Introduction to Cultural Analysis:
Towards a Global "América"

This course is an introduction to interdisciplinary thought; to cultural studies as a field that helps us to understand everyday life; and to tensions within the field of "American" culture, understood as a hemispheric and transnational phenomenon. Focusing in particular on what Raymond Williams has called "keywords" (1976), or vocabulary that structures intellectual work, our goal is to learn to read cultural theory and use it to develop aesthetic, media, and political literacy. Students will address the conditions under which cultural fields are transformed by different technologies such as print, sound, film, analog and digital media. How do such developments affect producers, consumers and intellectual workers?

Although there will be occasional lectures, the majority of class will be run as a discussion.

At the end of the course you should feel as if you have achieved:

• Confidence in your ability to read theory and analyze a primary cultural text;
• The ability to decide why and how a given theoretical approach applies to your intellectual, political and/or cultural work;
• Improved capacity to observe, understand and understand the implications of different theoretical approaches;
• An understanding of cultural studies as a coherent field of study;
• One goal you set for yourself on the first day of class.

At midterm, there will be an in-class, ungraded exercise to help you evaluate whether you are achieving your goals.

Major Readings: Used copies of all texts are available on line; new copies at Shakespeare & Co., 716 Broadway @ Washington Place.

*= available on Kindle

• Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler, eds. Keywords for American Cultural Studies (New York: New York University Press, 2007) 978-0814799482*
• Dick Hebdige, Subculture: the Meaning of Style (New York: Routledge, 1979) 978-0415039499*
Readings marked **Keywords** are essays from the Burgett and Hendler reader; other readings are posted to Black Board.

**Expectations:**

- Class attendance is mandatory: please be on time. Two unexcused absences will result in a grade reduction. You are responsible for contacting a classmate to find out what you have missed.
- All readings are required: you must come to class having done them to the best of your ability.
- You must participate in class to the best of your ability, and do so responsibly. This also means being an active and respectful listener.
- Completing weekly blog posts (accessible through Black Board.) They will be due on the class blog **no later** than 10:00 Monday night. Posts are not due in the weeks when there is another class assignment.

**Your grade will be determined by the following formula:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class participation (including attendance)</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weekly blog posts</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment #1: Observation</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment #2: Argument</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment #3: Implications</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm self - evaluation (CR/F)</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Open book final exam</td>
<td>30%</td>
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**UNIVERSITY POLICIES & RESOURCES: Please read and/or review**

**Disabilities:**
In keeping with the University’s policy of providing equal access for students with disabilities, any student with a disability who may need academic accommodations should contact the office of Student Disability Services. Students requesting any accommodations will need to meet with Jason Luchs, who will conduct an intake, and if appropriate, provide an academic accommodation notification letter. All conversations will be kept confidential.

Mr. Luchs’s office is located at 80 Fifth Ave, 3rd Floor (luchs@newschool.edu, 212.229.5626 x3135). You may also access more information at http://www.newschool.edu/studentservices/disability/.

**Incompletes**
A grade of Incomplete (“I”) indicates that your instructor has granted you an extension to complete outstanding work for a course. The grade of Incomplete will not be assigned automatically. It will only be assigned at the request of the student by the last day of class. Incomplete grades cannot be granted for students who are graduating seniors.
If circumstances require you to request a grade of Incomplete—and the instructor approves your request—the terms of the Incomplete should be agreed upon in writing, using the “Request for a Grade of Incomplete” form (http://www.newschool.edu/forms/registrar_incomplete_grade.pdf). This ensures that both the student and the instructor understand the exact nature of the required work, the manner in which it is to be submitted, and the date by which it must be submitted.

Your instructor will determine the deadline for submission of outstanding work. Students with a grade of Incomplete who do not complete their work by the agreed-upon deadline will receive a grade of Withdrawal/Failure (“WF”). Students who complete outstanding work according to the terms of the Incomplete will receive a letter grade. (The “I” will be converted to a letter grade after your instructor submits a Change of Grade form on your behalf.)

Libraries
The New School Library offers frequent research workshops for students, the day, time, and location of which are posted to the Library webpage (http://library.newschool.edu/events/) each semester. The library also provides one-on-one support for students who in conducting research for a paper or project require additional assistance. Students can contact the library about scheduling a one-on-one appointment with a reference librarian at the following link: http://library.newschool.edu/reference/request.php.

Plagiarism
Plagiarism is the use of another person’s words or ideas in any academic work. (This could be using books, journals, Internet postings, or other students’ papers.) For further information on avoiding plagiarism through proper acknowledgements, including expectations for paraphrasing source material and forms of citation in research and writing, students should consult the MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing (2nd edition), Chapter 6, on documentation. The Bachelor’s Program provides useful online resources to inform students of correct forms of research and writing. To access these resources, go to http://www.newschool.edu/ba/ and click on the link “Resources for Current Students.”

The New School Writing Center also provides online resources about avoiding plagiarism. (See http://www.newschool.edu/admin/writingcenter/index.html.)

Please note that students must receive prior permission from instructors to submit the same or substantially overlapping material for two different assignments. Submission of the same work for two assignments without prior permission is plagiarism.

Writing Center
Students are strongly encouraged to take advantage of the university writing center, located at 71 Fifth Avenue, 9th floor (Between 14th and 15th Streets). To make an appointment, you can e-mail the writing center at
Weeks 1-4: Theory and Practice

January 24: Introduction

- Setting personal goals

January 31: Keywords and Cultural Studies

- Keywords: Culture, America, Public, Capitalism
- Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer, “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception”
- Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler, "Introduction," *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*, 1-6.

February 7: The City as Our Laboratory

- Keywords: City, Modern, Immigration

February 14: Observation and Cultural Analysis

- Keywords: Community, Society
- Ellen Lupton (Maryland Institute College of Art), "A Introduction to Jane Jacobs: *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*," Power Point (February 2008)

**Assignment #1: Observation.** Go to a public place where you do not normally spend time and observe for 30 minutes. Take notes on what you see and hear, and deposit your notes in the Black Board drop box: make sure you include the address and time of day you were there. Then, in no more than 750 words, write an essay describing something that happened in that place while you were there, and how the event reveals something important about the place. Your essay should be informed by at least one readings drawn from work we have read for 2/7 and 2/14. It is due in the Black Board drop box no later than 6:00, February 19.

**Weeks 5 - 8: Cultural Studies and the Body**

**February 21: Race in Public**

- **Keywords:** Abolition, African, Mestizo/a Nation, Property, Race, Slavery, White
- The following articles are from *American Quarterly*, vol. 62 no. 2 (June 2010), and were written to be read together: Kevin Gaines, ASA Presidential Address: “Of Teachable Moments and Specters of Race,” 195-213; Roderick Ferguson, Response: “An American Studies Meant for Interruption,” 215-219; Melani McAlister, Response: “A Virtual Muslim is Something To Be,” 221-231.

**February 28: Sex, Gender, and Performance**

- **Keywords:** Body, Gender, Identity, Performance, Queer, Sex
- Judith Butler, "'Women' as the Subject of Feminism" and "The Compulsory Order of Sex/Gender/Desire," *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 3-10.
- "Austin Powers Battles the Fembots," from *Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery* (New Line Cinema: Jay Roach, 1997), 3:00,
- Murray Hill, "Tie Biz," video, 4:08

**Assignment #2: Argument.** In no more than 750 words, drawing on the Denizet-Lewis article, and using at least two of the essays available to you this
week, answer the following question: Is M. a girl or a boy? Argue your position strongly and be specific. Due March 3 5:00 P.M.

March 5: Racial Imitations

- **Keywords:** Aesthetics, Class, Dialect, Indian
- Film in class: “In Whose Honor? American Indian Mascots In Sports,” (Jay Rosenstein, 1997)

**Self-evaluation:** Deposit in Black Board drop box *no later than 6:00 P.M., March 8.* This a credit/fail assignment, but it is required.

**SPRING BREAK**

**Weeks 9-11: The Politics of Public Life**

March 20: Publics and Counterpublics

- **Keywords:** Border, Citizenship, Democracy
- Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” *Social Text* no. 25/26 (1990), 56-80.

March 27: Citizenship and the Private Sphere

- **Keywords:** Asian, Coolie, Domestic, Ethnicity, Family, Orientalism

**April 3: Subcultures**

- Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: the Meaning of Style*
Review: Ron Strickland, Professor of English, Illinois State University: "British Cultural Studies," Lecture 2 of the Cultural Theory video series, 9:20,

Weeks 12-14: Towards a Global "América"

April 10: An Empire State of Mind

- Keywords: Colonial, Empire, Exceptionalism, Globalization, Liberalism
- Henry Luce, “The American Century” (1941)

April 17: "Américans" in Circulation


April 24: Virtual Reality

- Jean Baudrillard, The Gulf War Did Not Take Place
- "Danger Zone," Top Gun, video (Paramount Pictures: Tony Scott, 1986), 4:06
- CNN, "First Strike Gulf War Air Campaign 1991" video (January 17 1991) 1:54

May 1: Class Presentation of Keywords projects

Assignment #3: Implications. Each student will choose one keyword that we have learned in this course and do a Power Point presentation or a video for the rest of the class. Using between 7 and 10 slides (no more than 5 minutes in the case of a video), and drawing on the course readings, your presentation should explain the cultural studies concept at hand. What are the different implications of this keyword for a local, a national, and a transnational phenomenon? Illustrate -- in words, graphics and other media. Prepare to present for 5 minutes. Presentations will be posted on the course Black Board to help the class study for the final exam.

May 8: Open book final exam