

# There's a Volcano in My Tummy!\*

\*(the new, exciting, secret/stealth version of ARCH 0330)

Spring 2010, Brown University. Rhode Island Hall, common room. F 2-4:20.

Instructor: Karen Holmberg (Office hours: by appt)

## DESCRIPTION

This course examines one natural 'thing' that humans have intersected with for millions of years - the volcano - and queries how it is portrayed in the earth sciences, social sciences, art, literature, ethnographic accounts, and pop culture. While at times disparate and at odds, at other times these different gazes overlap heavily and permeate one another. The course takes direction from naturalist and volcanophile Alexander von Humboldt, who felt that the earth and social sciences were inseparable from one another and that in a diversity of vantages one finds unity.<sup>1</sup> From early observers of volcanoes such as William Hamilton and Charles Darwin, we will draw upon the passion that should be inherent in studying the planet. In response to French philosopher Michel Serres, we will draw heavily upon freely accessible information and consider its role. The best way to consider the path the course will take is perhaps through the metaphor of the rhizome (per Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in their 'Capitalism and Schizophrenia' project), or an image of thought that considers multiplicities. Like a botanical rhizome, the course will grow in ways we cannot predict as weekly themes will stem from class discussions, wiki postings, and the actions of the volcano each student 'adopts' for the course of the semester. In essence, you can think of this class as a volcano: a living, unpredictable thing.

**GRADING:** Class participation (33%), assignments (33%), final project to be developed with consultation with the instructor (33%), the unpredictable nature of the universe (1%)

**THEMES:** Potential weekly themes include: The Grand Tour, The Premise of Pompeii, Metaphor, Google is Good!(!), Money, Materials & Monsters, Aesthetics, Throw in the Virgins!, Artificiality, and Volcanoes and American Life. The order in which we will cover these themes is not pre-determined.

## SMALL PROJECTS:

You will always be forewarned in the preceding class of any impending due date, and the smaller projects are meant to be thought provoking but should not be terribly time consuming.

Adopt-a-volcano: choose one volcano to follow through the course of the semester; you will report to the class on your volcano in two oral presentations and turn in a brief summation of your volcano (and any changes in your perception of it or in its activity) along with your favorite images of it at the end of the course.

Sell a volcano: Find a volcano product, Make a volcano product...

Create a volcano: this is entirely open-ended. You may create a theoretical volcano, a tangible one, a metaphorical one, a rhetorical one....[personally, I am making a Mentos-soda one so choose something else!]

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<sup>1</sup> Random trivia: the phrase 'e pluribus unum' (out of many, one) is derived from frequent poetic references in ancient Rome to a cheese and garlic mixture; the component colors of which create something entirely new but without each of the component parts would not be the same.

**FINAL PROJECT:** Individual final projects will be crafted around each student's scholarly needs and interests. Unlike the smaller projects, final projects should be built slowly over the course of the semester in order to prevent a last minute panic and shallow treatment of the material. Email dialogue with me throughout the course is invited in order to fully flesh out your final projects in a way that is productive, enriching, and produces something of quality.

**PRELIMINARY SCHEDULE SKELETON:**

As we will be meeting only once a week, it is essential that you attend. If for some reason you are unable to attend a class, please let me know in advance if possible. I will provide an assignment that engages with the material we covered and the discussion it engendered.

The following dates represent our remaining class meetings. Probable due dates for assignments are listed, though these are not set in stone.

Feb 19 –THEME 1: METAPHOR

Feb 26..... adopt-a-volcano (Part I) presentation in class

Mar 5

Mar 12..... adopt-a-volcano (Part II) presentation in class

Mar 19

Mar 26 ..... final project abstract due [IAN RUSSELL WILL VIEW 'JOE VERSUS THE VOLCANO' WITH YOU; TOM LEPPARD WILL PRESENT ON HIS RECENT FIELDWORK ON MONTSEERRAT]

*Apr 2 – NO CLASS MEETING (SPRING BREAK)*

Apr 9

*Apr 16 – NO CLASS MEETING (SAA's; hence will go into reading period)*

April 23..... sell a volcano (bring to class)

April 30..... 'adopt-a-volcano' (Part III) written report due

May 7..... make a volcano (and bring it to class)

May 12..... final projects due [extensions possible if needed but must be arranged in advance]