

## **Cultural Theory Course Syllabus**

Arizona State University  
Spring 2008 (JUS 591 / 691)  
Line Numbers: 12175, 12182  
College of Design, South, Rm.147  
Mondays, 5:40 - 8:30 PM

### **Instructor**

Dr. Torin Monahan  
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Office Hours: M 4:00 -5:00pm & by appt.

### **Course Description**

This graduate seminar will serve as an advanced introduction to contemporary cultural theory. Drawing upon the fields of anthropology, American studies, literary criticism, philosophy, cultural studies, and science and technology studies, it will investigate problems of modernity and the limits of our theoretical understandings of social problems. The orientation for seminar discussions and assignments will be a focus on the applicability of cultural theory for engaging with the complexity of local and global conflicts and cultural differences. Seminar participants will be expected to conduct close readings of dense theoretical texts and work to connect those texts to their own research interests.

### **Grading**

Participation	40%
4 “Critical Reaction” Essays	60%

### **Course Expectations**

*Attendance:* This class will be conducted as a seminar with a focus on in-class discussion. Because of this format, you are expected to attend all classes for the full scheduled time. Excessive tardiness will be counted as an absence. Provided you hand in all due materials on time, you can miss 1 class throughout the semester without penalty. Please let me know in advance if you are planning on missing a class.

*Reading:* **Complete all readings (and other assignments) prior to the class meeting for which they are scheduled.** In addition to the required books for the course, several photocopied readings or PDF documents will be made available for you. See the course outline below for details.

*Participation:* Through communication ideas are formed, revised, borrowed, and developed. It is through argument, description, explanation, and improvisation – within a community – that individual learning flourishes. This course requires full participation (including active listening,

facilitating, note-taking, and question-asking) to create an environment of open and shared learning.

We will have weekly common readings around which we will focus our discussion. Each class meeting will begin with some contextual background provided by me and then proceed to a brief summary of the arguments made in the reading (presented by one or more seminar participants). Next, we will generate an in-depth critique of the arguments and then pursue questions sparked by the reading or discussion – as guided by the overarching course goals. Each student should prepare for these steps in advance of the seminar meeting.

*Writing:* There will be four “critical reaction” essays (6-7 pages) that explore arguments made in the texts. The essays focus on critical analysis of the reading for two or more weeks, aiming at comparison and integration across texts, leading to the development of a clear normative position on your part. The four essays are due on the following dates: (1) February 4; (2) February 25; (3) March 24; (4) April 28. **No late writing assignments will be accepted.**

### **Academic Honesty**

In order to avoid plagiarism, your papers must provide full citations for all references: direct quotes, summaries, or ideas. While you are encouraged to develop your thinking with your peers, you cannot use their material without citing it. Work from other courses will not be accepted in this course. Allowing your writing to be copied by another student is also considered cheating. Please review the Student Code of Conduct for complete guidelines on academic honesty. Note: Any instance of plagiarism or cheating can be grounds for failure of the entire course or expulsion from the university.

### **Gender-Fair Language**

Language structures thought and action. Biases in language can (and do) naturalize inequities. Imprecise language also signifies un-interrogated values and sloppy thinking. For all of these reasons, the use of gender-fair language is expected in this course. For example, do not use words like “mankind” or “men” when referring to people in general; alternate between “she” and “he” instead of always using “he”, or construct sentences in the plural instead of the singular so you can use “they” or “them” and avoid the problem altogether.

### **ESL/LD Students**

Course requirements can be adjusted to serve the needs and capabilities of ESL and LD students. Please speak with me during the first two weeks of class to make arrangements. Students may be advised to attend additional sessions during my office hours so they can draw comparable value from the course.

## **Required Texts**

Butler, Judith. 1993. *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*. New York: Routledge.

Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. 1987. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translated by B. Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Derrida, Jacques. 1988. *Limited Inc.* Translated by S. Weber, and Jeffrey Mehlman. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Felman, Shoshana. 2002. *The Juridical Unconscious: Trials and Traumas in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Fortun, Michael, and Herbert J. Bernstein. 1998. *Muddling Through: Pursuing Science and Truths in the 21st Century*. Washington, DC: Counterpoint.

Foucault, Michel. 1990. *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*. Vol. 1. New York: Vintage.

Lyotard, Jean-François. 1979. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Translated by G. Bennington, and Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Mills, Charles W. 1997. *The Racial Contract*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Rose, Nikolas S. 1999. *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Stoler, Ann Laura. 1995. *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Žižek, Slavoj. 1999. *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. London ; New York: Verso.

## **Recommended Texts**

Edgar, Andrew, and Peter Sedgwick. 2007. *Cultural Theory: The Key Concepts*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. New York: Routledge.

Hall, Stuart. 1997. *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London: Sage.

## Course Schedule (subject to revision)

January 14: Course Introduction

Readings:

- Hall, Stuart. 1997. *Representation*. pp.1-74. (PDF available)
- Kneale & Plug. 2004. Deconstruction. *Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism*. pp.235-247. (PDF available)
- Geertz, Clifford. 2005. Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight. *Daedalus* 134(4): 56-86. (PDF available)

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January 21: Martin Luther King Day (no class meeting)

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January 28:

Readings:

- Lyotard, Jean-François. 1979. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Translated by G. Bennington, and Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Jameson, Fredric. 1984. Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism. *New Left Review* 146: 53-92. (PDF available)

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February 4:

Readings:

- Foucault, Michel. 1990. *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*. Vol. 1. New York: Vintage.
- Deleuze, Gilles. 1988. Strategies of the non-stratified. *Foucault*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp.70-93. (PDF available)

Assignment:

- **1<sup>st</sup> Critical Reaction essay due.**

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February 11:

Readings:

- Stoler, Ann Laura. 1995. *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things*. Durham: Duke University Press.

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February 18:

Readings:

- Rose, Nikolas S. 1999. *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Ticktin, Miriam. 2005. Policing and Humanitarianism in France: Immigration and the Turn to Law as State of Exception. *Interventions* 7(3): 347-368. (PDF available)

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February 25:

Readings:

- Derrida, Jacques. 1988. *Limited Inc.* Translated by S. Weber, and Jeffrey Mehlman. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Assignment:

- **2<sup>nd</sup> Critical Reaction essay due.**
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March 3:

Readings:

- Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. 1987. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translated by B. Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
  - Jardine, Alice. 1984. Woman in Limbo: Deleuze and his Br(others). *SubStance* 13(3/4): 46-60. (PDF available)
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March 10: Spring Break (no class meeting)

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March 17:

Readings:

- Felman, Shoshana. 2002. *The Juridical Unconscious: Trials and Traumas in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
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March 24:

Readings:

- Žižek, Slavoj. 1999. *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. London ; New York: Verso.

Assignment:

- **3<sup>rd</sup> Critical Reaction essay due.**
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March 31: UK surveillance conference (no class meeting)

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April 7:

Readings:

- Mills, Charles W. 1997. *The Racial Contract*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
  - Smith, Barbara Hernstein. 1991. Matters of Consequence. *Contingencies of Value*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, pp.150-184. (PDF available)
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April 14:

Readings:

- Bordo, Susan. 2001. Selections from *The Flight to Objectivity*. In *The Gender and Science Reader*, edited by M. Lederman and I. Bartsch. London: Routledge, 82-97. (PDF available)
- Fausto-Sterling, Anne. 2001. Gender, Race, and Nation. In *The Gender and Science Reader*, edited by M. Lederman and I. Bartsch. London: Routledge, 343-366. (PDF available)
- Haraway, Donna. 1989. Teddy Bear Patriarchy. *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science*. New York: Routledge, 26-58. (PDF available)
- Latour, Bruno. 1983. Give Me a Laboratory and I will Raise the World. In *Science Observed: Perspectives on the Social Studies of Science*, edited by K. D. Knorr-Cetina and D. Mulkay. Beverly Hills: Sage, 141-170. (PDF available)

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April 21:

Readings:

- Fortun, Michael, and Herbert J. Bernstein. 1998. *Muddling Through: Pursuing Science and Truths in the 21st Century*. Washington, DC: Counterpoint.

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April 28: Last Day of Classes

Readings:

- Butler, Judith. 1993. *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*. New York: Routledge.

Assignment:

- **4<sup>th</sup> Critical Reaction essay due.**