

Contemporary Practices in American Cultural Studies

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 10:30-12:30
and by appointment

AMST 507
CUE 407
Tuesdays 1:25-4:25

This seminar explores the crystallization, currents, and concerns of American cultural studies. It traces the contours of the field during the past two decades as its primary focus, highlighting established frameworks and emergent trends. The class has two overlapping parts: (1) roughly the first half of the class examines what might best be read as a reconceptualization of American cultural studies, emphasizing its foundations and futures; and (2) the second half of the class considers a series of case studies, unpacking the theories, methods, politics, and objects anchoring current engagements in the field.

Policies

Academic Integrity

PLAGARISM OR CHEATING OF ANY KIND ON ANY ASSIGNMENT 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.

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.

Questions and Quotes (Q & Q's) (15%)

By 12 noon on Monday of each week, students will submit (via email) one typed question and one typed quote from the readings assigned for the week. Questions should be open-ended. They may address specific readings or a theme running across several readings. Quotes may be anything from the readings that resonates with you. Along with the quote, write a paragraph or two explaining why you find the quote significant.

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! 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.

Midterm (25%)

Students will write a take home exam. It is due 10 March 2015 no later than 1:25 PM.

Annotated Bibliography (30%)

Students will complete an annotated of a theory, method, or subject germane to their area of concentration and scholarly interests. It will consist of 30 or more sources (with annotations of roughly 200-250 words each) and a 5 page summary of areas of significance key themes, and points of contention. It is due at the scheduled time of the final exam.

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). Please note two of the required texts are available online (hyperlinks below). If desired, readings will be placed on reserve in the CCGRS Office.

- Jodi A. Byrd, *Transit of Empire*, (University of Minnesota Press, 2013).
- Paul de Gay et al, *Doing Cultural Studies*, second edition (Sage, 2013).
- Iderpal Grewal, *Transnational America* (Duke University Press, 2005).
- Nicole Guidotti-Hernández, *Unspeakable Violence* (Duke University Press, 2011).
- Pease & Wiegman, *Futures of American Studies* (Duke University Press, 2002)
- Jasbir Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages* (Duke University Press, 2007).
- John Carlos Rowe, [Cultural Politics of the New American Studies](#) (OHP, 2012).
- Various. [Ethnographies of Neoliberalism](#). *Foucault Studies* (2014).
- Alexander Weheliye, *Habaes Viscus* (Duke University Press, 2014).

Course Schedule

13 Jan	Opening
20 Jan	<i>Doing Cultural Studies</i>
27 Jan	Redoing American Studies (readings to be distributed)
3 Feb	<i>American Studies in a Moment of Danger</i>
10 Feb	<i>Futures + Cultural Politics</i> , selections
17 Feb	<i>Futures + Cultural Politics</i> , selections
24 Feb	<i>Futures + Cultural Politics</i> , selections
3 March	<i>Transnational America</i>
10 March	Midterm Due at 1:25 PM (King's mailbox)
17 March	Spring Break. No Class.
24 March	<i>Transit of Empire</i>
31 March	<i>Unspeakable Violence</i>
7 April	<i>Terrorist Assemblage</i>
14 April	<i>Habeas Viscus</i>
21 April	<i>Ethnographies of Neoliberalism</i>
28 April	Dead Week. No class.
8 May	Final Due at 1:00 PM (King's mailbox)

Some Guidelines

This 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.
- Create a safe environment for discussion. Think about 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. Listen to others. 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 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 feels or emotions do they evoke anger/sadness/laughter?
- 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.
- Assume the people we study and who comprise this learning community always do the best they can.
- Agree to question accepted understandings and challenge myths and stereotypes.
- Remember class discussions should not be about embarrassing, showing off, winning, losing. Our meetings rather should be about dialogue, self-reflection, and learning.
- Turn off. Tune in. Be Here Now. Before each class turn off your cellphone and other electronic devices. Stow your laptop.