

Anthropology 490: Senior Seminar, Anthropology of Popular Culture  
Fall 2011, Monday 1:30 — 4:20, Multicultural House Basement

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Office Hours: M, W 9:30– 10:30 am  
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This seminar provides an overview of historical and contemporary anthropological theory. In this class, we will read samples of major theoretical works by anthropologists and other social and cultural theorists, and examine how they continue to inform both academic cultural theory and popular understandings of social life today. The goal of this seminar is to ground us in a wide variety of theoretical perspectives so that we can apply them to social issues of major concern to us today.

Our emphasis will be on understanding the premises and perspectives of different theorists and critically evaluating their assumptions and their reasoning. What were the historical and social positions that shaped the development of a particular theoretical perspective? What did they illuminate, and what did they obscure? Are they useful for us in understanding contemporary issues such as globalization, environmental issues, ethnic conflict, or social justice?

### Course Readings

Askew, Kelly and Richard Wilk 2002. *The Anthropology of Media*. Malden: Blackwell Press.  
Storey, John 2009. *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader* (4th Edition) ISBN-10: 9781405874212.

Condry, Ian 2006. *Hip-Hop Japan: Rap and the Paths of Cultural Globalization*. Durham: Duke University Press. ISBN: 0822338920.

Boellstorff, Tom 2010. *Coming of Age in Second Life: An Anthropologist Explores the Virtually Human*. ISBN-10: 0691146276.

Additional articles will be available on Moodle.

### Course Requirements

The most important work in this course is to be prepared for each seminar meeting; this means having thoroughly read the material and being prepared to discuss particular points from the reading. Readings are due on the day listed in the class schedule. Your engagement with the material is vital for the success of this learning experience.

*Seminar Participation: (20%)* Students are expected to attend all classes, do the readings prior to class, and **discuss the implications of the issues** in the classroom. This includes your leading two seminar meetings (10%; we will schedule this on the first day of class).

*Discussion Board: (10%)* **Each week**, students will write a brief reaction towards an idea prompted by the reading; I will help initiate reactions on the discussion board, but you should

feel free to write whatever you feel is relevant. They are due prior to the start of each seminar meeting. I expect you to have also reviewed you're your peers have written – you may respond to what they have written, but I expect all exchanges to be as civil as if they were said in person during the seminar meeting. **LATE SUBMISSIONS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.**

*Short Essays:* (total: **30%**) There will be two short essays (15% of the total grade each) due on **19 September 2011** and **24 October 2011**. The first essay will be a review/critique of the material that we have read in class. The second essay is a literature review of the topic that you plan to write on for you research project. Both essays should be no more than five pages, double-spaced, not including references.

*Term Paper:* (**40%**) Based on individual interests, students will select a particular theoretical perspective and apply this model to a particular contemporary topic. Use of ethnographies are not only permitted, but encouraged. In addition, students should use documentary sources, including newspaper clippings, web sites, past fieldwork, or fieldwork conducted specifically for this project. This includes a presentation and a new media component. The paper will be due on **7 December 2011**.

While we will work together on various issues and projects, your papers are your own individual work. All work is subject to the Davidson College Honor Code as stated in the student handbook. If there are individual accommodations for special needs, please let me know and authorize the Dean of Students to contact me so that we can work something out.

#### Course Schedule (subject to modification)

Week 1, 22 August: Seminar Introduction

Reading:

Week 2, 29 August:

Reading: Culturalism section (in Storey); Gramsci, Bennett essays (in Storey)

Week 3, 5 September

Reading: Appadurai article, McLuhan article (in Askew and Wilk)

Week 4, 12 September

Reading: Representing Others section (in Askew and Wilk)

Week 5, 19 September

Reading: Power, Colonialism, Nationalism section (in Askew and Wilk)

Start reading Boellstorff book

Assignment: First Short Essay Due

Week 6, 26 September

Reading: Boellstorff book

Week 7, 3 October

Reading: Boellstorff book

Week 8, 17 October

Reading: 'Race,' Racism, and Representation (in Storey)

Start reading Ian Condry book

Week 9, 24 October

Reading: Ian Condry book

Assignment: Second Short Essay Due

Week 10, 31 October

Reading: Ian Condry book

Week 11, 7 November

Reading: The Politics of the Popular (in Storey)

Week 12, 14 November

Reading: The Politics of the Popular (in Storey) continued

Week 13, 21 November

Reading: Representing Selves section (in Askew and Wilk)

Week 14: 28 November

Reading: Carter article, Brownell article, Appadurai cricket article (all on Blackboard)

Week 15: 5 December

Presentations

14 December: Final Paper Due

## Schedule of Presentations

Week 2, 29 August	
Week 3, 5 September	
Week 4, 12 September	
Week 5, 19 September	
Week 6, 26 September	
Week 7, 3 October:	
Week 8, 17 October:	
Week 9, 24 October	
Week 10, 31 October	
Week 11, 7 November	
Week 12, 14 November	
Week 14: 21 November	
Week 15: 28 November	