

# INTRODUCTION TO CULTURAL STUDIES

Lang College, Fall 2006  
LCST / 2120A, 2121A, 2121B  
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## Course Description:

Cultural Studies foregrounds the pivotal role of culture in the modern world. But what do we mean by “culture”? Conventional understandings of culture have tended to focus on the products of art and entertainment, with an emphasis on the creativity of individual artists and the selectivity of specific artistic traditions. Alternatively, anthropology has drawn attention to the more everyday and folkloric aspects of cultural existence among human groups. Cultural Studies seeks to amplify and deepen these notions of culture by highlighting the importance of studying the material processes through which culture is constructed. It privileges process over product and rupture over continuity. In particular, it presents culture as a dynamic arena of social struggle and utopian possibility. This course aims to introduce students to some of the key thinkers and critical frameworks in the field of Cultural Studies. We cover work by Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall and the Birmingham School; topics such as popular culture, identity politics and postmodernism in America; and the emergence of a ‘global cultural studies’ in which transnational cultural flows are examined and assessed. Class sessions are set up as dialogic encounters between cultural theory and concrete analyses.

## Required Texts:

Simon During (ed.), *The Cultural Studies Reader*

Various readings online via E-reserves. These can be accessed through Blackboard, and printed at the Academic Computing Center on 13<sup>th</sup> St., between 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> avenues.

Bookstore: Simon During’s *Cultural Studies Reader* has been ordered for you and is available at Bluestockings Books {172 Allen Street between Stanton and Rivington :: 212.777.6028}. A representative from the store will bring the text book to our first class, so this is the most convenient time to buy it.

All other readings are available online through Blackboard.

## Course Requirements/Assessment:

This course is the gateway course to the concentration. It is a history-and-theory course, which means that the focus of the course is on providing (a) a historical understanding of the field(s) of cultural and media studies; (b) introductory knowledge of a wide range of theoretical concepts, approaches and schools of thought; (c) an exposure to the idea of methodology, or what it means to do cultural studies through research and analysis; (d) a knowledge of major cultural debates, particularly those around gender, race/ethnicity, technology and the body, and international cultural flows. The aim of the course is to

provide a solid foundation for other courses in the concentration and its tracks through a stress on analytical rigor, intellectual commitment and hard work.

1. Your ability to participate depends on coming to class with the readings done and notes taken. Interaction with peers and meaningful discussion is necessary in order for you to get the full benefit of the course.
2. Class Presentation. 25%
3. Midterm paper (1,500-2,000 words): 25%, due October 19, 2006.
4. Final research paper (3,000-4,000): 50%, due December 21, 2006.

*Hardcopies only. No emailed papers, please.* Lateness will be reflected in a lower final grade.

## SYLLABUS

### Week 1 (Sep 5, 7): Introduction

1. Defining Cultural Studies
2. Key terms, concepts and genealogies

### Week 2 (Sep 12, 14): Foundations of Cultural Studies 1

1. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception" in During. [\*unless otherwise noted, all articles are from *The Cultural Studies Reader*]
2. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" <http://bid.berkeley.edu/bidclass/readings/benjamin.html>
3. Angela McRobbie, "The Place of Walter Benjamin in Cultural Studies" in During.

### Week 3 (Sep 19, 21): Foundations of Cultural Studies 2

1. Stuart Hall, "Cultural Studies and Its Theoretical Legacies" in During.
2. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1972.
3. Michel Foucault, "The Condemned Body," in *The Foucault Reader*. Ed. Paul Rabinow. New York: Pantheon, 1984.
4. Clifford Geertz, "Notes on a Balinese Cock Fight" in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Writings*. New York: Basic Books, 1973.

### Week 4 (Sep 26, 28): Space and Time

1. Edward Soja, "History, Geography, Modernity" in During.
2. Michel de Certeau, "Walking in the City" in During.
3. Ackbar Abbas, "Building on Disappearance: Hong Kong Architecture and Colonial Space" in During.
4. Dziga Vertov, *Man With a Movie Camera* (film, 1929)

### Week 5 (Oct 3, 5): Postcolonialism and Nationalism

1. Frantz Fanon, "On National Culture," *Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press, 1963.
2. Jamaica Kincaid, *A Small Place*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1988.
3. Marianna Torgovnick, "Defining the Primitive, Reimagining Modernity," *Gone Primitive*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990.
4. Mathieu Kassovitz, *La Haine* (film, 1995)

### Week 6 (Oct 10, 12): Race and Ethnicity

1. Richard Dyer, "White," *Visual Culture: The Reader*. Eds. Jessica Evans and Stuart Hall. London: Sage, 1999.
2. bell hooks, "A Revolution of Values: The Promise of Multicultural Change" in During.

3. Edward Said, "Introduction," *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage, 1994.
4. Mel Stuart, *Wattstax* (film, 1973)
5. Denis Sanders, *Soul II Soul* (film 1971)

### **Week 7 (Oct 17, 19) Sexuality and Gender 1**

1. Teresa de Lauretis, "Upping the Anti (sic) in Feminist Theory" in During.
2. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Axiomatic" in During.
3. Judith Butler, "Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire" in During.
4. Kate Davis, *Southern Comfort* (film, 2001)

### **\*\*Mid-Term Paper Due October 19\*\***

### **Week 8 (Oct 24, 26): Sexuality and Gender 2**

1. Denis Altman, "Sex and Political Economy," + "The Globalization of Sexual Identities," in *Global Sex*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001.
2. Laura Kipnis, "(Male) Desire and (Female) Disgust: Reading Hustler" in Eds Grossberg et al. New York and London: Routledge, 1992.
3. Richard Fung, "The Eroticized Asian" in *Popular Culture: A Reader*. Eds Raiford A Guins and Omayra Zaragoza Cruz. London: Sage, 2005.

### **Week 9 (Oct 31, Nov 2 ): Carnival, Utopia and Popular Culture**

1. Richard Dyer, "Entertainment and Utopia" in During.
2. Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, "Bourgeois Hysteria and the Carnavalesque" in During.
3. Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart, "How to Become a General in the Disneyland Club" in *Media and Cultural Studies: Key Works*. Eds. Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas Kellner. London: Blackwells, 2001.
4. Alejandro Jodorowsky, *Sante Sangre* (film, 1989)

### **Week 10 (Nov 7, 9): Consumption and the Market**

1. Meaghan Morris, "Things To Do with Shopping Centers" in During.
2. Raymond Williams, "Advertising: The Magic System" in During.
3. Henry A. Giroux, "Consuming Social Change: The United Colors of Benetton," in *Disturbing Pleasures: Learning Popular Culture*. London and New York: Routledge, 1994.
4. Adam Curtis, *Century of the Self* (film, 2002)

### **Week 11 (Nov 14, 16): Leisure**

1. Pierre Bourdieu, "How Can One Be a Sports Fan?" in During.
2. Dick Hebdige, "The Function of Subculture" in During.
3. Will Straw, "Characterizing Rock Music Culture: The Case of Heavy Metal" in During.
4. George Butler, *Pumping Iron* (1977)

**\*\*Week 12 (Nov 21, 23): Thanksgiving: No Classes This Week\*\***

**Week 13 (Nov 28, Nov 30): Media and Public Spheres**

1. Stuart Hall, "Encoding, Decoding" in *During*
2. Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy" in *During*.
3. Hamid Naficy, "The Making of Exile Cultures: Iranian Television in Los Angeles" in *During*.
4. Clara Law, *Floating Life* (film, 1996)

**Week 14 (Dec 5, 7): Science and Cyberculture**

1. Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto" in *During*.
2. Andrew Ross, "The Challenge of Science" in *During*.
3. Bruno Latour, "A Collective of Humans and Non-Humans," *Readings in the Philosophy of Technology*. Ed David Kaplan. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004.
4. Mark Neale, *No Maps For These Territories* (film, 2000)

**Week 15 (Dec 12, 14): Where to From Here?**

1. Lawrence Grossberg, "Identity and Cultural Studies: Is That All There Is?" *Questions of Cultural Identity*. Eds. Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay. London: Sage, 1996.
2. Willson, Michele. "Community in the Abstract: A Political and Ethical Dilemma?" *The Cybercultures Reader* Eds. David Bell and Barbara M. Kennedy. London and New York: Routledge, 2000.
3. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, "The Multitude Against Empire," *Empire*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2000.
4. Johan Grimmonprez, *Dial History* (film, 1998)
5. Astra Taylor, *Zizek: The Movie* (film, 2005)

**Week 16: (Dec 21) Review**

1. Summary and Conclusions

**\*\*Final Papers due: Dec 21\*\***