

LT351 Contemporary Cultural Theory: Comparative Approaches to Race, Class and Gender

Seminar Leader: Kathy-Ann Tan

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Office Hours: online, by appointment

Module: Theories of Literature and Culture

Credits: 8 ECTS, 4 U.S. credits

Course Times: Fridays, 9:00-12:15 CET

This course is being offered as an OSUN online course and will include students joining from other OSUN universities.

Course Description

In this class, students will be familiarized with comparative approaches in contemporary cultural theory that engage with the central issues of representation and discourse, memory, race, class and gender. By reading the seminal writings of American and continental European thinkers such as Judith Butler, Stuart Hall, Lauren Berlant, Audre Lorde and Sylvia Wynter, we will cover the major concepts relevant to an exploration of cultural texts, narratives and discourses. Our discussion of the theoretical texts within a comparative framework will reflect and facilitate the adoption of a broader transnational approach to contemporary cultural theory.

All reading material will be collected in a course reader, handed out as xeroxes, and/or will be made available on-line.

The course reader will be available at the beginning of the semester.

Requirements

Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the highest standards of academic integrity and expects students to adhere to these standards at all times. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

Attendance

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, two absences from twice-per-week courses or the equivalent (e.g. one absence from a once-per-week course) should not affect the participation grade or require documentation.

Bard College Berlin does not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR SPRING 2022: Some students may need to begin the semester remotely due to travel restrictions caused by the pandemic. In addition, all students and instructors must refrain from in-person attendance if they are feeling ill. Instructors should make efforts to offer alternatives to in-person attendance where needed, including remote participation or asynchronous options.

Assessment and Grade Breakdown:

Class Participation: 30%

Mid-term essay: 30%

Final Essay: 40%

Assignments

This course has two essay assignments: one mid-semester and one end of semester essay (5000 – 7000 words in total). It also has informal assignments, including giving presentations on readings and writing reading responses and/or discussion questions in advance of seminar meetings. Since this is a seminar, active and informed participation in class is a required and graded element of the course.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

Essays that are up to 24 hours late can be downgraded up to one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where an instructor agrees to accept a late essay, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment. Grades and comments will be returned to students in a timely fashion. Students are also entitled to make an appointment to discuss essay assignments and feedback during instructors' office hours.

Students receive mid- and end-of-semester grades for their seminar work. Students are entitled to make an appointment with an instructor to discuss seminar participation, or may be asked to meet with the instructor at any stage in the semester regarding class progress.

Essay Deadlines

Midterm essay: Wednesday, 23.03.2022 at 23:59.

Final essay: For senior students: Monday, 16.05.2022 at 23:59.

For all other students: Friday, 27.05.2022 at 23:59.

Classroom Etiquette/ Nature of in-class participation

Students are expected to have read all the texts scheduled for discussion in class – this will be the basis of our critical analysis and interpretation. Thoughtful, constructive dialogue is expected in this class. There will be less frontal teaching than open discussion. Students are encouraged and expected to participate and share their ideas while considerably respecting the viewpoints of other students, especially if they are different.

Schedule

Date	Topic	Concerns/Issues	Texts
04.02.	Introduction: Cultural Theory	What is cultural theory? Which perspectives frame our seminar? Some introductory thoughts.	
11.02.	Representation and Discourse	Signs, myth, discourse and power	Stuart Hall on “Representation”
18.02.	Case Study Case Study: Photography and Art (Catherine Opie and Zanele Muholi)	How do we represent hegemonic and non- hegemonic subjects?	Camille Erickson’s “Toward a Transnational Queer Futurity: The Photography of Opie, Muholi and Brundit”

25.02.	Memory	Individual and Collective/Cultural Memory	Astrid Erll's "Cultural Memory Studies: An Introduction", Jan Assmann's "Communicative and Cultural Memory"
04.03.	Case Study: Art and Collective/ Cultural Memory		"Dreading the Map" by Sonia E. Barrett Also bring your own examples to class! ☺
11.03.	Critical Race Theory I	Challenging the "post-racial"/color blindness. Counter-narratives, invisibility/hypervisibility	Excerpt from Audre Lorde's <i>Sister Outsider</i>
18.03.	Critical Race Theory II	An Intersectional and Decolonial Approach	Excerpt from Anna Cheng's <i>The Melancholy of Race</i> and Grada Kilomba's "Who Can Speak? Speaking at the Center, Decolonizing Knowledge"
25.03.	No class (Fall Break)		
01.04.	Guest lecture - performance	Guest speaker: Karim-Yassin Goessinger, Director of CILAS (Cairo Institute of Liberal Arts and Sciences)	
08.04.	Case Study: Race and representation in art and performance	Race and representation, gender and sexuality, cultural haunting, histories of slavery	Excerpted works by Adrian Piper, Kara Walker, Tschabalala Self, Glenn Ligon, William Pope L., Juliana Huxtable, and more.

15.04.	No class	Spring Break	
22.04.	Gender and Performance	Gender and performativity	Excerpt from Lauren Berlant's <i>The Female Complaint</i> and Judith Butler's "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution"
29.04.	Class and Power	Conceptualizing the intersections of class, race and gender from a perspective attendant to power differentials	Excerpt from Erik Olin Wright's <i>Class Counts</i> and Saidiya Hartman, "Seduction and the Ruses of Power"
06.05.	Affect	Affect theory	Patricia Clough's "The Affective Turn" Sara Ahmed: from <i>The Promise of Happiness</i>
13.05.	Media and Popular Culture	Race and racism in the media, popular culture and queer representation	Danielle Dirks and Jennifer Müller's "Racism and Popular Culture" and Diane Raymond's "Popular Culture and Queer Representation: A Critical Perspective"
18.05 (Completion week)	No class	Completion Week	