** Synthesizing proposal arguments



April

07 Zine workshop
09 Zine-making day

14 From Lit Review to Argument
Due: Lit-Review Zine

16 Museum-building as design-principle for research-writing

21 Orientation to the museum space

23 GOCA field trip (meet at the Ent Center for the Arts)

28 Museum building (Meet at KFL 3rd floor display space)

30 Museum building (Meet at KFL 3rd floor display space)

May

05 Hosting the museum
Due: Research Paper & Gathering Book

07 Hosting the museum

12/14 Finals week. No class.

