

AMST 505: PROSEMINAR IN AMERICAN CULTURAL STUDIES
Fall 2011 – Thursday 1:25-4:25 p.m. – Todd 211

Professor Lisa Guerrero

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Office Hours: **Tuesday 12-2 pm, and by appointment**

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(E-mail is the preferred method for reaching the professor. It is also the method that will yield the quickest response.)

Education is a progressive discovery of our ignorance.
Will Durant

The things taught in colleges and schools are not an education, but the means of education.
Ralph Waldo Emerson

The great aim of education is not knowledge, but action.
Herbert Spencer

There are two kinds of dissertations: perfect ones and submitted ones.
Ancient wisdom

In many disciplines, for the majority of graduates, the Ph.D. indicates the logical conclusion to an academic career.
Marc Bousquet

COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES: Becoming a professional academic in the humanities is challenging and requires mastering a variety of skills. The proseminar provides a common experience for entering graduate students, facilitates exchange of ideas and approaches to interdisciplinary texts in the fields of American Studies and Cultural Studies, critical issues, and theoretical problems. It focuses on broad aspects of the development of theory and criticism in the fields, on the students' critical writing, and on aspects of professional development, including pedagogy. As such, it will also provide an introduction for graduate students in university-level pedagogy in general and in the pedagogy of interdisciplinary studies specifically.

The curriculum is designed primarily to help students master scholarly communication, and provide students with several related skills needed by all professional academics. The general goal is to give you opportunities to learn, practice, and evaluate oral and

written methods of presenting scholarly work and ideas, as well as personal academic information in a variety of formats.

For most of the assignments throughout the term, both written and oral, along with the more formal evaluations provided by the instructor, your fellow classmates will provide various types of evaluation for organization, clarity, logical flow, style, timing, effectiveness of supplementary materials, or other relevant qualities.

READINGS:

Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler, eds. – *Keywords in American Cultural Studies*

A. Leigh DeNeef and Craufurd D. Goodman – *The Academic's Handbook*

Dora Farkas – *The Smart Way to Your Ph.D.: 200 Secrets from 100 Graduates*

Henry Giroux – *Teachers as Intellectuals: Toward a Critical Pedagogy of Learning*

Paul Silvia – *How to Write a Lot: A Practical Guide to Productive Academic Writing*

Kate L. Turabian – *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- (1) Improve students' fluency in both critically engaging theoretical work and writing in a critically theoretical manner
- (2) Increase students' knowledge of theoretical and methodological problems and issues faced in American Studies, Cultural Studies, and other relevant interdisciplinary studies.
- (3) Help students to develop an understanding of critical pedagogy including: analyzing the comparative strengths of different pedagogical strategies in achieving a wide range of curricular goals; describing what we do as teachers of interdisciplinary studies, as well as why and how we do it; designing effective syllabi and assignments for different kinds of courses and texts.
- (4) Assist students in expanding their knowledge of the various skills and documents required to get a job in the academy

Course Requirements:

- **General Requirement**

Students are expected to do all course readings prior to class and come prepared to discuss the readings in depth. Class is run in a seminar-style with the expectation that students will actively engage in and drive the discussions. You can also expect to be called on by me at any time during class.

- **Attendance**

Though your attendance will not be formally used to calculate your final grade, your attendance at each meeting is required. You need to arrive on time and participate in an informed and consistent manner. Anything less will not be tolerated and will result in problems in this class. Despite not being a formal component of your course evaluation, attendance does have the potential to affect your grade.

- **Participation (10% of final grade)**

You are expected to be **present intellectually as well as physically** in the classroom. This means that not only must you attend, but that you must endeavor to contribute to the flow and body of the course. You will be expected to prepare carefully for each class by completing the required readings by the day on which they are listed in the course schedule. This course asks you to read texts closely and responsively, and to participate actively in class discussion and debate. Additionally, your participation will be crucial in the reviewing and revising of each other's work. If you do not: 1) participate in an informed manner, (in other words, in a way that is not merely personal opinion or conjecture, but rather demonstrates you have both done the reading and critically considered it); 2) consider and comment on the work of your peers in a serious and constructive manner; or 3) participate at all, your grade will be significantly affected.

- **250-500 Word Project Abstract and Bibliography (10% of final grade)**

Write a jargon-free abstract explaining your proposed research and its relevance to the fields of Cultural Studies and/or American Studies. To accompany the abstract you will also put together a selected bibliography of no less than 10, no more than 20, texts relevant to the critical research of your project. The purpose of this assignment is to be able to critically, yet concisely, communicate the focus and significance of your work, as well as be able to identify the work in the field that is pertinent to situating your own research within the discipline. Both the abstract and the bibliography will serve as the foundations for the 8-10 page paper you will present at the end of the term.

- **Teaching Demonstration (25% of final grade)**

Each student will demonstrate her pedagogical technique and method by teaching a randomly selected short essay to the rest of the class. These demonstrations serve to help prepare first-time teachers for their entrance into the classroom, and refine those who are already in the classroom. Drawing on our course readings in critical pedagogy, students may choose any approach(es) they think will be the most effective in both highlighting their strengths as a teacher, as well as getting students to understand complex concepts. *Time limit:* 30 min + 5 min for questions.

- **Mock Conference Paper and Presentation (25% of final grade)**

In this presentation students will be responsible for writing an **8-10 page paper** based on their abstract and bibliography that will be presented to the class during the penultimate weeks of class. This presentation will follow the style used at academic conferences and will therefore be limited to **12 minutes + 5 minutes for questions**. (8-10 written pages = approx. 10-12 presentation minutes. Students will be cut off at **12 minutes** during their presentations.)

- **Syllabus (15% of final grade)**

Each student will create an original syllabus for an introductory course in **either: Ethnic Studies, Women's Studies, or American Studies**. (If a student is currently teaching a course, she MAY NOT use the syllabus for that course, but rather must create a NEW, original syllabus to fulfill this assignment.)

- **Curriculum Vitae (5% of final grade)**

Each student will be responsible for generating a curriculum vitae, one of the most central components of an academic's professional life. This is an account of a scholar's career, qualifications, and accomplishments and is roughly equivalent to, but distinctly different from a résumé. A handout will be provided describing how to prepare an effective CV.

- **Personal Statement (10% of final grade)**

In addition to a CV, students will write a **500-750 word** personal statement. The student should frame the statement as if she were applying for an academic position. The statement should include comments on research projects, research interests, teaching experience, teaching interests, and ways in which she is a good fit for the position. Students will be given a job announcement on which to focus their statements.

Policies:

Written Work

- Written work to be graded should be typed using a 12-point font, double-spaced (unless otherwise specified), spell checked, and proofread.
- **I DO NOT ACCEPT ANY ASSIGNMENTS VIA E-MAIL. NO EXCEPTIONS.**

Late Assignments

No late assignments will be accepted except in the case of a **documented** emergency, a **documented** university sponsored event, or a **documented** observance of a religious holiday.

Incompletes

I reserve "Incompletes" **ONLY** for students who are on their deathbeds or are experiencing a comparable catastrophic event. Everyone else will receive a grade in my class. **NO EXCEPTIONS.**

Communicating in the classroom

While it is obvious that we should avoid abusive and hateful speech, given that we must deal with plenty of that everywhere else, I also want to encourage you to exercise your academic freedoms in thoughtful, intellectually honest discourse. So, speak your mind. Just remember as you do so, people can disagree without being disrespectful.

Plagiarism

Really? I would hope that in a graduate seminar I would not have to remind people that academic dishonesty of any sort, particularly plagiarism, will NOT be tolerated. The penalty for academic dishonesty is at the professor's discretion. In the case of my graduate seminars, if any academic dishonesty is discovered it will result in an automatic "F" in the course. No discussion. Period. Accordingly, make sure you are familiar with the university's policies on plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty so you are well informed as to what constitutes a violation. Finally, be aware that plagiarism includes not providing proper citation for ANY work including information found on any website, book, pamphlet, etc., as well as copying in full or part someone else's work, (including fellow students AND yourself from a previous essay or project without proper citation.).

Grade Problems

During the semester use my office hours to talk to me about any problems you are having with your progress and/or evaluations for the course so we can try to fix any bad situation **early**, before it's too late. You must communicate any problems you may be having that are affecting your coursework early on so that I am aware of the situation as I continue to evaluate your work. Any explanations for poor performance, relevant or not, will not be accepted at the end of the semester and will have no effect on your final grade. Please do not come to ask me to change your grade after you have failed the course. Also, do not come to ask me to give you an "I" because you are failing or have failed the course.

Disability Accommodation

Reasonable accommodations are available for students with a documented disability. If you have a disability and may need accommodations to fully participate in this class, please visit the Disability Resource Center (DRC). All accommodations **MUST** be approved through the DRC (Washington Building, Room 217). Please stop by or call 509-335-3417 to make an appointment with a disability specialist. Please notify me during the first week of class of any accommodations needed for the course.

Campus Safety

In the interest of campus safety and emergency procedures, please become familiar with the information available on the WSU-provided websites.

<http://safetyplan.wsu.edu> Campus Safety Plan

<http://oem.wsu.edu/emergencies> Emergency management web site

<http://alert.wsu.edu> WSU Alert site

[Your continued enrollment in this course after the first week means that you have read and understand the information contained within this syllabus, and that you agree to follow the procedures and rules explained within it.]

• Grade Breakdown:

By Grade Point:

A = 4.0

A- = 3.8

B+ = 3.5

B = 3.0

B- = 2.8

C+ = 2.5

C = 2.0

C- = 1.8

D+ = 1.5

D = 1.0

By 100 Point Grading Scale:

94-100 = A

90-93 = A-

87-89 = B+

83-86 = B

80-82 = B-

77-79 = C+

73-76 = C

70-72 = C-

67-69 = D+

60-66 = D

0-59 = F

Course Schedule:

AUG 25: Introduction to class

SEP 1: Readings: **Burgett and Hendler – Chps. 1-21; Farkas – Chp. 1**

SEP 8: Readings: **Burgett and Hendler – Chps. 22-43; Farkas – Chp. 2**

SEP 15: Readings: **Burgett and Hendler – Chps. 44-64; Farkas – Chp. 3**
DUE: Abstract and bibliography

SEP 22: Readings: **DeNeef and Goodman – Parts 1 & 2; Farkas – Chp. 5**

SEP 29: Readings: **Giroux – Part 1**

OCT 6: Readings: **Giroux – Part 2; DeNeef and Goodman – Part 4**

OCT 13: **Teaching Demonstrations – Group #1**
DUE: Course syllabus
IN-CLASS: Critique SAMPLE Syllabi

OCT 20: **Teaching Demonstrations – Group #2**
IN-CLASS: Critique Student Syllabi

OCT 27: Readings: **Silvia (in its entirety); Farkas – Chp. 6**
DUE: Curriculum Vitae
IN-CLASS: Critique SAMPLE CVs

NOV 3: Readings: **DeNeef and Goodman – Part 5; Turabian – Chps. 1-14**

IN-CLASS: Critique Student CVs

NOV 10: Mock Conference Presentations – Group #1

NOV 17: Mock Conference Presentations – Group #2
DUE: Personal Statements

DEC 1: Readings: Farkas – Chp. 7
IN-CLASS: Critique Personal Statements

DEC 8: Publishing & the Peer-Review Process; Job Search & Interview
Process
Readings: DeNeef and Goodman – Parts 3 and 6; Farkas – Appendix A