Critical Approaches in Social and Cultural Theory

Fall 2012
WMST BC 2140 Critical Approaches in Social and Cultural Theory
MW 1:10-2:25 p.m.
Diana Center LL103

Neferti X. M. Tadiar
206 Barnard Hall
Office Hours: MW 3:00-4:00
ntadiar@barnard.edu / 212-854-2564

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Introduction to key concepts from social and cultural theory as they are understood and used in critical studies of gender, race, sexuality, class and nation. We will explore how these concepts are taken up from different perspectives to address particular social problems, and the implications of these critical approaches in the world.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

(1) Students are required to read the assigned material and to come to class prepared to think about and discuss key concepts and arguments. You cannot miss more than two meetings across the semester except in the case of a serious emergency. You should be ready to read approximately 100-120 pages a week. (Class participation 15%)
(2) Students are required to write two short (3-4 pages) papers (the first on the 4th week and the second on the 12th week) in response to the assigned readings. (Two short papers 30%)
(3) A take-home mid-term exam will be given out on the 7th week and is due a week later. Please bring a hard copy to class and post an electronic copy on Courseworks (Midterm 25%)
(4) Students are required to take a final essay-type exam applying key concepts from the course in the analysis of a chosen topic. (Final Exam 30%)

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Students who complete this course will learn how to:

1) Conduct close readings of key theoretical texts in interdisciplinary studies
2) Gain exposure to important concepts of critical social and cultural theory
3) Develop a facility for thinking about contemporary and historical problems using these concepts
4) Understand multiple traditions of appropriation and application of social and cultural theory
5) Interpret arguments in light of their social and historical contexts
6) Understand how ideas have been used to shape practice and the complex interaction between social structures and conceptual frameworks
7) Identify and communicate the importance of social difference and power relations in an increasingly global and interconnected world

REQUIRED READING
Required books are available at Book Culture, 112th Street, between Amsterdam and Broadway.

Additional readings are included as downloadable PDF files in Courseworks. Please print out the readings and bring to class on the days when they are assigned. Alternatively, they will be included in a Course Reader, available at Village Copier, 2872 Broadway (between 11th and 112th St.).

**TENTATIVE READING SCHEDULE**

**WEEK 1**
**INTRODUCTION**
Sept 5

**WEEK 2**
**IDEOLOGY**


**WEEK 3**
**HEGEMONY AND CULTURE**


**WEEK 4**
**LABOR AND CAPITAL**
Sept 24 Karl Marx, from *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (pp.67-105), “Waged Labor and Capital” (pp. 203-217) and “The Fetishism of
Commodities and the Secret Thereof” from Capital, Volume One (pp. 319-329) in The Marx-Engels Reader

Sept 26


First Response Paper Due

Week 5
Eurocentrism: Discourse and Power
Oct 1

Oct 3
Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can The Subaltern Speak?”

Week 6
Colonialism and Postcolonialism
Oct 8
Frantz Fanon, “Concerning Violence” and “On National Culture” in The Wretched of the Earth (New York: Grove Press).
Recommended: Yasser Munif, “Frantz Fanon and the Arab Uprisings, An Interview with Nigel Gibson,” Jadaliyya (August 17, 2012).

Oct 10

Week 7
Sexuality and Sociality
Oct 15
Sigmund Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents

Oct 17
Hortense Spillers, “‘All the Things You Could Be by Now if Sigmund Freud’s Wife Was Your Mother’: Race and Psychoanalysis,” in Female Subjects in Black and White: Race, Psychoanalysis and Feminism

Take-Home Midterm Exam Given Out
**Week 8**  
**SUBJECTIVITY, IDENTITY, PERFORMATIVITY**

Oct 22  

Oct 24  


**Take-Home Midterm Exam Due**

**Week 9**  
**POLITICAL LIBERALISM AND MINORITY COMMUNITIES**

Oct 29  
Karl Marx, “On The Jewish Question” in *The Marx-Engels Reader*


Oct 31  


**Week 10**  
**BIOPOLITICS**

Nov 5  
ELECTION HOLIDAY: NO CLASS

Nov 7  
Michel Foucault, “We Other Victorians” and “The Repressive Hypothesis” (292-330) in *The Foucault Reader*


**Week 11**  
**DISCIPLINE AND SECURITY**

Nov 12  
Michel Foucault, “Disciplines and Sciences of the Individual” (pp. 170-256)

Nov 14  
Angela Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (pp. 9-39, 60-115)

Second Response Paper Due

**Week 12**

**Governmentality and Freedom**

Nov 19


Nov 21

Inderpal Grewal, “‘Women’s Rights as Human Rights’: The Transnational Production of Global Feminist Subjects” from *Transnational America: Feminisms, Diasporas, Neoliberalisms*


**Week 13**

**Life, Biocapitalism and PostHumanity**

Nov 26


Nov 28

TBA

**Week 14**

**Open Topic**

Dec 3

Dec 5

**Week 15**

**Review**

Dec 10