

**YORK UNIVERSITY – FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES W 2006**  
**Graduate Program in Communication and Culture**

**Theoretical Approaches to Media and Culture: Subjectivity and Social Identity**

**Communication & Culture 6100 3.0**

**Monday, 11:30-2:30 p.m., TEL 0008 and CFT 137A**

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*“Identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by,  
and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past.”*  
Stuart Hall

This course reviews central issues in the study of media and culture through an examination of the ways in which mediations of social identity (e.g., class, gender, race, sexuality, nationality), act as highly selective and ideologically shaped portrayals of the social order. The course is built around a number of current and “classical” theories, which allow particular insight into the articulations of representation (discursive, imagistic, visual) with human identity, subjectivity and selfhood.

The course begins by considering post-structuralist theories of the subject and constructionist debates around identity developed as a challenge to essentialism and liberal humanism--mostly through feminist and post-colonial theory. The second half of the course addresses such themes as cosmopolitanism, new forms of transnational citizenship and hybrid identity. Finally, we will address recent writings around human rights and ethics that may allow for a common or ‘universal’ ground (what William James called ‘radical humanism’) to conceptualize a politics of recognition and global responsibility. As the course deals with mediations of identity, we hope to include a variety of audio-visual forms and genres that may exemplify issues raised in the readings, or challenge their plausibility.

**Course Materials:**

Reading kit, available from the York University Bookstore.  
Other readings will be on Reserve in the Scott Library.

**Evaluation:**

**Participation:** being part of an intellectual community means attending class regularly and punctually, reading thoughtfully in advance and involving yourself in class discussions in a way that enables you and other students to learn. Students are encouraged to bring in materials (textual, audio-visual) that will help to deepen and expand the course problematic. 20%

**Assignment 1: Two short position papers** (4 to 6 pages each) will be assigned in the course,  
10% x 2= 20 %

**Assignment 2: Essay Proposal**, Due: February 20, 2006,10% (You will be required to present your possible essay topic to discuss in class on February 6<sup>th</sup>, 2006.) 10%

**Assignment 3: Oral presentation**, assigned in class, 20%  
 Written summary, due at least two days before oral presentation.  
 Please email to your instructor to post.

**Assignment 4:** Research Paper, Due: April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2006, 30%

### **Description of Assignments:**

**Assignment 1:** You will be asked to engage with a current debate or to identify a social or cultural phenomenon around the issue of identity and culture. This will be discussed in greater detail in class. These papers are intended to facilitate discussion and help you to frame your research project.

**Assignment 2:** Essay Proposal. Students are required to submit a brief summary of their final paper. The brief summary should be no more than 5 double-space typed pages and include a research question, possible lines of arguments, and a bibliography, 10%.

**Assignment 3:** Oral presentation of one of the assigned readings. These will be assigned the second week of classes, 20%. You will be required to summarize the major points or themes of the articles, compare and contrast the viewpoints of the authors, critically assess the articles and their relationships to the broader themes and issues considered in the course. The student must prepare three to four questions from the reading to facilitate class discussion. Students are evaluated on the quality of ideas and material presented and the ability to generate response amongst seminar participants.

Written summary: Each student must summarize the above in written form and distribute it to the class in advance of the discussion. The oral presentation of reading should not exceed 20 minutes in length, the contents of the written summary should not be more than four double-spaced pages. Email to Course Director at least 48 hours in advance of presentation.

**Assignment 4:** Students will write a formal critical essay directly pertaining to the theoretical subject matter of the seminar, 30%. The length of the essay should not exceed 25 double-spaced pages, including notes. The essay topic must be approved by the professor.

### **Academic Honesty**

Students are subject to policies regarding academic honesty as set out by the Senate of York University. Breaches of academic honesty include such things as the submission of one piece of work to satisfy two assignments without prior informed consent by both course directors, plagiarism or the appropriation of someone else's work and presenting it as one's own, and obstruction of the academic activities of another. Penalties for academic dishonesty are serious and can jeopardize your academic future.

### **Seminar Schedule**

We will make every effort to follow the syllabus as outlined, but reserve the right to make scheduling changes when further discussion of a given topic is required or to take advantage of unforeseen events and opportunities. Web resources may be added throughout the term for enrichment and to reflect students' interests.

#### **Week 1, Jan. 9: Introduction to Course**

Screening: *TARNATION*, Jonathan Caouette, U.S.A., 2003.

#### **Week 2, Jan. 16: Frames of Reference: Creation Stories**

Kaja Silverman, Ch. 1-2, *World Spectators*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000.  
 Marc Augé, "The Near and the Elsewhere," "Anthropological Place," *Non-places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*. Trans. John Howe, London, New York: Verso Press, 1995.

### **Week 3, Jan. 23: Dualisms, Essentialisms, Universalisms: The Paradoxes of Identity**

- Joan Scott, "Experience," *Feminists Theorize the Political*, eds., Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott, New York: Routledge, 1992, pp. 22-40.
- Adrian Piper, "Passing for White, Passing for Black," in E. Shohat, ed., *Talking Visions: Multicultural Feminism in a Transnational Age*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998, pp. 75-112.
- Diana Fuss, "The Risk of Essence," *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature and Difference*, 1989, New York: Routledge, pp. 1-21.
- Sherene H. Razack, "Introduction," and "Conclusion: To Essentialize or Not to Essentialize: Is this the Question," *Looking White People in the Eye: Gender, Race, and Culture in Courtrooms and Classrooms*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998, pp. 3-22, 157-170.

### **Week 4, Jan. 30: Structures of Subjectivity: Interpellations**

- Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (notes Towards an Investigation)," *Lenin and Philosophy*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971, pp. 127-186.
- Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Visual and Other Pleasures*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989, pp. 14-26.
- Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience," in A. Sheridan, translation, *Jacques Lacan Ecrits: A Selection*, New York: W.W. Norton, 1977, pp. 1-7.
- Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (eds) *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. London: Macmillan, 1998.

### **Week 5, Feb. 6: Epistemology and Discourse**

- Michel Foucault, "The Body of the Condemned," *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, New York: Vintage, 1979, pp. 3-31.
- Michel Foucault, Parts One and Two, *History of Sexuality: Volume One*, New York: Vintage, 1990, pp. 1-14, 17-49.
- Nancy Hartsock, "Foucault on Power: A Theory for Women,?" in *Feminism/Postmodernism*, Linda Ncholson (ed.), New York, London: Routledge, 1990.
- Susan Bordo, "Feminism, Postmodernism, and Gender Skepticism" in *Feminism/Postmodernism*, op.cit.

### **Week 6, Feb. 13: Reading Week (York)**

### **Week 7 Feb. 20: Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Queer and Transgender**

- Bonnie P. Spanier, "What made Ellen (and Anne) Gay?: Feminist Critique of Popular and Scientific Beliefs," in K. Sawchuk and J. Marchessault, eds., *Wild Science: Reading Feminism, Medicine and the Media*, London: Routledge, 2000, pp. 80-101.
- Fred Fejes, "Advertising and the Political Economy of Lesbian/Gay Identity," in E. R. Meehan and E. Riordan, eds., *Sex & Money: Feminism and Political Economy in the Media*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2002, pp. 196-208.
- Eleanor MacDonald, "Critical Identities: Rethinking Feminism through Transgender Politics," in B. Crow and L. Gotell, eds., *Open Boundaries: A Canadian Women's Studies Reader*, Scarborough, ON: Prentice-Hall, 2000, pp. 282-290.
- Biddy Martin, "Sexualities without Genders and Other Queer Utopias," *Femininity Played Straight: The Significance of Being Lesbian*, New York: Routledge, 1996, pp. 71-94.

### **Week 8, Feb. 27: Enacting Identity and Cultural Economy**

- Chantal Nadeau, "Between Queer-and-Lesbian: Translated Politics," *Concerns*, 27:3/4 (Winter), 2000, pp. 53-66.
- Judith Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination," in D. Fuss, ed., *Inside Out: Lesbian Theories*,

*Gay Theories*, New York: Routledge, 1991, pp. 13-31.

Fuyuki Kurasawa, "Finding Godot?: Bringing Popular Culture in Political Economy," in W. Clement and L. Vosko, eds., *Changing Canada: Political Economy as Transformation*, Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003, pp. 467-492.

David Lyon, "Disappearing Bodies," *Surveillance and Society: Monitoring Everyday Life*, Philadelphia, PA.: Open University, 2001, pp. 15-27.

### **Week 9, March 6: Cyborg, Identity and Digital Technology**

Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," <http://www.stanford.edu/dept/HPS/Haraway/CyborgManifesto.html>

Jennifer Gonzalez, "Envisioning Cyborg Bodies: Notes from Current Research." In *Cybersexualities: A Reader in Feminist Theory, Cyborgs, and Cyberspace*. Ed., Jenny Wolmark. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999, pp. 264-279.

Jennifer Gonzalez, "The Appended Subject: Race and Identity as Digital Assemblage," in B. Kolko, L. Nakamura and G. Rodman, eds., *Race in Cyberspace*, New York: Routledge, 2000, pp. 27-50.

Anne Balsamo, "Reading Cyborgs, Writing Feminism: Reading the Body in Contemporary Culture," *Technologies of the Gendered Body: Reading Cyborg Women*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1995, pp. 17-40.

Chela Sandoval, "New Sciences: Cyborg Feminism and the Methodology of the Oppressed," in C. Hables Gray, ed., *The Cyborg Handbook*, New York: Routledge, 1995, pp. 407-421.

### **Week 10, Mar. 13 Cosmo-politics**

Stuart Hall, "Democracy, Globalization, Difference" in *Democracy Unrealized* Okwui Enwezor et.al. (eds) Kassel: Documenta und Museum, 2002.

Kwami Anthony Appia, "Contamination" NYTimes article, and responses.

Lisa Nakamura, "Where Do You Want To Go Today?: Cybernetic Tourism, the Internet, and Transnationality," in Beth Kolko, Lisa Nakamura, and Gilbert Rodman, eds., *Race in Cyberspace*, New York: Routledge, 2000, pp. 15-26.

Sheldon Pollock, "Cosmopolitan and Vernacular in History," in *Cosmopolitanism*, Carol Breckenridge et.al. (eds.) Durham: Duke University Press, 2002.

Walter D. Mignolo, "The Many Faces of Cosmo-polis: Border Thinking and Critical Cosmopolitanism," in *Cosmopolitanism*, op.cit.

### **Week 11. March 20: Transnational Localities**

Michael Peter Smith, ch 3, and ch 5 in *Transnational Urbanism: Locating Globalization*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001.

Anna Tsing, "Introduction," ch. 3 "Natural Universals and a Global Scale," ch 4 "Nature Lovers," in *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.

### **Week 12, Mar. 27: Networks of Meaning**

Bruno Latour, "A dialog between a student and his (somewhat) Socratic Professor"

"Introduction: How to Resume the Task of Tracing Associations"

<http://www.ensmp.fr/~latour/articles/article/090.html>

Michel Callon, "Techno-Economic Networks and Irreversibility." In Law, J. (ed.), *A Sociology of Monsters: Essays on Power, Technology and Domination*. London: Routledge, 1991.

Bruno Latour, "Morality and Technology: The End of the Means", *19/5&6 Theory, Culture and Society* 247-60, 2002.

John Law, "After ANT: Complexity, Naming and Topology." In Hassard, J & Law, J. (ed.), *Actor-Network Theory and After*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999.

**Week 13: April 3: Ethics**

Alain Badiou, *St Paul: the Foundations of Universalism*. Trans. Ray Brassier. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003.

Zygmunt Bauman, "Note on Society: Ethics of Individuals," *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 25, No. 1, 2000, pp. 44-46.

Jacques Ranciere, "Who is the Subject of the Rights of Man?" *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 103:2/3 Spring/Summer 2004, pp. 297-310.

Etienne Balibar, "Is a Philosophy of Human Civic Rights Possible? New Reflections on Equaliberty," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 103:2/3 Spring/Summer 2004, pp. 311-322.

Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1958, pp. 236-247.

Emmanuel Levinas, TBA.