

<b>From Critical Theory to Cultural Studies:</b>
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UCSD Ethnic Studies 257B
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Winter 2010
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<b>aesthetics in social theory</b>
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Professor Roshanak Kheshti

SSB 253

Tuesdays 12:30-3:20

**Description:**

While Marx famously rejected religion (“religion is the opiate of the people”<sup>1</sup>) the Marxist tradition identifies aesthetics with emancipatory potential. 20<sup>th</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup> century scholars writing in this tradition have produced various and competing studies of art and aesthetics, most notably those scholars affiliated with the Frankfurt School for Social Research and those within the vast field of cultural studies. While the notion of aesthetics has long been an object of philosophical concern, the Marxist aesthetic tradition generally identifies aesthetics and aesthetic practice with the potential to actualize social transformation. This course examines key texts with the aim of exploring the disparate critiques and valorizations of aesthetics within this tradition with a particular emphasis on the affective, emancipatory and ephemeral qualities that have drawn scholars and social movements to these forms and practices.

**Coursework:**

Presentations:

Each student is responsible for presenting and facilitating discussion during one class meeting. Presentations should facilitate discussion and offer interpretations of the text(s), preferably bringing ideas into conversation across class meetings. In keeping with the course theme on aesthetics, students should incorporate aesthetic objects (videos, music, sculpture, fashion, dance, etc.) into their presentation. Objects might reflect, complicate, interpret or interrogate the ideas raised in the reading ideally putting the object into conversation with the reading.

Response Papers:

Each student will produce one response paper for each class meeting synthesizing the readings, bringing them into conversation with each other and/or with the student’s own work. Response papers can also offer aesthetic readings influenced by the articles/books read for class that day.

Papers:

Each student will produce one 12-16 page paper on course core themes as they pertain to the student’s project or interest. Collaborations between students on one paper are encouraged.

**Required Texts:**

Books (available at Groundworks):

*The Aesthetic Dimension* Herbert Marcuse

*Aesthetics and Politics* Ernst Bloch

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<sup>1</sup> *Contribution to Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*

*The Culture Industry* Theodor Adorno  
*The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility and others Writings on Media* Walter Benjamin  
*In the Break* Fred Moten

Reader:

All other readings available through e-reserves

Recommended:

*Downcast Eyes* Martin Jay  
*One Dimensional Man* Herbert Marcuse  
*Negative Dialectics* Theodor Adorno  
*Arcades Project* Walter Benjamin

**Media:**

*Representation and the Media*  
*Herbert's Hippopotomas*  
*The Essential Marcuse*  
*Edward Said On Orientalism*  
Gayatri Spivak <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ZHH4ALRFHw>  
*Angela Davis at UCLA*  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AI4U-q2o2cg&feature=fvw>  
*Angela Davis: How Does Change Happen?*  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pc6RHtEbiOA>

Important Web Tools:

<http://www.blackculturalstudies.org/>

Stuart Hall Interview: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fBfPtRaGZPM>

**Schedule**

<b>The Frankfurt School</b>
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**Week 1 January 5**

-“ Forward,” “Introduction,” Chapter 1 “The Creation of the Institute...” pages 3-7, and Chapter 2 “The Genesis of Critical Theory” in *The Dialectical Imagination* by Martin Jay  
-*The Aesthetic Dimension* Herbert Marcuse

Recommended:

*Karl Marx and Frederick Engels on Literature and Art*

**Week 2 January 12**

-Presentation I & II in *Aesthetics and Politics* Ernst Bloch  
-Part two “The Role of Art in Modern Capitalism” in *Marxist Aesthetics* by Pauline Johnson  
-“Art and Mass Culture” in *Critical Theory: Selected Essays* Max Horkheimer  
-“Aesthetic Theory and the Critique of Mass Culture” in *The Dialectical Imagination* by Martin Jay

Presentations:

**Week 3 January 19**

- Part I and VI in *The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility and others Writings on Media* Walter Benjamin
- Chapter 1 and 12 in *Aesthetic Theory* Theodor Adorno
- Presentation III & IV in *Aesthetics and Politics* Ernst Bloch

Recommended:

*The Origin of Negative Dialectics* Susan Buck-Morss

*The Dialectics of Seeing* Susan Buck-Morss

Presentations:

<b>Further Intellectual Genealogies</b>
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**Week 4 January 26**

- Ch. 3 & 5 in *Cultural Marxism in Postwar Britain* Dennis Dworkin
- “Mass Society: an Outline” and “From Consumption, Concentration, Classless Compartments to Relativism” in *Mass Media in a Mass Society* Richard Hoggart
- “Introduction,” “A Note on Cricket,” “Preface,” Parts 5 & 6 in *Beyond a Boundary* by C.L. R. James
- Introduction and Chapter II “Cultural Theory” in *Marxism and Literature* Raymond Williams

Recommended:

*The Making of the English Working Class* E.P. Thompson

Presentations:

**Week 5 February 2**

- Introduction and Chapter 2: Louis Althusser in *Pictures of Reality* Terry Lovell
- “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus” in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* Louis Althusser
- Stuart Hall “Gramsci’s Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity” in *Antonio Gramsci* edited by James Martin
- “The Intellectuals,” Part I Ch. 3 section entitled “History of the Subaltern Classes,” Part II Ch. 2 section entitled “The Transition from the War of Manoeuvre ...to the War of Position” in *The Prison Notebooks* Antonio Gramsci

Recommended:

*Reading Capital* Louis Althusser and Etienne Balibar

“The Philosophy of Praxis” in *The Prison Notebooks* Antonio Gramsci

Presentations:

<b>Cultural Studies</b>
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**Week 6 February 9**

- “Cultural Studies and Its Theoretical Legacies” Stuart Hall and “New Ethnicities” by Stuart Hall and “The Formation of a Diasporic Intellectual: An Interview with Stuart Hall” by Kuam Hsing Chen in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies* Edited by David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen

-“Jewels Brought from Bondage’: Black Music and the Politics of Authenticity” in *The Black Atlantic* Paul Gilroy

-“Diaspora, Utopia and the Critique of Capitalism” in *There Ain’t No Black in the Union* Jack Pail Gilroy

Presentations:

**Week 7 February 16: Sound, Sexuality and Blackness Pt. 1**

-“Art on the Frontline” in *Angela Y. Davis Reader* by Joy James

-“Introducton” and “The Sexual Politics of Women’s Blues” in *Cultures in Babylon* Hazel Carby

-“Tuning the American Soul” in *Race Men* Hazel Carby

-“The Sorrow Song” in *The Souls of Black Folk* W.E.B. Dubois

-Introduction, “I Used to be Your Sweet Mama” and “Mama’s Got the Blues” in *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism*

Presentations:

**Week 8 February 23: Popular Culture and Blackness**

-Gina Dent “Black Pleasure, Black Joy” in *Black Popular Culture* Edited by Gina Dent

-“Known Rivers/New Forms” and “Variations on the Solidarity Blues” in *In Search of the Black Fantastic* Richard Iton

-Stuart Hall “What is this Black in Black Popular Culture” in *Black Popular Culture* Edited by Gina Dent

-“Hearing Sonic Afro-Modernity” in *Phonographies* Alexander G. Weheliye

Presentations:

**Week 9 March 2: Sound, Sexuality and Blackness Pt. 2**

*In the Break* Fred Moten

Presentations:

**Week 10 March 9: The Culture Industries: Desire, Profit, Pleasure**

-Chapters 1-4 in *The Culture Industry* Theodor Adorno

-Chapter 1, 8 and 9 in *Global Culture Industry* Scott Lash and Celia Lury (selections)

-“The Aesthetic Dimension” and “Eros and Thantos” in *Eros and Civilization* Herbert Marcuse

-Ch 2 & 3 in *Profit and Pleasure* Rosemary Hennessy

Presentations:

**Final Papers due March 16, 2010**