



STPEC 391H

Critical Histories
Embodied Theories
Cultural Politics

Seminar 1
Spring 2014

Tuesdays & Thursdays
11:00 – 12:45

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DESCRIPTION

Welcome to STPEC 391H! This 4-credit honors course begins our year-long STPEC Junior Seminar sequence. In this seminar, we will study the major driving forces behind the production of modernity as a Western *episteme* (the way we structure and decode the world as a Eurocentric fiction). We will explore questions of decolonization of social theory and liberation of the political imagination.

Our focus involves:

- An emphasis on interconnecting theory and practice with each other and with the lived histories that produce them.
- A critique of the constructed nature of the West, especially the ways that intellectual claims are made within a Western dominated co-creation of Western & non-Western worlds.
- A sustained commitment to decolonial perspectives and critiques of modernity, focusing on nationalism as a central tenet of modernity and on liberation struggles within global neoliberal paradigms.

Thus, we will study critiques of slavery, imperialism, conquest, social transformation, resistance, and global neoliberalism in the ways they result from histories of colonialism and the theories that perpetuated it. We will connect those critiques with contemporary iterations and legacies in institutions and social structures.

OBJECTIVES

1. Read primary sources while fostering a broad critical understanding of historically grounded texts and their persistence in contemporary case studies.
2. Know the main authors of foundational theories, their intellectual and cultural lineages, and the relation of theory to historical contexts as both causal and consequential.
3. Relate abstract concepts to governmental policies and their reformulations in resistant social actions.
4. Develop an awareness of key social theories & movements, and critically identify them in your personal experiences, memories, epistemologies, and politics.
5. Incorporate reflection & research on these topics in your independent learning.

ABOUT YOUR INSTRUCTOR



hari was born in India but grew up in Yemen and has lived in the USA since 1997. He worked as a software engineer for 8 years before leaving in 2008 to pursue a teaching career. He has an M.S. in Electrical Engineering from Boston University, an M.A. in Communication from UMass Amherst, and is working on his Ph.D. in English. His research uses decolonial performance methodologies to stage critical interventions in the processes of whiteness and racialization in American culture. He is married to Alexis, and they have two children: Eliana (age 3) and Micah (age 1). His website is: www.kineticnow.com

ASSIGNMENTS

Responses (8 x 5%)

These are short (1-page max) personal responses to each week's readings. There are 10 weeks, but only your top 8 will be graded. You will need to submit at least 6 responses in order to qualify for participation and project points.

Co-Facilitation (2 x 10%)

You will have the opportunity to co-facilitate a particular week's discussions twice in the semester, once in each unit.

Projects (2 x 15%)

These can be analytic papers, presentations, narratives, case studies, or reports. In decolonial solidarity, I highly encourage "non-traditional" work.

Participation (2 x 5%)

Your overall participation in each unit involves your preparation and curiosity about the readings, your contributions to our community dynamics, and your interest in learning.

GRADE SCALE

| | | | |
|-----------|-------|-----------|-------|
| A | > 94 | C+ | 77–79 |
| A- | 90–93 | C | 74–76 |
| B+ | 87–89 | C- | 70–73 |
| B | 84–86 | D+ | 67–69 |
| B- | 80–83 | D | 60–66 |
| | | F | < 60 |

SCHEDULE : UNIT 1

Critical Overviews

| WEEK | TOPIC / READINGS |
|--|--|
| Jan 21 Jan 23 | Introductions, course planning, lunch retreat. |
| Jan 28 Jan 30 | Reading Set 1 Malea Powell, "The Story Takes Place." Walter Mignolo, <i>The Darker Side of Western Modernity</i> , selections. Ella Shohat & Robert Stam, "Unthinking Eurocentrism." Reading Response 1 due by Tuesday 9am. Thursday co-facilitators: |
| Feb 4 Feb 6 | Reading Set 2 Eric Hobsbawn, <i>Age of Revolution (1789-1848)</i> , selections. Eric Hobsbawn, <i>Age of Capital (1848-1875)</i> , selections. Eric Hobsbawn, <i>Age of Empire (1875-1914)</i> , selections. Reading Response 2 due by Tuesday 9am. Thursday co-facilitators: |
| Feb 11 Feb 13 | Reading Set 3 Thomas Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> , selections. John Locke, <i>Second Treatise of Government</i> , selections. Silvia Federici, "Accumulation of Labor and the Degradation of Women." Irene Silverblatt, "The Black Legend and Global Conspiracies." Reading Response 3 due by Tuesday 9am. Thursday co-facilitators: |
| Feb 20 | THURSDAY ONLY: Project 1 Workshop Monday is a holiday, Tuesday is a "Monday," and other UMadness. |
| Feb 25 Feb 27 | Reading Set 4 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, <i>The Social Contract</i> , selections. Declaration of Independence / Declaration of Rights of Man Charles W. Mills, <i>The Racial Contract</i> , selections. Andrea Smith, "Heteropatriarchy and the three pillars of white supremacy." María Lugones, "Heterosexualism and the Modern/Colonial Gender Order." Reading Response 4 due by Tuesday 9am. Thursday co-facilitators: |
| Mar 4 Mar 6 | Reading Set 5 Immanuel Kant, "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?" Laurent Dubois, "An enslaved Enlightenment." Ruth Frankenberg, "The mirage of an unmarked whiteness." bell hooks, <i>Killing Rage</i> , selections. Reading Response 5 due by Tuesday 9am. Thursday co-facilitators: |
| Mar 11 Mar 13 | TUESDAY: Mid-semester Retreat THURSDAY: NO CLASS, PROJECT 1 DUE ON MOODLE BY 5pm. |
| MONDAY MARCH 17 - FRIDAY MARCH 21: SPRING BREAK | |

SCHEDULE : UNIT 2

Marxism and Critiques

| WEEK | TOPIC / READINGS |
|----------------------|---|
| March 25 March 27 | <p>Reading Set 6</p> <p>Karl Marx, <i>The Communist Manifesto</i>. Karl Marx, "Wage Labour and Capital." Karl Marx, "The Secret of Primitive Accumulation." Reading Response 6 due by Tuesday 9am. Thursday co-facilitators:</p> |
| April 1 April 3 | <p>Reading Set 7</p> <p>Karl Marx, Preface to <i>A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy</i>. Karl Marx, "On Estranged Labour" Karl Marx, <i>Theses on Feuerbach</i>, selections. Reading Response 7 due by Tuesday 9am. Thursday co-facilitators:</p> |
| April 8 April 10 | <p>Reading Set 8</p> <p>Antonio Gramsci, <i>The Prison Notebooks</i>, selections. Raymond Williams, "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory." Stuart Hall, "The relevance of Gramsci for the study of race and ethnicity." Reading Response 8 due by Tuesday 9am. Thursday co-facilitators:</p> |
| April 15 April 17 | <p>Reading Set 9</p> <p>Stuart Hall, "The Problem of Ideology: Marxism without Guarantees." Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses." Stuart Hall, <i>Hard Road To Renewal - Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left</i> Jennifer Daryl Slack, "The theory and method of articulation in cultural studies." Reading Response 9 due by Tuesday 9am. Thursday co-facilitators:</p> |
| April 22 April 24 | <p>Reading Set 10</p> <p>Dick Hebdige, "Postmodernism and 'the other side.'" Kuan-Hsing Chen, "Post-marxism: beyond/between critical postmodernism and cultural studies." Charlotte Brunsdon, "A thief in the night: stories of feminism in the 1970s at CCCS." Dwight Conquergood, "Beyond the text: Toward a performative cultural politics." Reading Response 10 due by Tuesday 9am. Thursday co-facilitators:</p> |
| April 29 | TUESDAY ONLY: Project 2 Workshop, last day of class. |
| May 8 | PROJECT 2 DUE ON MOODLE BY 5pm. |

POLICIES & EXPECTATIONS

Reading & Coursework

This is a 4-credit honors course at the 3rd-year college level. The material and workload are thus set with high standards, both for me as an instructor/facilitator and for you as a student/participant.

You can expect to be assigned about 150-200 pages of readings weekly. These will introduce you to “primary sources while fostering a broad understanding of historically grounded texts.”

I expect you to search beyond the assigned material on your own initiative, and based on your own interests, to find background information and contemporary examples that help explain the “intellectual and cultural lineages” of the readings.

All texts will be posted as PDFs on our course Moodle page. You are welcome to bring your laptops/tablets to class if you prefer not to print the readings.

You can expect vigorous in-class discussions that require you to read both broadly and in-depth each week. I expect you to contribute to our learning of the readings through your participation in collective co-facilitation for each week.

I expect you to engage relationally in exploring the readings together, including in meetings with me but also by arranging reading groups with each other on your own initiative, whether in person or online.

I will NOT email you reminders of reading assignments. Again, this is a 4-credit honors course. You are responsible for managing your workload and time to keep pace with the course schedule.

Learning Accommodations

I am committed to supporting your learning needs, recognizing that all of us learn in many different ways. If you require accommodations in partnership with the University’s Disability Services office, please make arrangements with me during the first two weeks of class. If you have any physical, psychological, emotional, or spiritual learning needs that you feel might make it difficult for you to engage the workload or participate in class, please contact me or the STPEC staff at any time. We will strive to provide a supportive and productive learning solution for you.

Attendance

Please attend. No, seriously, we will miss you deeply if you are absent. This is our collective learning journey—your presence & participation enriches all of us.

Attentive Attendance: Beyond your physical presence, I expect you to be alive, awake, attentive, aware, alert, and actively engaged with the class.

Excused Absences: If you need to miss class due to a known issue, please email me in advance to check if it can be excused. If you are absent due to serious illness or a personal emergency, please email me as soon as reasonably possible.

Unexcused Absences: You are allowed up to two unexcused absences. Each further absence takes away 3 points from your total grade. For unexcused absences you are responsible for catching up on missed work on your own.

Lateness: I expect punctuality. I will excuse the occasional or rare lateness, but habitual or disruptive lateness will affect your course grade.

Classroom Civility

I expect us to engage each other respectfully, voicing our perspectives while maintaining genuine curiosity about ideas and experiences that are in conflict with our own. We will engage several “hot-button” issues in this course, but we will always strive to approach them seriously and with critical depth. We will persistently question “soundbites” or “cliches” but always sensitively and openly, in a spirit of encouraging each other toward deeper understanding. If you feel you cannot speak in class, please talk with me privately or with a trusted STPEC staff member so that we can figure out more fruitful strategies.

All of us, including myself, are bound to the University’s Code of Classroom Civility available here:

<http://bit.ly/umass-civility>

Academic Honesty

It is fine to use ideas, words, and short passages from others in your own work as *long as you acknowledge the source!* Failure to do so is considered plagiarism, a serious academic offense which can result in automatic failure and possible suspension. Please see the University’s policy on Academic Honesty:

<http://bit.ly/umass-honesty>

Grading & Evaluation

You will be evaluated based on the quality of your work and your participation. Your grades will not be based on your beliefs or whether you agree with the views presented in class. If you have concerns, please talk with me privately. FERPA law restricts me from discussing your grades in public or over email.

Communicating With Me

Email is the best way to reach me. During the work week I check my email constantly. You can expect a reply within 12 to 24 hours. However, my Sabbath observances include not checking email on weekends. Please note that emails written in Facebook/Twitter/SMS style are injurious to my health and will be treated accordingly.

My Office Hours

Machmer E-27 (STPEC main office).
Tuesdays & Thursdays 9.30 – 10.30.

Please email me for an appointment on other days/times. We can also arrange a Skype session or a phone call instead if those work better for you than an in-person meeting.