

Special Topics: Signifying Practices

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Office Hours: Mondays 11:00-1:00
and by appointment

AMST 596
218 CUE
Mondays 1:10-4:00

This seminar examines the cultural politics of meaning--its construction, circulation, and contestation--what might be best described as the significance of signifying practices. It concentrates on representation and performance with special reference to the USA. Racial identities, imaginaries, and enactments anchor much of the reading and reflection, particularly in relation to gender, sexuality, and nation.

Policies

Academic Integrity

PLAGARISM OR CHEATING OF ANY KIND ON ANY ASSIGNMENT OR EXAM WILL NOT BE TOLLERATED AND WILL RESULT IN A FAILING GRADE IN THE COURSE. (Consult the WSU Student Handbook for further details). In other words, do your own work.

Students with Disability

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 Access Center. All accommodations MUST be approved through the Access Center (Washington Building, Room 217). Please stop by or call 509-335-3417 to make an appointment with an Access Advisor.

Office Hours

As noted above, I will hold regular office hours each week (Mondays 11:00-1:00).

Email

I check my email at least once a day. If you cannot make my office hours or simply find it more convenient to use electronic mail, let me know via computer what is troubling, perplexing, and/or inspiring you.

Commitment to Campus Safety

Washington State University is committed to enhancing the safety of the students, faculty, staff, and visitors to the Pullman campus. As part of this commitment, the university has prepared this Campus Safety Plan, containing a listing of university policies, procedures, statistics and information relating to campus safety, emergency management and the health and welfare of the campus community. See: <http://safetyplan.wsu.edu/> and <http://oem.wsu.edu/>.

Requirements

Participation (15%)

This is a seminar and as such demands student engage the material before class and engage with it and one another in class. I expect students to think, asks questions, and be active. I will assess both quality and quantity. Students who text in class will be asked to leave.

Facilitation (15%):

Students will structure, design, and/or direct one during the semester. These presentations will not be lectures on a specific topic. Instead, students will take responsibility for a reading and facilitate class discussion of it. Essentially, these presentations should frame the texts, providing a context for discussion that simultaneously illuminates them, while offering information and posing questions that transcend them. The precise content and form of these projects is open. Students should be creative, abandoning the familiar call and response format whenever possible. Students are encouraged to discuss possible strategies and approaches with me prior to their facilitations.

Read the text(s) and discuss possible ways to attack the problem, to frame it for the class, to say something meaningful about it. Work with your group to develop your presentation. Be creative! Use skits, posters, exercises, (short) video segments, etc. to facilitate the subject and to establish a context for class discussion. Each facilitation should run roughly 45 minutes.

Students will be graded for the completeness and sophistication, for the materials used and presented, the creativity of the content and form of the presentation, your ability to engage the class in discussion relevant to your topic, and your ability to make use of a range of concepts and perspectives.

Term Project

Proposal (5%)

a 250-500 word projective abstract summarizing the subject and scope of the project, its thesis, and its significance. Due in class 16 September.

Bibliography (10%)

an exhaustive list of works central to the research question. Due in class 14 October.

Draft (5%)

an initial version of the paper, which need not be polished, but a fully formed, good faith rendering of the final paper, developed substantially beyond a mere outline. Completion of a quality draft is necessary to complete the remaining elements of the project and hence pass the class. Due 18 November (via email to CRK and peers).

Peer Review (20%)

a critical reading of drafts of two papers written by others in the class that offers detailed feedback designed to foster productive revisions and an improved final paper. Due 2 December (via email to CRK; plan to meet with peers). Make comments electronically and use track-changes.

Final Paper (30%)

a 20+ page essay conforming to professional standards and stylistic conventions. Due 16 December by 12:00 Noon. Hard copy only.

Some Guidelines

This is a class seeks to promote mutual growth and shared learning about challenging subjects. To achieve this ideal, we will have to work together, treat one another respect, and push ourselves to get beyond our comfort zones. We will encounter difficult topics and sensitive material that may at times disturb or offend. This is perhaps unavoidable given that the readings and discussions prompt us to take up themes often left silent in our society, including race and racism, power and oppression, conflict and struggle. With this in mind, the following guidelines are meant to encourage open, productive, and reflexive conversations.

Acknowledge the existence of institutionalized forms of oppression, particularly racism, classism, sexism, and heterosexism.

Listen to others.

Create a safe environment for discussion. Think the language in which you choose to express yourself. Be aware that how you talk may impact others and their willingness to share. Avoid words that hurt, stigmatize, stereotype, or silence others.

Be respectful. Do not interrupt. Do not belittle. Treat others with the same dignity and compassion you would expect.

Be engaged. Commit yourself to the material, to getting at its political and personal implications.

Be open to others and their opinions.

Actively participate.

Read consistent, carefully, critically. Ask yourself: What is significant in this piece? What are the central arguments and what do they mean? What do they teach? How do they challenge? What feelings or emotions do they evoke?

Reflect on your position. Recognize where you are at, that is, how your life, desires, and interpretations fit in a broader social context. Be willing to name your prejudices, ideologies, and privileges.

Resist the temptation to dismiss positions before you take them seriously.

Ground your comments in evidence.

Agree to actively work against myths and stereotypes.

Appreciate the knowledge and experience of your peers.

Avoid blaming.

Remember class discussions should not be about embarrassing, showing off, winning, losing. Our meetings rather should be about dialogue, self-reflection, and learning.

Arrive on time. Leave on time. Those who come into class late or leave early will be asked to sit in the front row and meet with the instructor after class. Repeat offenders can anticipate a penalty (see above).

Turn off. Tune in. Be Here Now. Before each class turn off your cellphone and other electronic devices.

Required Readings

The required books for this class are available for purchase at the Bookie or Crimson and Grey; used copies may also be obtained online (abebooks.com, amazon.com, and half.com all are good resources for locating used books). Readings can be placed on reserve as well.

- Chappell, Ben. (2012). Lowrider Space. U Texas Press.
- Creef, Elana. (2004). Imagining Japanese America. NYU Press.
- Deloria, Philip. (1999). Playing Indian. Yale U Press.
- Ehlers, Nadine. (2012). Racial Imperatives. Indiana U Press.
- Hogan, Jackie. (2011). Gender, Race, and National Identity. Routledge.
- Imada, Adria L. (2012). Aloha America. Duke U Press.
- Johnson, Stephen, ed. (2012). Burnt Cork. U Massachusetts Press.
- King, CR, C Lugo-Lugo & M Bloodsworth-Lugo. (2010). Animating Difference.
- Newman, Joshua I. (2010). Embodying Dixie. Common Ground Publishing.

Course Schedule

19 Aug	Opening
26 Aug	<i>Animating Difference</i>
2 Sept	Labor Day. No Class.
9 Sept	<i>Lowrider Space</i>
16 Sept	<i>Embodying Dixie</i>
23 Sept	<i>Race, Gender, & Nation</i>
30 Sept	<i>Imagining Japanese America</i>
7 Oct	<i>Burnt Cork</i>
14 Oct	<i>Playing Indian</i>
21 Oct	<i>Aloha America</i>
28 Oct	<i>Racial Imperatives</i>
4 Nov	King Germany. No Class.
11 Nov	Veterans Day. No Class.
18 Nov	King Germany. No Class.
25 Nov	Thanksgiving Break. No Class.
2 Dec	King Germany. No Class.