

American Studies 507
Contemporary Practices in American Cultural Studies
Spring 2012

Instructor	Dr. David Leonard	E-mail	djl@wsu.edu
Phone	335-6854	Office Hours	MWF 9-10 and by appointment
Office	Wilson 117		

Introduction and Course Description

It has become rightly commonplace within academic circles to talk about race as a social construction,” refuting the commonly accepted definitions of race as either a genetic or cultural essentialist category that defines and limits a person’s identity. This course similarly looks to explores the ways in which race is socially constructed within the spheres of popular culture, the public square, other sites of cultural production. It examines how race and racial difference, along with the intersectional constructs of class, gender, sexuality, and nationality, is defined, practiced, perpetuated and resisted within these discursive and material spaces. Reflecting ideology, narrative and racialization, this course examines the ways in which cultural production impacts and is impacted by race, gender, sexuality, class, and nationality. In other words, we will reflect on how racial difference is represented within a myriad of cultural context? What similarities are evident across time and space? What is rendered invisible and what is given visibility what is the consequence of the production of meaning? These types of questions will guide our class discussions. While there will be a range of topics and readings for this class, the task here is to think about the interface between cultural discourses and racial meaning, focusing on inequality, representation, commodification, visibility/invisibility, “the Other,” etc.

Course Requirements

Attendance

You are expected to attend class every day, arrive on time, and participate in an informed and consistent manner. If you are absent from class, it is your responsibility to check on announcements made while you were away.

Participation (20%)

As a graduate course, this is your space to engage, discuss, and collectively analyze. I hope each and every class will elicit discussion, debate, and critical engagement. As such, in order for this class to be productive you will need to come to class each and every day prepared to discuss the material. This requires more than simply doing the reading (WHICH IS ESSENTIAL), but arriving at class with a readiness to discuss the issues for that day. Participating in class not only consists of talking, but also includes

listening (please do not talk while others are speaking), interacting with your peers, and contributing to our classroom energy.

There are three additional ways to enhance your participation grade and contribution to class:

- ☐ You can participate in course blog, where I will regularly post articles, information about authors read in class, including biography, twitter and blog information
- ☐ You can e-mail me comments or questions prior to class
- ☐ You can hand me a note at the beginning of class that asks specific questions (or relays comments)
- ☐ You can also enhance participation grade by reading academic blogs and commentaries, engage scholarly works, read daily newspapers in print or online and bringing the class's attention to relevant articles/developments

Participation Portion of grades based on following:

17-20 Points: Active participant in class in all regards; enhances and invigorates the class

13-17 Points: Participates and contributes regularly; does not push class conversations in new directions but often contributes

9-12 Points: Contributes on occasions but does so at basic level; engaged, but not active

5-8 Points: Rarely contributes, but present; shows limited effort and interest in class

2-4 Points: Does not contribute, but physically present for most part; brings little energy and generally demonstrates little interest or effort within class

0-1 Points: Detracts from overall success of class because of disinterest, disengagement, negative attitude, rudeness, non or disruptive/destructive participation, etc.

Facilitation and Discussion Preparation (20%)

In all but two cases, our classes will start class with a Skype conversation with the author or editor of that week's book. It will be your job to come up with 3-5 questions for that day's author/editor. You will also come up with 3-5 questions, which will guide the class in a post-Skype discussion. Each student will be responsible for two class meetings (2 x 10%).

Paper(s)

The primary focus for this class is a semester long project/paper. In an effort to foster skill development and emphasize the importance of communicating ideas, analysis, and argumentation in different contexts, you will be responsible for producing four installments of your project:

1. Abstract: In 50 words and in 200 words, describe your project and its principle argument
2. Popular Piece: Public scholarship represents an important facet of the academic profession. Spawned by social media and the power of the Internet, the ability to disseminate analysis and communicate to a myriad of audiences, public scholarship provides significant opportunities. Here, you are to write a 1,200-word essay on your topic. It should be analytically rich, but devoid of discursive pretense and jargon. Most importantly, it should convey the relevance and importance of the work
3. Conference paper/PowerPoint: Attending conferences, giving presentations, and classroom lectures are a primary area of focus for our profession. Yet, the skills required to be successful here are often ignored and underdeveloped. So often presentations of our research is little more than reading a shortened version of a paper. As such, with this installment, you will produce a PowerPoint presentation for your topic as if you were presenting at a conference. Focus on communicating ideas beyond the written text.
4. Final Paper: Each student will be required to write a critical, 20-25 page paper that builds on/engages existing scholarship. The basic requirements for this assignment are: (1) exploring an issue/concept/idea connected to those issues and topics raised within class; (2) offering an argument; (3) engaging and building upon existing scholarship. While it is desired that you build upon course themes, it is equally important to pick a topic that you are passionate about and one that benefits your overall graduate study.
Grading for the research paper will be based on its: CONTENT (clear argument, analysis, presentation of specifics/evidence, level of details, & uniqueness), QUALITY OF WRITING (grammar, punctuation, format, paragraphing, title, sentence variety), LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT WITH RELEVANT SCHOLARSHIP (You must demonstrate mastery and understanding of scholarship) and EFFORT.

Assignment Schedule

Due Date**	Assignment	Grade Value
TBA	Facilitation	20 points
January 30, 2012	Abstract	5 points
February 20, 2012	Popular Piece	15 points
March 26, 2012	Conference PowerPoint	15 points
May 3, 2010	Final Paper	25 points
Everyday	Participation	20 points

Grading Scale

100-93: A

92-90: A-

89-87: B+

86-83: B

82-80: B-

79-77: C+

76-73: C

72-70: C-

69-67: D+

60-69: D

59 and Below: F

Course Outline and Readings

January 9 – Introduction

January 16 – No class

January 23 – Michael Lacy and [Kent Ono](#), eds., *Critical Rhetorics of Race*, NYU Press (July 11, 2011)

January 30 – [Mark Anthony Neal](#), *Soul Babies: Black Popular Culture and the Post-Soul Aesthetic*, Routledge (March 1, 2002)

February 6 – [Amy Abugo Ongiri](#), *Spectacular Blackness: The Cultural Politics of the Black Power Movement and the Search for a Black Aesthetic*, University of Virginia Press (December 9, 2009)

February 13 – [Nicole Fleetwood](#), *Troubling Vision: Performance, Visuality, and Blackness*, University Of Chicago Press (January 30, 2011)

February 20 – No Class (We will meet February 21 with AMST 520 class)

February 21 @2:50 – [Jasbir Puar](#), *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*, Duke University Press Books (October 5, 2007) – Liz

February 27 – [Grace Kyungwon Hong](#) & [Roderick A. Ferguson](#), eds., *Strange Affinities: The Gender and Sexual Politics of Comparative Racialization*, Duke University Press Books (August 3, 2011) -

March 5 – [Catherine Ramirez](#), *The Woman in the Zoot Suit: Gender, Nationalism, and the Cultural Politics of Memory* Duke University Press Books (December 26, 2008) - Rebecca

March 12 – NO CLASS

March 19 – Jonathan Markovitz, *Racial Spectacles Explorations in Media, Race, and Justice*, Routledge (April 12, 2011) - Joseph

March 26 – [Priscilla Wald](#), *Contagious: Cultures, Carriers, and the Outbreak Narrative*, Duke University Press Books (December 19, 2007) – Jeremy

April 2 – [Ty P. Kāwika Tengan](#), *Native Men Remade: Gender and Nation in Contemporary Hawaii*, Duke University Press Books (September 29, 2008) - Cam

April 9 – [Anita Mannur](#), *Culinary Fictions: Food in South Asian Diasporic Culture*, Temple University Press (December 28, 2009) – Rahian

April 16 – [Ien Ang](#), *On Not Speaking Chinese: Living Between Asia and the West*, Routledge (December 23, 2001) – Liang

April 23 – [Josh Sides](#), *Erotic City: Sexual Revolutions and the Making of Modern San Francisco*, Oxford University (October 24, 2011) – Nichole

This syllabus and schedule are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances and shifts in class needs. If you are absent from class, it is your responsibility to check on announcements made in your absence.

Course Policies

While, we can certainly expand on these the following represents a few guidelines for our class:

- 1 READ, READ, READ
- 2 Arrive to class on time
- 3 Be respectful of others, in terms of engaging and listening to other's analysis, commentaries, points of discussion
- 4 Reflect on social location
- 5 Respect and understand rage
- 6 Don't be rude

Cheating

DON'T DO IT! What constitutes cheating: Turning in any work that is not yours and yours completely, which includes using a "cheat sheet," copying the answers from a peer, copying and pasting from a website, copying a friend's work, etc. If someone else said it, wrote it, thought it, etc. give them credit – DON'T STEAL THE INTELLECTUAL WORK OF OTHERS. Your failure to follow these basic instructions, to respect the classroom, to take the easy route, to be in the business of pretending to learn, think, analyze, and otherwise be a student, is not acceptable in any regard. What this means is that if you cheat, you will receive a "0" for that assignment and you will be reported to the Office of the Dean of Students. Any decision to violate the sanctity and purpose of the classroom leaves me with little choice in this regard. If you are unfamiliar with WSU policy regarding cheating and confused as to what constitutes cheating (plagiarism), please consult the Standards for Student Conduct found here:

<http://conduct.wsu.edu/default.asp?PageID=109>

Students with Disabilities

I am committed to providing assistance to help you be successful in this course. Reasonable accommodations are available for students with a documented disability. If you have a disability and may need accommodation to fully participate in this class, please visit the Disability Resource Center (DRC). All accommodations MUST be approved through the DRC, located Washington Building, Room 217. To make an appointment with a disability specialist, please call 335-3417.

Emergency Notification System:¹

WSU has made an **emergency notification system** available for faculty, students and staff. Please register at myWSU with emergency contact information (cell, email, text, etc). You may have been prompted to complete emergency contact information when registering for classes on ROnet. Please refer to the University emergency management website <http://oem.wsu.edu/emergencies> as well WSU ALERT <http://alert.wsu.edu> for information on WSU's communication resources WSU will use to provide warning and notification for emergencies. The entire WSU safety plan can be found at <http://safetyplan.wsu.edu>.

Primary Learning Outcomes

- Identify the ways in which public culture and popular culture contribute to the construction of race
- Ability to think through continuities of systems of oppression; understand systems of power and domination within and beyond the context of public culture and popular culture
- Identify the ways in race functions in a myriad of institutions
- Recognize and understand the dialects that exist between popular culture, cultural/material discourse and identity formation
- Recognize and understand the ways in popular culture exists as space of pedagogical instruction
- Articulate the ways in which community, members, scholars, artists, and activists resist assimilation, demonization, and racism
- Understand the ways in which injustice and inequality operate within a myriad of institutions
- Develop skills related to the dissemination and production of knowledge

¹ From T & L 589 syllabus of Dr. Paula Groves Price