

HONR 1030:

# TATTOOS AS TEXT (H)



**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** Does a “tramp stamp” really mean someone is promiscuous? Can a barn swallow tattoo really save a sailor’s life? Is someone with a tear drop inked under their eye trustworthy? From being the mark of a criminal to sacred art, tattoos have been met with reverence and scorn throughout human history. In this honors seminar we will explore the history, art, and meaning of tattoos to understand the significance they hold for different peoples and cultures through readings, films, and discussion. Assuming no previous knowledge, this course is designed for students from all majors.

## INSTRUCTOR / CLASS TIME

- Dr. John Andrews ([john.r.andrews@okstate.edu](mailto:john.r.andrews@okstate.edu))
- Class time: TR 3:00-4:15 201 Old Central Office Hours: M 3 - 4, T 1:30-2:30 W 1 - 3, & appt.

## BOOK LIST

- Essays and Documentaries  
Provided on Canvas

## HUMANITIES GENERAL EDUCATION DESIGNATION

1. Purpose: Courses designated "H" concentrate on the expression, analysis, and interpretation of ideas and the aesthetics or values that have formed and informed individuals and societies.

2. Requirements:

- Students will critically analyze the relationships of aesthetics, ideas, or cultural values to historic and contemporary cultures. **This course will explore the aesthetics, history, and cultural significance of tattoos in contemporary life.**
- Students will develop an understanding of how ideas, events, arts, or texts shape diverse individual identities. **This course will explore and unpack how individuals value and define tattoos through numerous course readings and lectures.**
- Students will demonstrate their understanding through written work that provides them the opportunity to enhance their writing skills; upper division “H” courses will include extensive written work.

1. Writing assignments must be weighted in the grading scheme such that students are discouraged from skipping the assignment (i.e. writing assignments are worth a minimum of 10% of the overall grade). **The major research essay for the course is worth 30% of the final grade.**

2. The minimum required number of pages may be encompassed in one or multiple assignment/s. Informal writing assignments (like journals or class notes) and group projects will not count toward writing minimum. Multiple drafts of the same work cannot be counted twice in the cumulative page minimum. **In addition to several small writing prompts in class, the major research paper will be a minimum of 5 pages.**

3. Lower-division courses must include at least five pages of out-of-class written assignments or essays. **The major essay for this course, developed and researched throughout the semester, will be a minimum of 5 pages.**

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

In keeping with the objectives advocated by the National Collegiate Honors Council, this course will promote the goals of an elective course by offering students the opportunity to develop skills in the following areas:

### Written Communication

Students will submit 4 essays throughout the course working in a variety of modes to expand their ability to adapt for different writing genres. The first essay will ask students to critically self reflect on their own perceptions. The second will have them profile a subject of their choosing. The third will be a research paper requiring the synthesis of sources to make an argument. The final paper will be a defense of their own aesthetic choices.



### Oral Communication

Students will develop their oral communication skills through daily class discussion of the course materials, workshopping essays, and presenting their final reflection project to the class.

### Analysis, Synthesis, Understanding

Students will develop their analytical skills by engaging with numerous sources and arguments on the history, aesthetics, and history of tattoos. In their analysis of multiple sources, students will synthesize across genres of film, music, art, to not only understand the contexts tattoos exist in, but further explore the impact and importance of tattoos as a cultural phenomenon.

### Intellectual Independence: Critical and Creative Thinking

Utilizing the classroom discussions, workshops, texts, films, and guest lectures, students will work independently to develop their own critical analysis of tattoos. Course readings and discussions will be utilized to spark both individual exploration into the history and culture of tattoos and foster an agency to research independently. Further, students will be encouraged to interrogate their own relationship with, and understanding of, tattoos in contemporary society.

### Interdisciplinarity

This course will take an interdisciplinary approach as we will discuss historical traditions of tattoos, and academic theory, in relation to historical and contemporary assumptions about tattooed bodies. Instead of defining the validity of tattoos as a cultural practice, this course asks students use their own diverse experiences and aesthetics to define the relevance of tattoos in contemporary life on their own terms.



# REQUIREMENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS



## **Participation (4 Segments 20%):**

During the semester you will receive 4 participation grades (weeks 1-4; weeks 5-8; weeks 9-12; weeks 13-16). This class meets twice a week. Regular class meetings will be used to discuss and reflect on class readings about the history, art, and culture of tattoos. Carefully read each day's reading selections and watch the documentaries prior to class, annotate your texts, and write down questions and observations, and be prepared to share your ideas. Our class time is limited, and we have a lot to cover, so be ready to jump right in!

## **Perception Essay (5%):**

Prior to getting too deep into exploring the history and culture of tattoos, you'll critically think about your own perceptions of the art of tattoos. What compels you to learn more about tattoos? What kinds of people do you associate with tattoos? How have the people around you felt about tattoos? This is exploratory writing; it should be clearly written but can be reflections on the course readings in the context of your own personal thoughts through a 2-3 page paper.

## **Poked Pokes Essay (25%):**

In this mode you'll need to listen carefully to an "inked" person here at Oklahoma State University to gain insight into the reasons and meanings behind their tattoo. Like a profile piece in a magazine or a blog, you'll select a person, take a photo of their ink, and listen to what they have to say about their tattoos. Then, you will critically render what you've heard into a 3-4 page paper.

## **Research Essay (30%):**

For this essay you will critically explore a style or tradition of tattoos and render an overview of it considering its social/cultural impact. You'll consider things like artistic aesthetics, social meanings, and historical traditions in a researched 5-7 page paper.

## **Reflective Project (15%):**

In this mode you'll reflect on what you've learned about exploration of tattoos by synthesizing your experiences, discoveries, and further questions into your own hypothetical tattoo. Considering history, artistic trends, and social contexts, you will design or select a tattoo that you would personally have and then explain why.

## **Final Presentation (5%):**

For your final exam/presentation you will give an overview of the tattoo you selected/created. This will be short, 3 minute explanation of your personal reason in the context of the larger conversation around the history and art of tattoos.

# COURSE POLICIES

## **Add/Drop Information**

Classes begin **1/13**. The nonrestrictive drop/add deadline is **1/21**. The restrictive drop/add deadline is **1/24**. The instructor must sign your add card, so give yourself sufficient time to find the instructor prior to the deadline; however, the instructor is not required to allow you late entry into the course, nor does his or her signature guarantee you a seat. Composition courses are never over-enrolled, nor are seats held for individuals. The W drop/withdraw deadline is **4/11**. The W/F withdraw deadline is **4/25**. Class work ends **5/2**. For more information, see the academic calendar on the Registrar's Website.

## **Student Accessibility Services**

If you think you need special accommodations for this course, you should notify your instructor and request verification of eligibility for accommodations from the Office of Student Accessibility Services (155 UHS) as soon as possible. Accommodations cannot be made until the instructor receives a verification letter from the SAS office, and accommodations cannot be made retroactively for assignments already completed or absences already accrued. Call 405-744-7116 or go to [accessibility.okstate.edu](http://accessibility.okstate.edu) for further information.

## **Attendance**

You are expected to be present every day class meets, and parts of your grade require in class work and participation. That being said, the attendance policy is designed to make sure that if you are ill you are able to remain at home without penalty. If you are required to participate in university sponsored activities (not including Greek life or student organizations) or military training, please be sure to provide appropriate documentation so that these absences do not count against you. Since this course meets only twice per week the attendance policy breaks down as such: 5 absences with no penalty; 6 absences will result in a 100-point deduction from the final grade. 7 absences will result in a 200-point deduction from the final grade; 8 Absences will result in failure of the course.

## **Late Work**

Grades of work defined as "late" (coming in after established due date and time) will be reduced by 5% of the total points possible for the assignment each day it is late.

## **Electronics**

Because this course will primarily draw on discussion, laptops and tablets are not necessary during class, but you may utilize them for note taking or poetry writing if you choose. With this please be courteous of your fellow classmates when using electronic devices in the classroom so as to not disrupt or distract from other's learning. The instructor reserves the right to limit or bar the use of electronic devices if deemed necessary.

## **Plagiarism**

According to University Policy, plagiarism is "presenting the written, published or creative work of another as the student's own work. Whenever the student uses wording, arguments, data, design, etc., belonging to someone else in a paper, report, oral presentation, or other assignment, the student must make this fact explicitly clear by correctly citing the appropriate references or sources. The student must fully indicate the extent to which any part or parts of the project are attributed to others. The student must also provide citations for paraphrased materials." Plagiarism can result in failure of the course or suspension from the University. For more information, see the policies listed at <http://academicintegrity.okstate.edu/>.

# COURSE CALENDAR

\*Subject to Change at Instructor's Discretion

Date	Activities in Class	Read Before Class
1/14	- Course Introduction - Syllabus	
1/16	UNIT 1: Perceptions	"I Ink, Therefore I am" – Robert Arp
1/21		"How to Read a Tattoo, and Other Perilous Quests" – Juniper Ellis
1/23		"Secret Ink: Tattoo's Place in Contemporary American Culture" – Derek John Roberts
1/28		"Tattoos and the Tattooing Arts in Perspective" – Mark Odden
1/30	- Film: "Japanese Tattoos and the Yakuza"	
2/4	- Initial Perceptions Discussion	PERCEPTIONS ESSAY DUE
2/6	- UNIT 2: The Canvas Speaks	"Tattoo You: Personality in Ink" – Kyle Fruh
2/11	- Poked Pokes Essay Assigned	"My Tattoo May Be Permanent, But My Memory of It Isn't" – Clancy Smith
2/13		"Inked Well" – David Kirby
2/18		"Never Merely 'There': Tattooing as a Practice of Writing and Telling of Stories" – Wendy Lynne Lee
2/20		"Oklahoma Tattoo Artists Ready to Make a Mark" and "Ink Barely Dry on a Law with a Flaw" – Associated Press
2/25	- Tattoo Studio Field Trip!	Meet for this class at "It's Only The Tip" Tattoo Studio 2312 N Perkins Rd, Stillwater, OK.
2/27		"Tattoos are Forever: Bodily Freedom and the (Im)Possibility of Change" – Filipe Carvalho
3/4	- Film: Tattoo Nation (2013)	
3/6		"Painted Fetters: Tattooing as Feminist Liberation" – Nancy Kang
3/11		"The Vice of the Tough Tattoo" – Jennifer Baker
3/13	Unit 3: Beneath the Skin	POKED POKES ESSAY DUE

Date	Activities in Class	Read Before Class
3/17 3/19	Spring Break No Class	
3/25	Conducting Research on Tattoos Library Session	"Writing on the Body: The Modern Morality of the Tattoo" – Simon Woods
3/27	– Film: Tattoo Uprising (2019)	
4/1		"Something Terribly Flawed: Philosophy and 'The Illustrated Man'" – Kevin S. Decker
4/3		"To Ink or Not to Ink: Tattoos and Bioethics" – Daniel Miori
4/8		"Is a Tattoo a Sign of Impiety?" – Adam Barkman
4/10	RESEARCH ESSAY WORKSHOP	
4/15		RESEARCH ESSAY DUE
4/17	– UNIT 4: Inking Meanings	
4/22	– Design Studio	
4/24	– Design Studio	
4/29		Final Project Workshop
5/1	Final Project Presentations	
Final Exam 5/6	Reflection Essay Due	