

Art 6933 (REVISED SYLLABUS)

Introduction to Critical Theory: Theories of the Subject/Theories of the Image

Instructor: Coco Fusco

Tuesdays 11:45-2:45

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Office Hours: Wednesday 12:00-1:30 and by appointment

INTRODUCTION: Critical Theory is a school of thought originally developed in the 1930s that interprets society and culture through the lens of philosophy, sociology, psychology and linguistics. It does not offer a theory of art or aesthetics, but its proponents do engage in critique of cultural texts.

In this seminar, we will review some of the foundational texts of critical theory and consider multiple theories of the subject, focusing in particular on their bearing upon aesthetic experience and artistic production. We will also study foundational texts for theoretical analysis of images. The goal of these discussions is to arrive at a more nuanced understanding of who we are and how we see when we imagine, when we create and when we interact with art. In addition, students will meet with the professor regularly on an individual basis to discuss their writing.

REQUIREMENTS: Students are required to read and watch a film each week in order to come to seminar prepared for an animated group discussion. In addition, week students must write several one-page essays in response to questions listed on the syllabus. These writing assignments should be conceived of as a way to organize thoughts rather than as formal essays. In these assignments, students should consider the implications of the pairings of the written and visual texts and reflect on the ways that the films shed light on a set of ideas about selfhood, cognition and visualization. The writing assignments are not meant to be film reviews and should not be treated as such. Further instructions as to how to write an effectively argued essay will be provided in class.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: Students must complete all reading and writing assignments and engage regularly in seminar discussions in order to pass this course. Students who do not turn in all writing assignments or who fail to complete reading/viewing assignments several times will receive an "E" grade. Turning in assignments late will result in lower grades.

Readings for this course will be made available in PDF via Dropbox. Videos will be available through the UF Library or on line. Some videos are on 2-hour reserve and must be viewed at the library.

GUIDELINES FOR WRITING ASSIGNMENTS: Papers are due on the dates that assignments appear on the syllabus. Late papers will receive lower grades based on tardiness. All writing assignments should be done in 12pt font, with double-space

pages and one inch margins. That means about 250 words per page. Students must put their names, the date and the title of the assignment on the page. Students must check spelling and grammar before turning in their written work. Students should adhere to a standard expository prose format for these assignments. The texts should have an introduction and conclusion and clearly state an argument. Assertions should be substantiated by evidence. Proper citation of sources is required.

OBJECTIVES AND GOALS: The main goal of this course is to arrive at a deeper understanding of the range of theoretical approaches to the interpretation of art. Another important objective of the course is to give students opportunities to sharpen their analytical tools for interpreting visual culture.

ATTENDANCE POLICIES: Students are expected to attend and participate in all sessions. Students who are absent more than three times without a legitimate excuse will receive a failing grade due to Attendance/Participation (i.e. E1 or U1). If you are absent due to illness, a family emergency, religious observance, or another academic obligation, you must provide a written explanation to the instructor and when warranted, a note from a medical professional or your advisor. The UF policy on attendance can be found here:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx-absences>

METHOD OF EVALUATION: Students will be assessed based on the quality of their participation in class and their writing assignments. Any student who may be in danger of not receiving credit or not passing the course will receive a written warning prior to the end of the term. The final grade for the course will be determined by the following:

1. Quality of the student's participation in discussions: 30%
2. Quality of writing assignments: 40%
3. Quality of oral report: 20%
3. Attendance and consistency of class participation: 10%

Here is an explanation of how I determine final grades:

A grade:

- Perfect attendance record
- Substantive participation in at least 80% of class discussions, i.e. good questions and comments that demonstrate understanding of readings and films.
- Papers that have no grammatical or spelling errors, with proper citation of sources.
- Papers that show a high level of understanding of course materials.

- Papers that have introductions that outline an argument, middle paragraphs that develop that argument and substantiate assertions with evidence, and conclusions that summarize the argument.
- Papers that indicate that the student can work with the key themes and idea of the course and apply them effectively.
- Papers turned in on time.

B grade:

- No more than 2 absences. No more than 2 late papers.
- Substantive participation in at least 65% of class discussions, i.e. good questions and comments that demonstrate understanding of readings and films.
- Papers that have minimal grammatical or spelling errors, with proper citation of sources.
- Papers that show some understanding of course materials.
- Papers that have introductions that outline an argument, middle paragraphs that develop that argument and substantiate assertions with evidence, and conclusions that summarize the argument.
- Papers that indicate that the student understood the key themes and idea of the course but may have some difficulty applying those ideas.

C grade:

- 3 absences. 3 or more late papers.
- Substantive participation in less than 50% of class discussions, i.e. questions and comments that demonstrate understanding of readings and films.
- Papers that have many grammatical or spelling errors, and that lack proper citation of sources.
- Papers that do not show knowledge of course materials.
- Papers that do not have introductions that outline an argument, middle paragraphs that develop that argument and substantiate assertions with evidence, and conclusions that summarize the argument.
- Papers that indicate that the student may not have understood the key themes and idea of the course.

The UF policies on grading can be found here:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

Please note: Not all students who enroll in this course are familiar with the specifics of film analysis. I have three books available in PDF form that can serve as references - James Monaco's classic, *How to Read a Film*, Bill Nichols *Introduction to*

Documentary, and Susan Hayward's *Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts*. Let me know if you want them.

Policy on cell phones, laptops and recording: Cell phones should be turned on silent during class sessions. Laptops may only be used to produce work in class. Seminars may not be recorded without prior consent of the instructor.

For students with disabilities: Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation. Link to Disability Resource Center: <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>

Policy regarding non-completion of assignments: Students must complete all assignments on time and participate in discussions regularly to pass the course.

August 28: Session 1 INTRODUCTION

What is Critical Theory and why is it relevant to the interpretation of art?
Discussion of Critical Theory questionnaire about goals of course.

Sept 4: Session 2 - The Marxist Underpinning of Critical Theory

Read: Selections on Aesthetics from the Writings of Marx and Engels (PDF)

Film: Karl Marx and Marxism documentary

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0y5gC_hNx-c&index=89&list=WL

Sept. 11: Session 3 The Central Question of Ideology

Read: Stuart Hall: The Problem of Ideology: Marxism without Guarantees

Film: Harun Faroki: *The Inextinguishable Fire* (1969)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1231&v=aJXRNB-5kk

Question of the Week: How does Stuart Hall define ideology? How does Harun Faroki address ideology in *The Inextinguishable Fire*?

Sept. 18: Session 4 - Notions of Authorship

Read: Walter Benjamin: The Author as Producer (PDF)

Film: Jorge Furtado's *Island of Flowers* (1989)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZQcdXh9v0pA>

Sept. 25: Session 5 - Semiotics and Image Analysis

Read: Roland Barthes: *The Rhetoric of the Image*

Film: Michelangelo Antonioni's *Blow Up* (1966) (on reserve at Library West)

October 2 Session 6 - The Sighted Subject

Read: Oliver Sacks: *To See and Not to See* (pdf)

View: Javier Tellez: *Letter on the Blind for the Use of Those Who See*

Question of the Week (write one page/250 words)

How do these works by Sacks and Tellez complicate the relationship between perception and intellection?

October 9: Session 7 - The Oedipal Subject

Sigmund Freud: *Fetishism* (pdf)

Jacques Lacan: *The Split Between the Eye and the Gaze* (pdf)

View: Francis Ford Coppola's *The Conversation* (on reserve at Library West)
(Also available through Amazon Prime)

Oct. 16: Session 8 - The Ideological Subject

Read; Luis Althusser's *Ideology and the Ideological State Apparatus* (pdf)

View: George Lucas' *THX 1138* (on reserve at Library West)

<https://yesmovies.to/movie/thx-1138-4831/74196-16/watching.html>

Question of the Week (write one page/250 words)

You can write about either *The Conversation* or *THX 1138*

As a viewer are you permitted to know more about the scenes than the protagonist? What is absent from the society represented in the film? What does that tell you about Lucas' or Coppola's view of society?

Oct. 23: Session 9 - The Revolutionary Subject

Read: Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau: *Hegemony and Radical Democracy* (pdf)

View: Ivan Dixon's *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* (on reserve at Library West)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GxtMoaV42n8>

October 30: Session 10 - The Racialized Subject

Read: Frantz Fanon's *The Fact of Blackness* (pdf)

View: Steve McQueen's *Twelve Years a Slave* (on reserve at Library West)

Also available on Amazon as a rental

Question of the Week (write one page/250 words)

What do Mouffe and Laclau mean by antagonism? Chose either *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* or *Twelve Years a Slave* and identify what the relationships of antagonism are in the film. How does the protagonist's relation to them change in the course of the film?

November 6: Session 11 - The Sexualized Subject

Read: Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality, Parts 1-2-3* (pdf)

View: Luis Buñuel's *Belle du Jour* (on reserve at Library West)

Also available on Amazon

Nov. 13: Session 12 The Gendered Subject

Read: Judith Butler's *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution* (pdf)

View: Kimberly Pierce's *Boys Don't Cry* (on reserve at Library West)

Question for the Week (write one page/250 words)

Michel Foucault and Judith Butler both argue that gender and sexuality are social constructs. How do the stories in *Boys Don't Cry* and *Belle du Jour* shed light on the notion of socially constructed sexual identity?

NO CLASS ON NOVEMBER 21

Nov. 27: Session 13 - The Emancipated Subject

Read: Jacques Ranciere , *The Emancipated Spectator*, Chapt's 1, 2, 3. (pdf)

View: Brian Knappenberger's *We Are Legion*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZHl0WI32XkY>

Dec 5: Session 14 - The Afflicted Subject

Read: Byung-Chul Han *The Burnout Society* (pdf)

View: Todd Haynes' *Safe* (on reserve at Library West)

Question for the Week (write one page/250 words)

Does the theory of subjectivity described in *The Burnout Society* describe conditions that you are familiar with? If so, how so? If not, how does Todd Haynes represent the scenario outlined by Byung-Chul Han?