Cultural Studies and Cultural Production
Ethnic Studies 240: Multidisciplinary Research in Ethnic Studies
Winter 2009
Mondays 1:00-3:50 p.m., Social Sciences Building 253
Holiday makeup class #1: Fri 1/23 12:30-3 pm
Holiday makeup class #2: Wed 2/18 1-3 pm

Description

It is hardly appropriate to have a methods course on cultural studies, because of its interdisciplinary nature and its rejection of entrenchment in its own ‘traditions’, and because of the sheer volume and diversity of efforts on this topic that resist encapsulation by a 10-week course. Furthermore, cultural studies is not a unified field, but rather a problem-posing arena of study that has been characterized by important historical breaks in directions and methods of inquiry, which are themselves spatially and temporally specific to eras and political places. For example, one could speak of the Birmingham school of cultural studies, U.S. cultural studies, and Latin American cultural studies, to name a few movements, as well as the disjunctures within these movements.

This course pushes in some directions that are perhaps particular to ethnic studies at UCSD, and certainly to the biases of this instructor. Specifically, the course is organized around 5 analyses: representations, absences, space & time, interactions, and affect. Our aim is to go beyond the study of media representations and critiques of hegemony towards the less studied aspects of ‘culture’ in cultural studies such as interaction, the question of praxis in cultural work, and counter-hegemony. In this respect, this course is heavily weighted towards the work of Stuart Hall especially with respect to his readings of Antonio Gramsci. Centered in this discussion is ‘popular culture’ as a key theoretical and political concern.

As such, this course is highly limited it what it can accomplish. So to be transparent, here are some things I expect to accomplish and some gaps that I have accepted in the design of this syllabus.

What you will not leave the course with:
1) An expertise on any particular movement in cultural studies.
2) Any specific set of tools for literary, art, or film analysis.
3) Any guarantee that other people will acknowledge your work as cultural studies.

What you will leave the course with:
1) Some modest framework on popular culture as a site for social action.
2) An ability to map a few movements in cultural studies, at least partially.
3) Several of your own in-depth analyses of culturally specific events, artifacts, problems that are generative of theory, through some analytic exercises in: representations, absences, space & time, interactions, and affect.

4) Amateurism – a thus a drive to learn interdisciplinary methods towards developing your own methodology.

Requirements

Broad goals
- Students will produce several written analyses of data of their choice, and through these, experiment with different techniques of analysis. [5 analyses]
- Students will be able to pass a qualifying exam on cultural studies. [weekly responses and final exam]
- Students will begin to articulate a vision for their own work, specifically its significance practically, theoretically, and methodologically. [analyses and final exam]

Due in class each week – 90%
1. Always bring the readings for the current week and the next week to class.
2. Response papers: You will always have 2 short papers to write each week, responding to the readings. I will give you the prompt for those papers in class. On weeks in which you are presenting data (#3 below), you only have to submit 1 response paper.
3. Data Analysis: Every other week you will be responsible for bringing data and an analysis of it for crit – for a total of 5 analyses. I will give you some guidelines for these analyses in class. Your propositions should stretch your data even if you stretch so hard that it breaks. The resulting gaps should inform a research project.

Final Exam – 10%
In lieu of a research paper, you will submit a 2-part final exam of totaling 10 pages. Part 1 will resemble a qualifying exam question that will ask you to connect cultural studies with ethnic studies. In part 2, you will articulate a possible vision for your own research and what it might ‘do’ practically, theoretically and methodologically.

A note about workload
This course has an extremely heavy workload because in conjunction with readings, students will be presenting data & analyses for discussion.

A note about attendance
I expect perfect attendance. Although I have no strict attendance ‘scoring’ rules for the purpose of grades, more than 1 absence will likely result in not passing.
Readings

The readings are centered around 3 questions: What is cultural studies? Why perform cultural studies? How might we practice cultural studies? For the purpose of our class discussions I have forced the readings to fit into three categories: What (understanding movements in cultural studies), Why (culture as a site of inquiry and political action), and How (model studies).

All readings will be provided electronically on WebCT, with the exception of those listed below. I recommend that you download/print ALL the readings in the first week of the quarter.

- Beloved [videorecording] / [presented by Touchstone Pictures] ; Harpo Films ; screenplay by Akosua Busia and Richard La Gravenese and Adam Brooks ; produced by Edward Saxon ... [et al.] ; directed by Jonathan Demme or

and

- Avery Gordon.1997. “not only the footprints but the water too and what is down there.” Chapter 4 in Ghostly matters: Haunting and the sociological imagination, pp.137-190.

Calendar

Week 1: The problems of (a course on) methods in cultural studies

Week 2: Representations: Texts and their Contexts

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### Week 3 – Representations: Texts and their Contexts

**Remember: Class time is rescheduled this week because of the holiday**

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### Week 4 – Absences, Silences, Ghosts, and Hauntings

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<td>Beloved [film] and/or [book]</td>
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<td>Avery Gordon, “not only the footprints but the water too and what is down there.” Chapter 4 in <em>Ghostly matters: Haunting and the sociological imagination, pp.137-190.</em></td>
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### Week 5 – Absences, Silences, Ghosts, and Hauntings

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### Week 6 – Space and Time: Geographies of subjugation, subjectivity and resistance

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Week 7 – Space and Time: Geographies of subjugation, subjectivity and resistance

******Remember: Class time is rescheduled this week because of the holiday******


Data analysis:

Week 8 – Interaction, interpellation, and counterhegemony


Why: Judith Butler. “Gender is buring: question of appropriation and subversion.” Ch.4 in Bodies that matter.


Data analysis:

Week 9 – Interaction, interpellation, and counterhegemony


Data analysis:

Week 10 – Affect and other uncomfortable questions


How: TBD

Data analysis: