

ENGL 501 (32770D): History of Literary and Cultural Theory

John Carlos Rowe (johnrowe@usc.edu)

W, 5-7:20, THH 203 (Probably in THH 420 [English Dept. Commons Room] and/or 411 [English Dept. Conference Room], but subject to availability)

Office Hours: W, 3:30-5:00 PM (or by appointment)

Readings (in seminar sequence):

Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Harvard University Press, 1995.

Walter Dignolo, *Local Histories/ Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*. Princeton University Press, 2000.

Coco Fusco, *English Is Broken Here: Notes on Cultural Fusion in the Americas*. Athenaeum, 1995.

Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1996.

Ruth W. Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.

Roderick Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black: Towards a Queer of Color Critique*. University of Minnesota Press, 2003.

Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Power of Mourning and Violence*. Verso, 2006.

Paul Jay, *Global Matters: The Transnational Turn in Literary Studies*. Cornell University Press, 2010.

Gary Hall, *Digitize This Book: The Politics of New Media and Why We Need Open Access Now*. University of Minnesota Press, 2008.

John Carlos Rowe, *The Cultural Politics of the New American Studies*. Open Humanities Press/University of Michigan Publishing (www.openhumanitiespress.org), 2012.

Seminar Description:

What do you need, what do you want, and what do you know? We will do a broadly based “survey” of modern and contemporary literary and cultural theories, together with their pertinent backgrounds and pretexts, including readings of theorists suggested by members of the seminar. The core of the seminar will be readings of theorists representing the following broadly defined schools or movements: Marxist and neo-Marxist; Postmodern and Poststructuralist; New Historicist; Feminist; Cultural Studies; Critical Race Studies; Queer; Postcolonial and

Transnational; New Media. Each member of the seminar will lead the seminar discussion of one assigned work. Each member of the seminar will propose (in the seminar) a seminar project in which his/her position is developed clearly and exemplified by an applicable case study or research object. The seminar project will be submitted as a fully developed “position paper” (15-20 pages) at the end of the semester.

Seminar Format:

We will read parts of ten books (assigned readings) and various essays/ selections by those of you who choose to send us materials to read in conjunction with your seminar presentations. We’ll be reading together in the manner of an advanced graduate or postdoctoral seminar, in which research is our collective goal. Most of the books we’re reading are collections of essays by these influential theorists, so we can decide in advance what we all would like to read/ emphasize. These decisions may be especially important for the seminar leaders, who may wish to tell us by email what chapters or portions on which they would like to focus.

Each seminar with assigned readings, I’ll begin by developing an approach to the critic/ theorist we have read. My aim will be to identify the theorist and his/her strengths and weaknesses. My task is not to develop a complete interpretation, but provide a context for further discussion. This will be the same task for the seminar leaders.

This seminar is yours. I’m not in the room to transmit information, which I could just as well send you by email, but to help all of you establish a context for conversation and intellectual collaboration.

Requirements:

Seminar Leader: Each member of the seminar will lead a seminar discussion at least once during the semester. In some cases, two members of the seminar may work together to lead the discussion. The discussion will last about the final hour of the seminar. Seminar leaders may respond to what I did in the first half of the seminar, introduce other scholarly perspectives, or raise their own questions about the author/text treated that week. The seminar leader should not prepare a paper, report, or any other kind of formal presentation. The seminar leader’s responsibility is to stimulate discussion by all seminar participants. A sign-up sheet will be distributed in the first seminar. Participants should be prepared at that time to choose their weeks.

Seminar Proposal and Essay: In weeks 6, 8, 10, and 12, we will have seminar presentations by four people per seminar. Your 15-minute presentation should tell us what kind of critic/ scholar you are (or wish to be) and identify some of your important influences. You may draw on the critics/ texts assigned for the seminar and/or other critics/ theorists. You may wish to ask us to read something by one of the critics/ theorists not included in the formal reading list. If so (it is not required), you should send the entire seminar a selection by that critic/ scholar by one week before your presentation. The selection you send must not exceed 30 printed pages. We will spend about 15 minutes per person to discuss presentation and overall plans for the seminar essay. **Sign-ups for seminar presentations will also be in the first seminar, August 29.**

You should develop your seminar essay of 15-20 pages out of your seminar presentation. Your goal is to identify yourself as a critic, scholar, and/or theorist, specifically linking your work with an established tradition of criticism and by giving some examples of the kind of work you would like to do. This work need not be a full interpretation of a literary or cultural text, although such texts might well be examples. Your work can be quite diverse, but you should make an effort to identify how it would appeal to existing disciplines, departmental structures, and higher education in general.

You should follow the *Modern Language Association* system of citation. The seminar essay is due by email (attached file) on **December 14, F, no later than 5 PM.**

Grading: There will be no discrete percentages for the different assignments. In fact, the seminar proposal and seminar leader role won't be graded as separate items, but taken into account in my evaluation of the seminar essay. My written comments (electronically sent) on your seminar essay will include comments on your participation in the seminar. These comments will be the same as those I submit to the Department in evaluation of your performance.

Legal statements for USC syllabi

Student Behavior that persistently or grossly interferes with classroom activities is considered disruptive behavior and may be subject to disciplinary action. Such behavior inhibits other students' ability to learn and an instructor's ability to teach. A student responsible for disruptive behavior may be required to leave class pending discussion and resolution of the problem and may be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs for disciplinary action. These strictures may extend to behaviors outside the classroom that are related to the course.

Students with Disabilities requesting academic accommodations based on a disability are required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

Academic Integrity. USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. SCampus, the Student Guidebook, contains the Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A:

<http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/>.

Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at:

<http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/>.

Syllabus

Week 1, August 29

Introductions and introduction to the seminar. **Sign-up sheet for seminar leaders. Sign-up sheet for seminar presentations.**

Week 2, September 5

Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*

Seminar leaders: _____

Week 3, September 12

Coco Fusco, *English Is Broken Here*

Seminar leaders: _____

Week 4, September 19

Walter Mignolo, *Local Histories/ Global Designs*

Seminar leaders: _____

Week 5, September 26

Ruth Gilmore, *Golden Gulag*

Seminar leaders: _____

Week 6, October 3: Seminar Presentations

Week 7, October 10

Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts*

Week 8, October 17: Seminar Presentations

Week 9, October 24

Paul Jay, *Global Matters*

Seminar leaders: _____

Week 10, October 31: Seminar Presentations

Week 11, November 7

Roderick Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black*

Seminar leaders: _____

Week 12, November 14: Seminar Presentations

Week 13, November 21-24: Thanksgiving. No Seminar.

Week 14, November 28:

Judith Butler, *Precarious Life*

Seminar leaders: _____

Week 15, December 5:

Gary Hall, *Digitize This Book* and (look at) Rowe, *The Cultural Politics of the New American Studies*

Seminar leaders: _____

December 14, F, 5 PM: Seminar Essays due by email (attached file) to johnrowe@usc.edu