

English 306-003: Advanced Composition

WRITING BEYOND THE ALPHABET

TTH 2:00PM-3:30PM



Codex Espangliensis: From Columbus to the Border Patrol (City Lights Press, 2000)



Common assumptions about written communication depend upon the alphabet as a precondition for literacy. By privileging alphabets, pictographic and non-verbal writing systems become obscured. In order to account a plurality of transmission practices, this class will forward a broad definition of “writing,” notably including Aztec pictography, the Andean khipu system of knotted cords, and digital media communications. The class will offer a new perspective on approaches to writing that supports historically sound accounts of how recorded information changes across cultures and time in Mesoamerica and other regions across the globe. Beyond emerging trends in digital humanities, we will investigate “new” ways of reading, writing, and learning, with the aim of fundamentally altering the character of 21st century education.