

UC San Diego | Dept. of Ethnic Studies
ETHN 120: Race & Performance: The Politics of Popular Culture
Spring 2018 | Instructor: M. Hidalgo, Ph.D.
MWF 2-2:50pm in Warren Lecture Hall (WLH) 2115

Email: mhidalgo@ucsd.edu

Office Hours: MW 12:45-1:45pm + by Skype appt.; please email at least 24 hours in advance to schedule office hours visit

Office Hours Location: The Loft (Price Center)

Ethnic Studies Office Mailbox: Social Science Building (SSB), 2nd floor

Dear Students,

Welcome to this section of ETHN 120, “Race & Performance: The Politics of Popular Culture.” My name is Melissa Hidalgo—you can call me “Profe Hidalgo” or “professor” or “Dr. Hidalgo”—and I’m your instructor. We’re going to have fun and think hard about serious things by studying films, stand up comedies, music videos, television shows, critical theories about all of these cultural products, and much more that comprises what we know as “popular culture.” Let’s get started.

Consider this letter the course Syllabus. The bullet points below contain the classroom procedures, policies, and other important ‘ground rules’ for our class. I’ve linked important University policies and procedures in our TritonEd pages. Please review those pages, particularly the parts about cheating (don’t do it!), student conduct, and campus emergencies.

- First things first. This **course explores** the ways in which racial categories and ideologies are constructed and simultaneously contested and critiqued through contemporary and current performance and production of popular culture. **We take as our starting point the premise that no meaningful study of popular culture can happen apart from examining its critical convergence with gender, race, nation/citizenship, sexuality, and class formations.** We will examine how through acts of representation, bodies are objectified, racialized and stereotyped, cultures appropriated and histories erased. At the same time, we will also look at how racialized and gendered subjects can use performance to enter social and political arenas. Historically disenfranchised communities in particular use popular culture to address, contest, and attempt to transform the social and material conditions of gender-based oppressions, racism, misogyny, trans and queer-phobias, class-based inequalities, and other institutional violences. **Our exploration, then, is not simply a “race-and-gender-tour” of pop culture, but rather a contextually-based critical evaluation.** We will consider both mainstream and subterranean popular cultural practices, productions, and embodiments in mediums such as film, music, performance, television, cyberspace, and visual texts. The central goal of this course is to teach students how to critically examine both everyday acts of performance and formal staged productions as important sites of knowledge production in the US and beyond.
- While you will **not have to purchase books** for this class, you **will have to have access to streaming services** (Netflix, Amazon, Hulu, Tidal, iTunes, etc.) in order **watch these films/shows online.** Please make arrangements. The following is required viewing material:

- 1) Beyoncé: *Lemonade* (2016) (film and album)
- 2) Ali Wong, *Baby Cobra* (Netflix, 2016) (stand-up comedy)
- 3) *Selena* (dir. Gregory Nava, 1997) (biopic)
- 4) *Moonlight* (dir. Barry Jenkins, 2016) (narrative film)
- 5) *Ugly Delicious* and *Nailed It!* (Netflix, 2018) (food/cooking shows)
- 6) Other required music videos, films, television series, and other material will be linked on TritonEd or screened in class.

Occasionally, you will have to **access e-books** available through **UCSD Library** online (simply search Roger). Some of these include (but are not limited to):

- 1) Mark Padoongpatt, *Flavors of Empire: Food and the Making of Thai America* (UC Press, 2017)
- 2) Deborah Paredez, *Selenidad: Selena, Latinos, and the Performance of Memory* (Duke, 2009)
- 3) bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (1992/2015)
- 4) Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler, eds. *Keywords for American Cultural Studies* (NYU Press, 2014) (a.k.a. “KWACS”)

All other **required reading** will be posted as PDFs or weblinks on TritonEd under “Content.”

- Speaking of **notetaking**: please refrain from using laptop computers and handheld devices for notetaking in this class. Studies show that students retain more information when they are required to listen and pay attention to lectures and discussion and write down pertinent information. Plus, I find the tapping of a keyboard distracting. Bring your text, a notebook, and pen/pencil for the work we’ll do together. If you have a documented requirement for other accommodations, please see me.
- Also, please **stow away your phones** and other iDevices, and refrain from surfing the web, checking/responding to emails, texting, and other non-course-related uses of electronic devices while in class—I see you! Phone-peeking/tapping not good for your participation grade.
- Starting Week 2, my **office hours** are MW 12:45-1:45pm at The Loft (Price Center). If you’d like to see me in office hours, please **email me at least 24 hours ahead of time to schedule an appointment**. If you have a schedule conflict and cannot make my regular OH (and also because I don’t live locally and I’m only on campus on the days I teach), I also offer Skype sessions (24-hr email notice also applies).
- When emailing me, please include the course number, your name, and a **clear subject** in the subject line. Practice **good email etiquette** by including an **appropriate address** (for example, “Dear Professor Hidalgo,” or “Hello, Professor”) and a clearly conveyed message. If you begin your email with “hey” or write to me like ur texting ur bff (wtf!) or posting on IG, I will #not reply to u.
- In order to **pass this class**, all students must complete and submit the following **graded assignments**: 1) two response papers (20 pts); 2) final group project (20 pts); midterm quiz (15 pts); final written assignment (20 pts); and homework, short ‘pop’ quizzes and other assignments (15 pts). Attendance and participation are worth 10 points, for a grand total of

100 possible points for the class. For each assignment, I will post a handout detailing requirements, criteria, due dates, and other information.

- Because lots can happen in 10 weeks, timelines and material are **subject to change**. If I do make changes, I will announce it in class and post it on TritonEd; I will also update the syllabus to reflect these changes. It is your responsibility to keep up with any changes to our game plan.
- **As for attendance, everyone gets one 'freebie' absence.** You don't have to explain to me your 'freebie.' After your one 'freebie,' I will deduct one participation/attendance point for every absence thereafter, unless you have a documented excuse. If you have a situation or emergency that comes up or will otherwise impact your participation in this class, please let me know sooner rather than later to discuss your options.
- **Good attendance also means arriving on time!** I value our limited classroom time together, and I would hope you all do, too. Constant tardiness (or leaving early) is just as harmful to your grade as missing class, and in small classrooms like ours, it's especially disruptive. Since our class meets only for 50 minutes, if you plan to be more than **20 minutes late**, please note that you will be **marked absent**.
- In this class, there are many ways to earn **participation** points. Regular involvement in **class discussion** and **group participation** in activities are usually the most common. When you do say something in class, make sure it's a contribution: ground your insights, questions, and comments in the course materials; engage with your classmates in productive ways that advance or expand the conversation. **Stay on topic**. If you are a shy person and do not feel as comfortable as others speaking in class, you can make up for this by seeing me in **office hours** for a chat, which also counts toward participation. You may also **email** me your questions or observations about the readings or lectures; **post questions** or comments for your classmates on TritonEd discussion boards; or bring something to **'share' in class** and connect to the material; etc.
- There are many UCSD campus policies governing **student conduct**, and we ask that everyone adhere to the university's expectations for student conduct. Ethnic slurs, anti-immigrant, classist, racist, sexist and homophobic remarks, and religious diatribes/hate speech will not be acceptable commentary for this course, and appropriate action will be taken if these things occur. Students will be held to the university-wide policies established for Student Conduct.
- **Want to major (or minor) in Ethnic Studies?** 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 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

Mónica Rodríguez de Cabaza, our Ethnic Studies Undergraduate Advisor, at 858-534-3277 or ethnicstudies@ucsd.edu

If you have any questions about any of the above, please let me know. I encourage your active participation and inquiries. As your instructor, my main goals for this class are threefold: 1) to present a compelling variety of texts that engage you in thoughtful analysis of “race, performance, and the politics of popular culture”; 2) to expand your critical thinking, writing, and communication skills; and 3) to give you some tools for understanding how popular cultural expressions emerge and are informed and become meaningful by the historical and contemporary contexts in which they arise.

Looking forward to a fun, engaging, and enriching quarter for us all.

-profe mhidalgo.

COURSE READING AND ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

Complete all reading and assignments before the day they are listed.

<p style="text-align: center;">UNIT 1. “Race,” “Performance,” and “Popular Culture”: Defining terms, establishing contexts, and setting the stage for our studies</p>
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Week 1

- M 4/2 First day. Course introduction. “What is popular culture? Why study it?”
- W 4/4 Course overview: *Nailed It!* (Netflix) clip + unpacking pop culture. (slides)
- F 4/6** **VIEW:** bell hooks, *Cultural Criticism and Transformation* (61 mins.) (dir. S. Jhally, 1997).
READ: Rod Ferguson, “Race,” George Yúdice, “Culture,” and Susan Manning, “Performance,” in *Keywords for American Cultural Studies* (2014).
Note: class will not meet today; instead, watch the documentary above online, available on Kanopy streaming (UCSD library), AND read the above entries above in *KWACS* (access online UCSB e-book) for MW next week.

Week 2

- M 4/9 Discuss: hooks, *Cultural Criticism and Transformation*; “Race” and “Performance” (*KWACS*)
- W 4/11 **READ:** G. Lipsitz, “Popular Culture: This Ain’t No Sideshow” (1990); “Culture”

- F 4/13** **VIEW:** *Beyoncé: Lemonade* (2016) (on Tidal or iTunes; full visual album)
READ: Hilton Als, “Beywatch: Beyoncé’s reformation” (*New York Magazine*) + links to related material on TritonEd

UNIT 2. <i>Lemonade and Moonlight:</i> Two examples of black, queer, fierce, & feminist cultural production
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Week 3

- M 4/16 Beyoncé, *Lemonade*
- W 4/18 *Lemonade* + bell hooks, “Moving Beyond Pain” (2016) + selections from *Black Looks*
- F 4/20** **VIEW:** *Moonlight* (1 hr, 50 mins; 2016)
READ: Selected critical readings on *Moonlight*

Week 4

- M 4/23 *Moonlight*
- W 4/25 *Moonlight* + selected critical readings
- F 4/27** **MIDTERM QUIZ** (upload to TritonEd by midnight tonight); ALSO:
VIEW: Margaret Cho, *I’m the One That I Want* (1 hr, 46 min; 2000) and Ali Wong, *Baby Cobra* (1 hr; 2016). Cho is linked on TritonEd; Wong is on Netflix.

UNIT 3. Comedy as Resistance: Margaret Cho & Ali Wong Asian American Representation in Millennial Hollywood
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Week 5

- M 4/30 Margaret Cho, *I’m the One That I Want* and Ali Wong, *Baby Cobra*
- W 5/2 **READ:** Lee, “Introduction: Yellowface” (in *Orientalism: Asian Americans in Popular Culture*, Temple UP 1999) + selected writings on Cho and Wong
- F 5/4** **DUE: Response Paper 1.** (upload to TritonEd by midnight tonight)

UNIT 4.
Performing Tejanas: Femininity, Queerness, Race and Class in *La Angry Xicana* and *Selena*

Week 6

- M 5/7 In-class screening: Adelina Anthony, *La Angry Xicana?! (2011)*
- W 5/9 Queer chicana performance: Adelina Anthony (selected readings)
- F 5/11** **VIEW:** *Selena* (2 hrs, 7 mins) + clips of Selena's live performances
READ: Paredez, *Selenidad* (e-book; selected chapters)

Week 7

- M 5/14 *Selena* (dir. G. Nava, 1997)
- W 5/16 Paredez, *Selenidad* + additional critical reading
- F 5/18** **DUE: Response Paper 2.** (upload to TritonEd by midnight tonight) **ALSO:**
VIEW: Selected episodes of *Ugly Delicious* and *Nailed It!* (Netflix, 2018)

UNIT 5.
Eat This! Race, Gender & Performance on Netflix Cooking Shows *Ugly Delicious* and *Nailed It!*

Week 8

- M 5/21 *Ugly Delicious & Nailed It!*
- W 5/23 **READ:** Padoongpatt, *Flavors of Empire* + selected reviews of UD & NI!
- F 5/25** **What's your part? Planning your group presentations.** (assignment on T'ed)

Week 9

- M 5/28 MEMORIAL DAY HOLIDAY. CAMPUS CLOSED.
- W 5/30 In-class group meetings for presentations
- F 6/1** **TBD**

Week 10

- M 6/4 **Group Presentations.**
- W 6/6 **Group Presentations.** Final class meeting.

F 6/8 Work on final written assignment. Skype conferences?

FINALS WEEK

W 6/13 **Final written assignment due; upload to TritonEd by midnight tonight.**

~~~~WANT/NEED EXTRA CREDIT?

^^^^^^^^^Earn up to 5 points. Ask me how.