

## Fall 2015 AMST 500

### Theoretical Foundations in American Studies

**Professor Jack Halberstam**

**Email:** halberst@usc.edu

**Office:** 448 Kaprelian Hall

**Office Hours:** Tu-10:00 – 11:30; W 11:30 – 1:00, and by appointment

**Class Time and Place:** Tu 2:00-4:50pm in KAP 150

This course is designed to introduce students to key debates in the fields of American and Ethnic Studies. Rather than give a comprehensive or chronological survey of the field, this course attempts to sample from the field in order to give students access to some important conversations, some relevant historical arcs and some pressing politically urgent questions. The texts have been chosen, therefore, for their contributions to an ongoing understanding of the global understanding of “America” “the Americas: and “American” within dynamic systems and processes of race, migration, subjectivity, property and knowledge

Our readings will provide us with the tools and theories to resist the seductions of developmental narratives of the citizen-subject and we will look for alternative accounts of history, subjectivity, politics and the social. Throughout we will situate “America” as a regulating concept rather than as an idealization and we will consider the meaning of this concept within a global economy. Most weeks, we will select a central theme and then situate readings in a constellation around that theme. We will mostly focus on books or book chapters but you will always have the option of doing other suggested readings on the theme.

The themes/topics we will try to cover include: histories of capitalism; settler colonialism; US Imperialism; knowledge production/circulation; carceral power; migration; memory; architecture.

### REQUIRED TEXTS

Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).

Franz Fanon, *Black Skins, White Masks* (New York, NY: Grove Press, 2008).

Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction* (New York: Vintage, 1980).

Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1997).

Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York, NY: Vintage, 1999).

Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many Headed Hydra: The Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Norton, MA: Beacon Press, 2000).

Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015).

Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (New York: Minor Compositions, 2013).

Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of a Black Radical Tradition* (University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

## **ELECTRONIC RESERVES**

1) James Baldwin, "A Talk to Teachers." Delivered October 16, 1963, as "The Negro Child – His Self-Image"; originally published in *The Saturday Review*, December 21, 1963, reprinted in *The Price of the Ticket, Collected Non-Fiction 1948-1985* (New York: Saint Martin's Press 1985).

2) Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" in *Illuminations* (NY: Schocken, 1969): pp. 217-252.

3) Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in *Lenin, And Philosophy and Other Essays* (NY: Monthly Review Press, 2001): 85-126.

4) Antonio Gramsci, "Hegemony, Relations of Force, Historical Bloc," in *The Antonio Gramsci Reader* (NY: NYU Press, 2000): 189-221.

5) Stuart Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity" from *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, Chapter 20 (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006).

6) Fred Moten, "Resistance of the Object: Aunt Hester's Scream" from *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2003): 1 – 24.

7) Gayle Rubin, "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality," in *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*, ed. Carole S. Vance (New York:

Pandora, 1989), 267-319.

8) Michel Foucault, Lectures 9 and 10 on American Neo-Liberalism from *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978—1979 Lectures at the College de France*. (NY: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2008): 215 – 266..

9) Jasbir Puar, from “Homonationalism and Biopolitics” and “The Sexuality of Terrorism” from *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007): 1 – 78.

10) Chandan Reddy, “Freedom’s Amendments” in *Freedom with Violence: Race, Sexuality, and the US State* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011): 1 – 54.

11) Dean Spade, *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of Law* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books; New edition, 2015).

12) Kale Fajardo, Bantigue. "Transportation: Translating Filipino/Filipino American Tomboy Masculinities Through Seafaring and Migration." *GLQ* 14:2/3.

13) Kathleen Stewart, “The Space of Culture” from *A Space on the Side of the Road* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996): 3 – 40.

14) Lanita Jacobs, Chapters 1 and 6 from *From the Kitchen to the Parlor: Language and Becoming in African American Women's Hair Care* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2006).

15) Heather Love, “Close but not Deep: Literary Ethics and the Descriptive Turn,” *New Literary History*, Volume 41, Number 2, Spring 2010, pp. 371-391.  
[https://svtwuni.files.wordpress.com/2011/12/close-but-not-deep-h\\_love.pdf](https://svtwuni.files.wordpress.com/2011/12/close-but-not-deep-h_love.pdf)

16) Macarena Gomez-Barris, “Ice and Political Heat” from *Where Memory Dwells: Cultural and Violence in Chile* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: UC Press, 2008)” 1-30.

17) Jack Halberstam, “Animating Revolt” from *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).

18) Nayan Shah, Part One, “Migration, Capitalism and Stranger Intimacy” from *Stranger Intimacy: Contesting Race, Sexuality and the Law in the North American West* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press): 1 – 128.

19) Ann Cvetkovich, “Introduction” and “The Everyday Life of Queer Trauma,” from *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003): 1 – 48.

20) Gayatri Gopinath, “Archive, Affect and the Everyday: Queer Diasporic Revisions” in *Political Emotions*, edited by Janet Staiger, Ann Cvetkovich and Ann Reynolds (New York, NY: Routledge, 2010): 166-192.

21) Ann Stoler, “A Prologue in Two Parts” and “The Pulse of the Archive” from *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010): 1 – 54.

22) Diana Taylor, “Memory as Cultural Practice” in *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003): 79-109.

23) José E. Muñoz, “A Jeté Out The Window” from *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2009): 147-168.

24) Karen Tongson, “Karaoke, Queer Theory, Queer Performance” in *Oxford Volume on Music and Queerness*, eds. Fred Maus and Sheila Whitely (Oxford University Press, 2015).

25) Marlon Bailey, “It’s Gonna Get Severe Up in Here” from *Butch Queens Up in Pumps: Gender, Performance, and Ballroom Culture in Detroit* (Detroit, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2013): 124-181.

26) Joseph Roach, “Introduction: History, Memory, And Performance,” from *Cities of The Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia UP, 1996): 1-32.

## **Assignments**

**1. Weekly Reports:** Each week you will turn in summaries of that week’s reading. In no more than a total of 1.5 single-spaced pages for each week’s reading, identify:

- 1) What is the main question/problem engaged by each text?
- 2) What is the main argument of each text (try to keep this to two sentences) and, moreover, what is at stake for the author in this argument?
- 3) You should end with a question provoked by the reading that is specific to the reading but that opens out into a discussion topic for the seminar.

## **2. Final Paper:**

Please submit a final seminar paper (10-15 pages) that addresses an area or topic or question that you wish to explore further but that deploys the theoretical materials of the course. We can meet and talk about your papers in the second half of the semester.

### 3. Presentations:

After week two, one or two students per session will be responsible for leading a discussion about one or more of the seminar readings for that week. You can use your weekly report to build your presentation.

## SCHEDULE

### WEEK 1: INTRODUCTIONS: TRIAL BY FIRE

Aug. 25

**Reading:** James Baldwin, "A Talk to Teachers" - [http://www.pps.k12.or.us/files/district-leadership/A\\_Talk\\_To\\_Teachers\\_James\\_Baldwin.pdf](http://www.pps.k12.or.us/files/district-leadership/A_Talk_To_Teachers_James_Baldwin.pdf)

### WEEK 2: WHAT, WHY, WHEN AND HOW?

September 1

**Readings:** Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (**BB**); Stuart Hall, "Marxism Without Guarantees from *Stuart Hall*" (**BB**); Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" (**BB**); Antonio Gramsci, "Hegemony, Relations of Force, Historical Bloc" (**BB**). Stuart Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity" (**BB**).

### WEEK 3: NO CLASS

September 8

LABOR DAY

**Reading:**

### WEEK 4: WAR, WHAT IS IT GOOD FOR?

September 15

**Reading:** Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity*

**WEEK 5:**  
September 22

## **HIDDEN HISTORIES**

**Reading:** Linebaugh and Rediker from *Many Headed Hydra*; Cedric Robinson, Section One from *Black Marxism*.

**Themes:** Histories of resistance; dominant archives, counter histories; capitalism and its discontents; coalition; multitudes.

**WEEK 6:**  
September 29

## **SUBJECTION, SLAVERY, ESCAPE**

**Reading:** Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*; Fred Moten, “Resistance of the Object: Aunt Hester’s Scream” from *In the Break*.

**Themes:** Race, histories of captivity and escape; aesthetics and survival.

**WEEK 7:**  
October 6

## **BLACK SKINS, RED SKINS, WHITE MASKS**

**Reading:** Fanon, from *Black Skins, White Masks*; Coulthard, from *Red Skins, White Masks*.

**Themes:** Territory, occupation; spaces, movement; biopolitics.

**WEEK 8:**  
October 13

## **FROM REPRESSION TO PRODUCTION**

**Reading:** Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume 1*; Foucault, from *Biopolitics* (**BB**); Gayle Rubin, “Thinking Sex” (**BB**).

**Themes:** Power, desire, history, blood, affiliation, productivity.

**WEEK 9:**

October 20

**READINGS IN QUEER THEORY**

**Reading:** Jasbir Puar, from *Terrorist Assemblages* (BB); from Chandan Reddy, *Freedom With Violence* (BB); from Dean Spade, *Normal Life* (BB).

**Themes:** Norms, violence, sexuality and power.

**Special Event:** Lecture and Seminar with Professor Jasbir Puar, October 29 + 30.

**WEEK 10:**

October 27

**METHODOLOGIES 1: ETHNOGRAPHY**

**Reading:** Kale Fajardo, Bantigue. "Transportation: Translating Filipino/Filipino American Tomboy Masculinities Through Seafaring and Migration." *GLQ* 14:2/3 (BB); Kathleen Stewart, from *A Space on the Side of the Road* (BB); Lanita Jacobs, from *From the Kitchen to the Parlor* (BB).

**Special Event:** CLASS VISIT: Professor Lanita Jacobs

**WEEK 11:**

November 3

**METHODOLOGIES 2: CLOSE READING,  
SURFACE READING, SOCIO-CULTURAL  
ANALYSIS**

**Reading:** Heather Love, "Surface Reading" (BB); Macarena Gomez-Barris, from *In Memory Dwells* (BB); Jack Halberstam, from *The Queer Art of Failure* (BB).

**Special Event:** CLASS VISIT: Professor Gomez-Barris.

**WEEK 11:**

November 10

**METHODOLOGIES 3: ARCHIVES**

**Reading:** Nayan Shah, from *Stranger Intimacy* (BB); Ann Cvetkovich, from *Archive of Feelings* (BB); Gayatri Gopinath (BB); Ann

