**Integrated Liberal Studies (ILS) 275**  
**Remix and Appropriation in the Western Tradition**

**2301 Sterling Hall**

**Tuesday / Thursday 1 – 2:15 p.m.**

Instructor:

Dr. Shawn Peters

Integrated Liberal Studies Program (ILS)

23A Ingraham Hall

Hours: 11:30-12:30 T and TH (and by appointment)

sfpeters@wisc.edu

We often think of innovations as being the products of lone geniuses -- solitary figures who labor long hours in isolation before experiencing a creative epiphany that gives the world something entirely new and different.   But in a variety of creative efforts, the reality is usually somewhat different.  In fields ranging from biotechnology to visual art to religion, innovators have appropriated from and built upon the works of others in order to create new forms.    
  
For many, this remixing or hybridizing has become a central element of the creative process.  (Some even go so far as to proclaim, “Everything is remix.”)  Others, however, view it as nothing little more than a glorified form of stealing -- a theft of intellectual property that might be punishable under the laws of copyright or patent.  
  
This multi- and interdisciplinary course traces some of the long and contested history of appropriation in the Western tradition.  Although “remix” is term most often associated with music, we’ll discover that inherently combinatorial practices have contributed to innovations in literature, visual arts, and architecture.  We’ll also examine how combinatorial evolution has shaped patterns of development in the biological and technological realms.  In addition to looking at traditional producers, we’ll also consider how consumers and fans remake cultural artifacts -- often for subversive ends.  
  
As we trace these patterns, we’ll pay careful attention to how they are complicated by such factors as the underlying philosophy of copyright/intellectual property law, long-held ideas about authorship, and bioethical norms.  
  
This course will require students to engage a diverse array of texts and topics. The semester will take us from biological evolution to the development of the personal computer to the art of Shepard Fairey to the music of Public Enemy.  As we make that meandering journey, we’ll throw around terms like *postmodernism*, *bricolage*, and *mash-up*. However, the course will not simply be an exercise in the mastery of jargon; it will require students to reflect seriously on a variety of creative processes and make linkages between them.

**Main course components**

**Exams (20% of grade each)**

There will be two exams worth 20% each (or 40% total). The exams (on February 25 and April 22) will be in-class tests covering our readings and class discussions.

**Response papers (15% of grade each)**  
You’ll write two short response essays throughout the semester. These are not so much formal research papers as they are reflections on our readings and discussions. You will get a specific prompt for each assignment, but you should feel free to focus on areas that interest you most.

**Class facilitation (10% of grade)**

Students will form groups of 3-4 and lead individual class sessions throughout the semester. These won’t be “presentations” but rather active learning sessions reflecting the assigned readings for that day. (There is a separate document on our Learn@UW page covering the ins and outs of this assignment.)

**Final project (15%)**  
As a final project, all students in the course will produce an intellectual or creative autobiography employing some of the remix techniques we’ll encounter over the course of the semester. These projects will be due on the final day of class. (There is a separate document on our Learn@UW page covering the ins and outs of this assignment.)

**Citizenship / attendance (5%)**  
All students in the course are expected to attend every session and be active participants in it.  I will take attendance and note your engagement in our class sessions. Additionally, you will be assigned to lead specific discussions throughout the semester.

**Required texts**

**Books:**

Kembrew McLeod and Peter DiCola, *Creative License: The Law and Culture of Digital Sampling*

(This book is available at the University Book Store as well as through online retailers.)  
  
**E-book available for free through UW-Madison Libraries and/or Learn@UW:**

Joseph Schloss, *Making Beats: The Art of Sample-Based Hip-Hop*

(Accessing this book through the campus library system will require you to log into your MyUW account. This isn’t always a smooth process, so please be patient. )

**Additional Readings**

Throughout the semester, shorter readings will be posted on our Learn@UW course website. If you have trouble accessing them, please let your instructor know immediately. (DoIT recommends that you use Firefox as your browser rather than Chrome.)

**Social media**

Official course website: http://uwmadisonremix.wordpress.com

Twitter hashtag: #uwremix

Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/RemixuwMadison

**Personal technology**

We need at least six students to bring laptops for every class session (one per table and screen). If you have a laptop, or have access to one (via Helen C. White), please bring it to class. Also, you are encouraged to use your phones to take pictures, Tweet, etc., as long as it is related to our course.