

# ES 185: Discourse, Power & Inequality

Fall 2013

Professor: Kalindi Vora

T. 12:30-3:20, Cross Cultural Center Art Space

Office Hours: SSB 221, T. 11:30-12:20  
& CCC 3:20-3:50  
(sign-up at office) and by appointment

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## Course Description:

What is discourse? How does discourse serve to distribute relative privilege, power, advantage and disadvantage in U.S. society and internationally? This course explores the role of institutional discourses (e.g. medical clinics, schools, churches, the state, the family), and other social discourses (race, gender, nationality, sexuality) in shaping common sense ideas about nations, social movements, social groups, and identities. We will examine discourses through critical analysis of social contexts ranging from global and national media to political rhetoric and everyday language. The goal of this course is for students to develop the analytical skills to critically “read” discourses and analyze how they operate and how they are resisted, applying this knowledge to their own political and intellectual projects.

## Required texts and other materials:

All course readings will be available on E-res (password is **kv185**) and TED unless otherwise indicated. Films will be put on reserve at the library. Other media will only be available in lecture. Always bring your readings to class, particularly the readings for the current and past week.

## Assignments and Evaluation:

Students are expected to complete the readings for each course meeting before they attend that class. Late assignments will not be accepted, and all assignments must be submitted in hard copy. Students will be assigned to working groups at the end of week three. These groups are a space to develop and workshop ideas for the final project.

**1) Weekly Journal:** Beginning Week 2: these 1-page, double-spaced responses to readings, lecture and course media should be edited for grammar and spelling and submitted via WebCT before Tuesday’s lecture each week (content: a brief question or observation based on readings with some initial discussion, an important quote with your explanation, or connecting your analysis of the reading to current events or media outside of class). We will discuss these questions and comments during Thursday lecture. You will also submit these weekly writings together as a portfolio with your final project. Failure to submit these each week will affect your participation grade.

### **2) Analytical Project**

Using an example from your own life history, analyze how a given assumption about the world (belief, attitude, value, or a “common sense” idea) that others do not share came to be a part

of your consciousness. What are the social sources of your assumption? What influenced your acceptance of it? What ideas, beliefs, stories or feelings were displaced in this process? Do this project using the language of the course (ideology, discourse, representation, socialization, norms, hegemony, etc.).

**3) Proposal for final project (800 words):** Propose the medium and organization for your final project, as well as the arguments and evidence you will present and the sources you will use. This proposal will also help you with the write-up component of your final project.

**4) Final project and presentation:** A visual media project or written project that analyzes how a dominant discourse promotes inequality and provides a counter-narrative. Short presentations of your final project will be scheduled during week 10, and the project itself is due during our assigned exam time. Collaborative projects are possible with prior approval. If collaborative, you must include a report of task division, and time needs to be 50/50.

Choose One:

**a. Research paper (1250-1500 words):** This paper should present one case of a dominant discourse and a counter-narrative against it. Using course concepts and course readings, the paper should argue how this discourse has become dominant and participated in creating unequal social conditions. It should then analyze at least one counternarrative and explain how it works against the dominant discourse.

**b. Visual media project: Media+write up (800 words).** Using the medium of your choice, you should create a project that provides a critique of a mainstream discourse that promotes social inequality based on course readings and media, and advances a counter-discourse. Media possibilities: photo essay, short experimental video, culture jamming/creative anti-advertisements, tumblr or blog including images, short documentary. Other media form may be with my approval. Write-up will use course readings and concepts to explain the argument made by your media project.

**Discussion/Participation: Attendance is mandatory.** Arrive on time. More than 2 excused absences will be grounds for failure. Media screened and analyzed in class will often only be available in class, and discussion is central to the course. For this reason, participation constitutes a significant percentage of student evaluation. Three pop quizzes will be given during the quarter to make sure people are completing the reading, and along with attendance and discussion, will contribute to your participation grade.

Percentages and Grades:

20%- Analytical Project

20%- Participation

20%- Final project proposal

40%-Final project and portfolio

Email policy: I do not respond to email unless it is urgent/an emergency (I check at 9 am and 4 pm). Contact me by phone, or speak to me before and after lecture or in office hours.

Electronic Devices policy: No wireless connection in class-laptops for note-taking only.

**Majoring or Minor in Ethnic Studies at UCSD**

Many students take an ethnic studies course because the topic is of great interest or because of a need to fulfill a social science, non-contiguous, or other college requirement. Often

students have taken three or four classes out of “interest” yet have no information about the major or minor and don’t realize how close they are to a major, a minor, or even a double major. An ethnic studies major is excellent preparation for a career in medicine, law, public policy, government and politics, journalism, education, public health, social work, international relations, and many other careers. If you would like information about the ethnic studies major or minor at UCSD, please contact Daisy Rodriguez, Ethnic Studies Department Undergraduate Advisor, at 858-534-3277 or [d1rodriguez@ucsd.edu](mailto:d1rodriguez@ucsd.edu).

## **Course Schedule**

### **Week 1: Introduction to basic concepts: sign, discourse, interpellation, culture**

10/1: Course Introduction, Working Group Assignments  
 Readings: Raymond Williams Keywords: “Popular,” and “Culture”  
 Screening: Stuart Hall Representation and the Media (55 min)

### **Week 2: Semiotics and Ideology**

10/8: Readings: 1) Ferdinand de Saussure. "Nature of the linguistic sign." 2) Mieke Bal, "Semiotics for Beginners." 3) Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses."  
 Screening: Cultural Criticism and Transformation, featuring and directed by bell hooks.  
 Screening: *Culture Jamming*  
 Assign working groups

### **Week 3: Power/Knowledge and Discourse**

10/15: Michel Foucault. "The Body of the Condemned" (Pg. 3-8) & "Panopticism" Pg. 195-228. From *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*.  
 bell hooks. "The Oppositional Gaze" in *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. South End Press, 1999. (115-132).

### **Week 4: Race, Stereotyping and Representational Politics**

#### **\*Analytical Project Due Tuesday 4/23**

10/22 Readings 1) Stuart Hall: "Stereotyping as Signifying Practice." pp. 257-268; 2) Junaid Rana: "Islam and Racism." 25-49; 3) Rana: Racial Panic, Islamic Peril, and Terror 50-71 and 4) Rana: "Imperial Targets." 74-93

### **Week 5: Colonial and Decolonial Discourse**

10/29: 1) Albert Memmi. "Portrait of the Colonized" from *The Colonizer and the Colonized*. 2) Daphne Taylor-Garcia. "The Discursive Construction of 'Women' in Las Americas." I-VII. (<http://people.duke.edu/~wmignolo/links-of-interest/WKODTG/WKO-DTGindex.html>). 3) Coco Fusco. 1994 "The Other History of Intercultural Performance."  
 Screening: *The Couple in the Cage: A Guatanaui Odyssey*

### **Week 6: Representation and Subalterneity**

11/5: Gayatri Spivak. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (read it twice). Pp. 2197-2207;

2) Curtis Marez. "Subaltern Soundtracks: Mexican Immigrants and the Making of Hollywood Cinema." pp. 57-82.

Screening and discussion: *Free Land*, Minda Martin

### **Week 7: Race, Gender and Sexuality in Science**

#### **\*Final project Proposal Due Tuesday 5/7**

11/12: 1) D'Archangelis, da Costa, Phillip. "Interview with Richard Lewontin." From *Tactical Biopolitics*. 2) Carol Stabile. "Shooting the Mother: Fetal photography and the politics of disappearance." 3) Kim Tallbear. "DNA, Blood and Racializing the Tribe." pp. 81-107. 2) (Multiple Authors). "News Focus: Science and Native Rights." *Science*. October 8, 2010. pp. 166-172. 4) Jenny Reardon, "Race and Biology: Beyond the Perpetual Return of Crisis." 373-377.

Screening: *TBA*

### **Week 8: 11/19 Class Cancelled**

### **Week 9: Counter-narratives**

11/26: Jose Munoz. "Performing Disidentifications." Pp. 1-36. 2) Sherry Ortner, "Towards a Feminist, minority, postcolonial, subaltern, etc. Theory of Practice." Pp. 1-20.

Student presentations

### **Week 10: Counter-narratives production**

12/4: Student presentations

**Final Project due: Friday December 13<sup>th</sup>, 11:30**