

Culture & Communication

Alessandro Duranti

Winter 2021

Lecture # 17 Aspect Seeing

today

“Seeing *as*” (“Aspect seeing”)

Filling in the missing information

Doing it right and doing it wrong (an example)

Socializing an audience to “see” in a “professional way”

Mind, Body, *Umwelt*

The notion of habitus brings up the question of the habitual ways we know things, places, people.

How do we *know*, or *how do we get to know*?

Through an interplay of the senses, our memory, our cultural understanding/interpretation (schemata, concepts, language)



Gregory Bateson (1972) *Steps
to an Ecology of Mind*

Suppose I am a blind man, and I use a stick. I go tap, tap, tap. Where do I start? Is my mental system bounded at the handle of the stick? Is it bounded by my skin? Does it start halfway of the tip of the stick? But these are nonsense questions. The stick is a pathway along which transforms of difference are being transmitted. The way to delineate the system is to draw the limiting line in such a way that you do not cut any of these pathways in ways which leave things inexplicable. If what you are trying to explain is a given piece of behavior, such as the locomotion of the blind man, then for this purpose, you will need the street, the stick, the man,; the street, the stick, and so on, round and round. (Bateson 1972: 549)



Video of blind woman walking inside Plasy Monastery, Czech Republic

“Seeing as”

We don't just *see*, we *see as*

L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*

The word *see* [German *sehen*] has two uses:

1. “What do you see there?” “I see *this*”
2. “I see a likeness between these two faces”

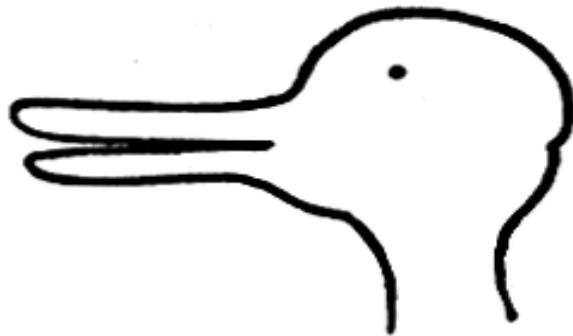
[...]

“I contemplate a face, and then **suddenly** notice its likeness to another. I *see* that it has not changed; and yet I see it differently. I call this experience “noticing an aspect”. [...]

“So we interpret it, and *see* it as we *interpret* it.”

Phil. Investigations, Part II, Section xi

“I shall call the following figure, derived from Jastrow, the duck-rabbit. It can be seen as a rabbit’s head or as a duck’s.



And I must distinguish between the ‘continuous seeing’ of an aspect and the ‘dawning’ of an aspect.”

“1034. We become conscious of the aspect only when it changes. As when someone is conscious only of a change of note, but doesn't have absolute pitch.” (Wittgenstein, RPP, I)

436. If there were no change of aspect then there would only be a *way of taking* [*Auffassung*], and no such thing as *seeing* this or that. (RPP, 2)

437. [...] “If there were only *one* substance, there would be no use for the word ‘substance’”? [...] The concept ‘substance’ presupposes the concept ‘difference in substance’. (As that of the king of chess presupposes that of a move in chess; or that of *colour* that of *colours*.) (RPP, 2)

Seeing a table



When we view the table, we view it from some particular side, and this side is thereby what is genuinely seen. Yet the table has still other sides. It has a non-visible back side, it has a non-visible interior; and these are actually indexes for a variety of sides, a variety of complexes of possible visibility. [...] this thing is not [merely] the side genuinely seen in this moment; rather [...] the thing is precisely the full-thing that has still other sides, sides that are not brought to genuine perception in this perception, but that would be brought to genuine perception in other perceptions.” (Husserl 2001: 40 <4>]

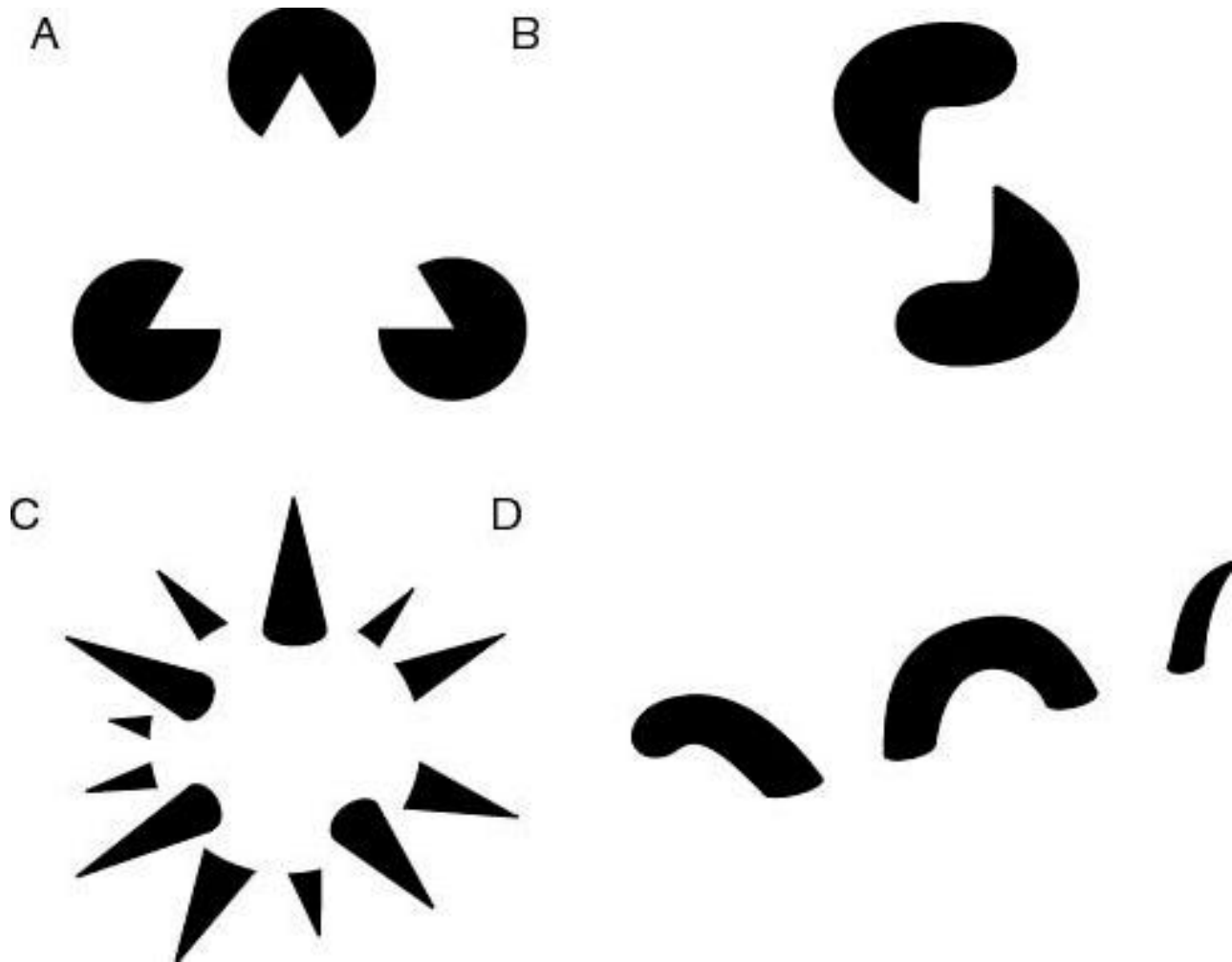
Filling in

Expectations (“*doxa*”) guide our perception.

Our everyday way of being in the world requires us to **fill in the missing parts, to have imagination.**

We add what is not “there” – the phantom - (what we don’t see or don’t hear but “should be there” or what someone else – or us at a different time/place – would see).

“We see what is not there”



Faye Dunaway & Warren Beatty announce “The Best Picture”



W; and the Academy Award ...

(6 secs) ((looks down at card))

W; for best picture

((turns toward FD))

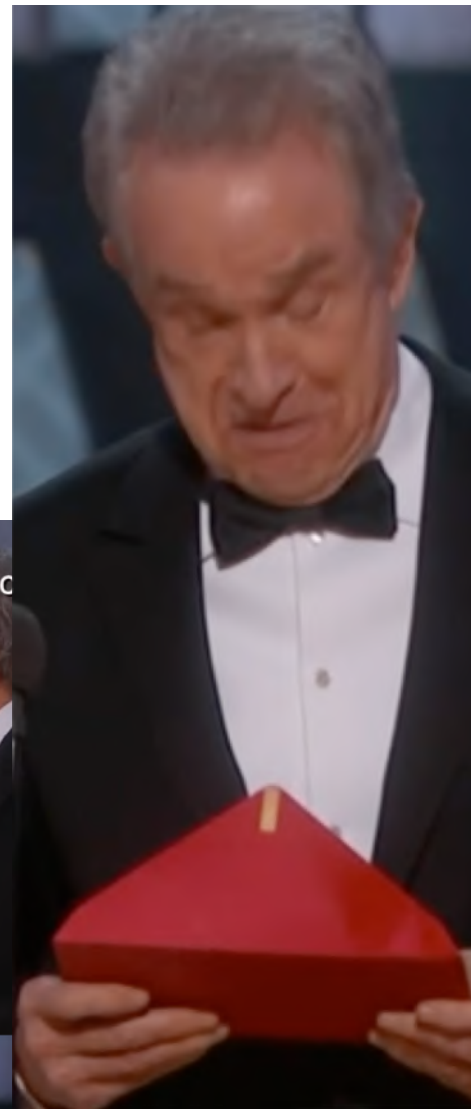
F; ((softly)) you're impossible. Go on

(3 secs)

((WB gives FD card & she looks at i

Faye; LaLa Land!

((Cheers from audience))



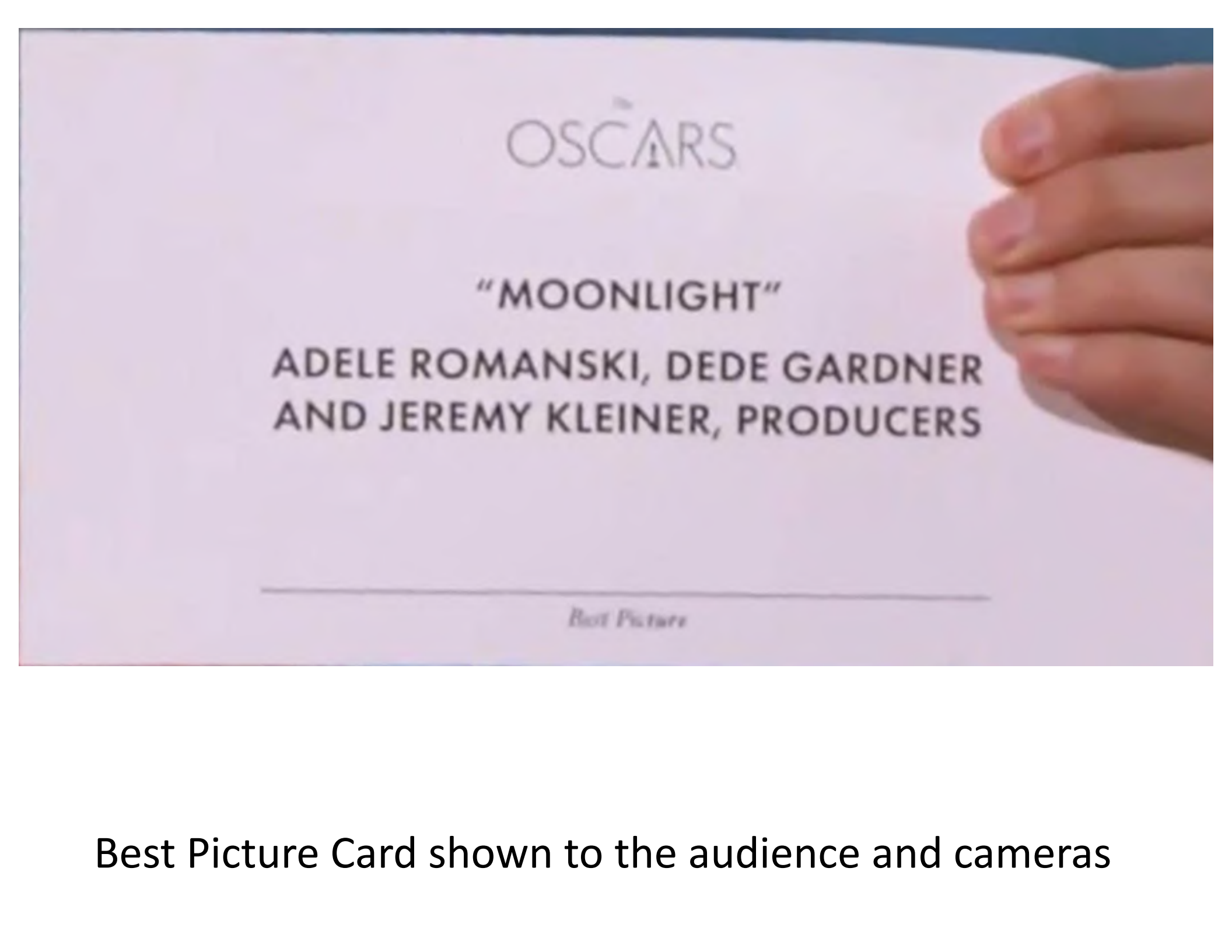
Faye Dunaway; ((looks at card))

La La Land!

((Cheers from audience))



Card possibly read by Faye Dunaway, as reconstructed by Benjamin Bannister, "Pop Culture Analyst"

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a white card. The card is the Best Picture Oscar card, featuring the word "OSCARS" at the top, followed by the movie title "MOONLIGHT" in quotes, and the producers' names "ADELE ROMANSKI, DEDE GARDNER AND JEREMY KLEINER, PRODUCERS". At the bottom, a horizontal line is followed by the words "Best Picture" in a smaller, italicized font.

OSCARS

"MOONLIGHT"

ADELE ROMANSKI, DEDE GARDNER
AND JEREMY KLEINER, PRODUCERS

Best Picture

Best Picture Card shown to the audience and cameras

“Seeing as” = constituting

1. The audience sees Betty’s actions *as* “being funny.” Dunaway *sees* him *as* “being impossible”.
2. Faye Dunaway *sees* the card *as* the “Best Picture” Card, i.e., *sees* the wrong card *as* the right card.

Can Habitus (be Change(d)?

Primary and secondary socialization (schooling)

Acquiring a professional way of ...

Seeing

Hearing / Listening

Feeling (by touch, by emotion)

Tasting

Smelling

“Seeing as” in a court case

Charles Goodwin’s analysis of the first trial of four police officers accused of use of excessive force against motorist Rodney King.

Main piece of evidence = video recording made amateur video photographer. Graphic violence is shown. Conviction was expected. The tape was *seen as* “objective.”

Seeing as excessive use of force vs. proper response

To develop a “professional vision” means to be able to *see as* an archaeologist or ... *as* a policeman (Goodwin, Ch. 19)

The video tape as evidence of?

Hitting Rodney King *seen as* police **brutality, violence.**
vs.

seen as legitimate, **appropriate response**

Through a **coding scheme** (“de-escalation”) to King’s actions (“escalation”)

A “coding scheme” (tools)

“the tools that Sergeant Koon had available to him on March 3rd ... [shown on a chart to the jury] ... a metal baton ... is a tool ... to protect yourself.” (p. 463)

Seeing aggression vs. cooperation

Body movements of King visible on the video tape are coded as either “cooperative” of “aggressive”

Small moments are situated within a prospective horizon, using present progressive, e.g., “*starting to*”

Control of the perceptual field.

Defining “aggressive”

Prosecutor: So uh would you, again consider this to be a nonaggressive, movement by Mr. King?

St. Duke: At this time no I wouldn't. (1.1)

Prosecutor: It is aggressive.

St. Duke: Yes. It's starting to be. (0.9)
This foot, is laying flat, (0.8)
There's starting to be a *bend*, in uh (0.6)
this leg (0.4) in his butt (0.4)
The buttocks area has started to rise. (0.7)
which would put us,
at the beginning of our spectrum again.

Showing aggression visually

From video tape to blown up still images

“photos were cropped, enlarged, and pasted in sequence to form a display over a meter long that was placed in front of the jury on an easel.”

(p. 467)

Use of **highlighting** to enhance objects, people, details. To stretch, slow down time.

Coming up trial

The officer who was shown pressing his knee on George Floyd's neck for 8 minutes and 46 seconds has been charged for second-degree manslaughter.

The video of those 8 minutes and 46 seconds is the main evidence. It's taken to be a "fact," and "objective."

But there will be interpretations. There will be seeing as, and there will be context added.

Truth is mediated by language and actions, and what is known or shared cannot be taken for granted.

Truth

Culture & Communication mediate truth.

That does not mean that “truth” does not exist, but that it is part of a process, a negotiation of perspectives, a coming together or staying apart.

Truth is never obvious.

It takes work to uncover, check, understand.

It's a test for individuals and community.

A story

I want to end with a story that takes us back to where we started, the study of how human understand each other in encounters that are always mediated, by shared experiences as well as new tools.

The story is called “My great-grandfather and the radio”. (See video recording of lecture)

Concluding remarks

Despite the challenges we have had this quarter, including the limitations of online teaching, I have enjoyed teaching this course. I am happy that you have been so engaged with the new ideas, research questions, and methods that you encountered in this course.

