

Notebooks and Other Irregular Accountings  
Wayne Koestenbaum  
Spring 2014  
Tuesdays 2-4

In this seminar, we will read autobiographical texts that work irregularly, spasmodically, haphazardly, with interruptions, in fragments, in abject states of disassembly, obeying the periodicities of the day, the commute, the mental lapse, the aside, the list, the epistle-without-addressee. These literary adventures—or accidents—go by many names: notebook, journal, pillow book, essay, treatise, poem, letter. We might hesitate to call them anything in particular; we might, instead, apologize for their existence, and wish they would shape up. Or we might feel loyalty toward these wayward creatures; without wishing to corral them into a category, we might believe that they deserve congregation, that they have chartable and treasurable resemblances, and that they are inspiring models for contemporary composition.

Our readings may include *The Pillow Book of Sei Shonagon*, Emily Dickinson's "Master Letters," Henry David Thoreau's *Journals* (online transcripts of his manuscripts), Franz Kafka's *The Blue Octavo Notebooks*, Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Culture and Value*, Francis Ponge's *Soap*, Georges Perec's *La Boutique Obscure: 124 Dreams*, Susan Sontag's *Reborn: Journals & Notebooks, 1947-1963*, Toi Derricotte's *The Black Notebooks*, Hervé Guibert's *Mausoleum of Lovers: Journals 1976-1991*, Hilton Als's *The Women*, Aaron Kunin's *Grace Period: Notebooks, 1998-2007*, Matias Viegner's *2500 Random Things About Me Too*, Claudia Rankine's *Don't Let Me Be Lonely*, Maggie Nelson's *Bluets*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *A Dialogue on Love*, Marie Chaix's *The Summer of the Elder Tree*, and Beatriz Preciado's *Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs, and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era*.

In lieu of a final paper, students will write each week a two-page essay in response to specific assignments. These essays may exercise the freedom to be autobiographical and to engage in irregular accounting.