

COURSE ID - LT120 Introduction to Critical and Cultural Theory

Seminar Leader: Dr Clio Nicastro

Course Times: Tues and Thurs 9.00-10.30

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Office Hours: by appointment

Room: P98-0-11-Seminar Room 2

Course Description

This course will introduce students to key concepts and methodological approaches from different traditions of Cultural Studies and Critical Theory, including feminism, queer theory, postcolonialism, and black studies. The seminar will cover “canonized” as well as less known thinkers: Theodor Adorno, Gloria Anzaldua, Andrea Long Chu, Hélène Cixous, Angela Davis, Silvia Federici, Michel Foucault, Max Horkheimer, Lisa Yun Lee, Carla Lonzi, Audre Lorde, Paul Preciado.

Through a close reading of a selection of texts and film excerpts, we will delve into the issue of human subjectivity and its social, institutional, and political arrangement. With this in mind, the seminar will follow three main intertwined paths:

- 1) We will investigate how socio-political historical processes involved in the constitution of subjectivities are often perceived as “natural.”
- 2) By exploring the positions from which a subject (can/is allowed to?) speak, act, express herself, we will observe how the production of determinate meaning may simultaneously exclude the emergence of others. How do individuals become accomplices to their own subjugation? How do they introject forms of domination?
- 3) Where is the place of writing, reading (studying?) and filming in these power relations and narratives? Do they bolster or protest them? How do the cultures/societies we inhabit inform both how we write and read and how we see and perceive reality? How is language and genre deployed for political or polemical ends (and for critical and self-reflexive ends?)?

What does it mean for a text to be ‘accessible’? This important question will be addressed during the seminar – but we will discuss this issue not only as critical ‘readers’, by comparing the different styles of the authors we encounter, but also as ‘writers’: from a perspective of producers of text.

Requirements

Class preparation

Preparing for class involves reading thoughtfully and engaging with the set text for each class, for instance, by thinking through the argument of a particular section and taking notes while reading. Try to formulate and address questions before you come to class: What is the argument being made by the author? What terms recur throughout the text? How does it relate to other texts we have read on the course? If you find a particular section difficult to understand underline unfamiliar terms and try to ask yourself what specifically is unclear (don't worry if you find the texts difficult or if you are not familiar with all the references; remember it is always possible that the author is being unclear or contradictory).

Students are expected to participate actively in class. The purpose of the class is to come to a better understanding of it through collective discussion. Students are therefore encouraged to ask questions as well as making statements in class. The texts will be uploaded every week on google classroom. Students are asked to bring paper copies of the reading to class and to not use laptops. The use of electronic devices during class time is only allowed for disability accommodation. If you have a disability accommodation, please inform your instructor at the beginning of the course.

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.

Consult the Student Handbook for regulations governing periods of illness or leaves of absence.

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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.

Assessment

The assessment will be made on the basis of two essays and class participation (See 'Grade Breakdown' and 'Essay Deadlines' below).

Writing Assignments

The deadlines for all writing assignments can be found under 'Essay deadlines.'

Essays: The midterm essay (2000 words) responds to a thematic question and should represent your understanding of one aspect of the course reading. The Final essay (3000

words) is expected to be more ambitious and somewhat longer, trying to develop a more comprehensive account of a particular conceptual question or topic you will have encountered during the course and drawing on a wider range of sources.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

The following policy from the Student Handbook on the submission of essays applies to this course: essays that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded 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 and cannot receive a grade of higher than C. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.

You are welcome to make an appointment with the instructor to discuss essay assignments and feedback during office hours.

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

Grade Breakdown

Participation (including presentations): 30%

Midterm Essay: 30%

Final Essay: 40%

Schedule

Week 1: The Frankfurter School

Tuesday, January 31: Introduction to the course, presentation of the syllabus.

Excerpt from Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Gretel Karplus, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947)

Thursday, February 2: Excerpt from Theodor W. Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Gretel Karplus, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947)

Week 2: The Frankfurter School in exile

Tuesday, February 7: Excerpt from Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia* (1951) + *On the Term of Exile*, a poem by Bertold Brecht

Thursday, February 9: Edward W. Said, *Intellectual Exile* (1993)

Week 3: Repression and Re-enactment

Tuesday, February 14: Theodor W. Adorno, *The Meaning of Working Through the Past* (1959) + Sigmund Freud, *Remembering, Repeating, Working Through* (1914)

Thursday, February 16: Theodor W. Adorno, *The Meaning of Working Through the Past* (1959) + Sigmund Freud, *Remembering, Repeating, Working Through* (1914)

Week 4: Transit

Tuesday, February 21: No Class

Thursday, February 23: Film + discussion *Transit* by Christian Petzold (2018). We will find an evening this week that works for everyone. It will be a three-hour slot.

Week 5: Dialectics of the Body

Tuesday, February 28: Excerpt from *Feminist Interpretations of Theodor Adorno* edited by Renée J. Heberle (2006)

Thursday, March 2: Excerpt from *Feminist Interpretations of Theodor Adorno* edited by Renée J. Heberle (2006)

Week 6: Power and Biopolitics

Tuesday, March 7: Michel Foucault, *The Subject and Power* (1982)

Tuesday, March 9: Michel Foucault, *The Subject and Power* (1982)

Week 7: Rivolta femminile

Tuesday, March 14: Carla Lonzi, Excerpt from *Self-portrait* (1968)

Thursday, March 16: Carla Lonzi, Excerpt from *Self-portrait* (1968) + Manifesto di Rivolta Femminile

Week 8: Tremble tremble the witches are back

Tuesday, March 21: Excerpt from Silvia Federici, *Wage against Housework+ Caliban and the Witch* (2004)

Thursday, March 23: Excerpt from Silvia Federici, *Wage against Housework + Caliban and the Witch* (2004)

Week 9: Tremble tremble the witches are back

Thursday, March 28: Silvia Bovenschen, *The Contemporary Witch, the Historical Witch, and the Witch Myth* (1978)

Thursday, March 30: Silvia Bovenschen, *The Contemporary Witch, the Historical Witch, and the Witch Myth* (1978)

Spring Break

Week 10: Intersectionality

Tuesday, April 11: Guest lecturer

Thursday, April 13: Rossana Rossanda, Excerpt from *This Body that Inhabits Me* (2018)

Week 11: Intersectionality

Tuesday, April 18: Excerpts from Angela Davis, *Freedom Is a Constant Struggle* (2016)

Thursday, April 20: Lorde, Audre. Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference. *Sister Outsider* (2007)

Week 12: Borderlands

Tuesday, April 25: Gloria Anzaldua and the Kitchen Table publishing house

Thursday, April 27: Paul B. Preciado, Excerpts from *Texto Junkie* (2008)

Week 13: Borderlands

Tuesday, May 2: Paul B. Preciado, Excerpts from *Texto Junkie* (2008)

Thursday, May 4: Andrea Long Chu, *Females* (2019)

Week 14:

Tuesday, May 9: Andrea Long Chu, *Females* (2019)

Thursday, May 11: Recap and final remarks

Midterm Essay: Sunday Apr 2, 23:59

Final Essay: Sunday May 14, 23:59