



Image by Banksy

### ANT 330C: Theories of Culture & Society

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Tuesdays & Thursdays: 12:30-2:00 PM SAC 4.118

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 2:30-4:30pm or by appointment

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to a set of core ideas and propositions in social theory broadly and theories of culture and society specifically. The course aims to do this by teaching strategies for thinking with and against, writing about, using, and engaging theoretical texts. The course works forward from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, engaging a highly selective set of thinkers who provide core foundations in contemporary social and anthropological thought. It then moves into a series of explorations of the ways that anthropological theories of culture and society written in the early and mid-twentieth century continue to fuel debates in anthropology today. It closes with a brief introduction to a series of transformations in social and cultural theory from the 1970s forward, particularly postcolonial theory and post-structuralism. The course makes no claim to be comprehensive. Rather, it aims to teach students how to work with and through social theory and to prepare them for further encounters with social theory in academic work and in the “world beyond.”

The course is conceived primarily for majors but above all for students who are committed to working with difficult, influential, and fascinating texts. The course combines lecture and seminar discussion. The course integrates an intense and demanding regime of reading and discussion with an equally intense and demanding program of writing. The aim is to encourage students to develop the habit of writing clear and concise prose, especially when engaging with difficult and complex ideas.

## Course Format, Policies and Procedures

### Course Format

This course is a writing intensive and combines lectures, in-class presentations, and small group work. We will cover a range of different materials in a number of different ways. I expect your *full, active, and professional participation in class*. This means:

- . Attending all class meetings
- . Showing up on time (note—persistently showing up late will negatively affect your participation grade)
- . Respectfully engaging with the course instructor and your peers
- . Being responsible for all of the assigned reading and materials: *this means that if you miss a class, it is your responsibility to do the reading and get class notes from one of your peers*

### Course readings and syllabus

I believe that a course and its instructor should be adaptable. This means that readings and course activities *may* change to suite course developments, forward fruitful discussions, or to address student interests. For this reason, the readings in this syllabus should be regarded as provisional. *For any given week, the readings will be available and listed in the “Modules” section of Canvas. For this reason, readings are not available for a given week until the previous week.*

While readings may, from time to time change, *the course policies and procedures listed in this syllabus will not*. It is your responsibility to know them.

### Reading Policy

All of the course readings for this class can be found on Canvas with the exception of five books which are required. Those are:

- Simon During. *The Cultural Studies Reader*. Routledge.
- Sigmund Freud. *The Uncanny*. Penguin.
- Tucker. *The Marx-Engles Reader*. Norton.
- Michel Foucault. *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*. Vintage.
- Carl Wilson. *Celine Dion’s ‘Let’s Talk About Love: A Journey to the End of Taste*. 33 1/3.

In some classes, we will spend significant time discussing particular readings. In others, we will treat them as background. In all cases, if there is something you don’t understand in the material, *it is your responsibility to make sure that you gain an understanding of it by asking questions and raising issues*. You are expected to arrive at class ready to discuss any and all of the required course readings.

### Policy on Plagiarism

I strongly believe that learning (particularly learning theory) is a collaborative venture. I encourage you to study with your peers, meet to discuss readings with them, and, on particular assignments, to work together with them. That said, the work that you produce for this course must be your own. There are *no exceptions to this rule and no legitimate excuses for violating it*.

In event that you fail to acknowledge others' work or that you are caught overtly plagiarizing from online or written sources, you will receive a zero on the assignment and may be subject to disciplinary procedures. See below (following course readings) for links to the University Policy on Academic integrity

### Email and Office Hours policy

Please, feel free to contact me via email ([jasoncons@utexas.edu](mailto:jasoncons@utexas.edu)). I prefer that you contact me directly rather than through Canvas. Please also keep in mind that I am as busy as you. Make sure you consult the

course syllabus, other handouts, your peers and the course Canvas site *before* sending an e-mail. Note that e-mail should *not* be seen as an alternative to meeting with me during office hours. Nor should e-mail be used as a mechanism to receive private tutorials or to explain material that was covered in classes you missed (those are your responsibility to obtain from your peers). I will endeavor to respond within 24 hours, though *I do not respond to email on the weekends or after 5pm*, so plan ahead. Contacting me the night before an assignment is due is, by definition, too late.

My office hours are *your* time and you are welcome to drop by at any time during them. Because, at particular times in the semester, many of you will want to see me, I do recommend setting up an appointment ahead of time. Also, if you have a regular class conflict during my office hours, I am more than happy to set up an appointment with you at another time, however, I ask that you do not just drop by my office outside of office hours without checking with me first. I may be there, but I will be working on other things with pressing deadlines.

### **Late Policy**

I adhere to the following late policy on assignments:

- . All reading response papers must be turned in by *midnight the night before class*. Late reading responses will receive a zero. The responses must deal with the readings for that day. Post-facto responses are not acceptable.
- . Other assignments turned in up to 12 hours late will be penalized by 1/3 of a letter grade.
- . Assignments turned in between 12 and 24 hours late will be penalized a full letter grade.
- . Assignments turned in between 24 and 48 hours late will be penalized two full letter grades.
- . Assignments more than 48 hours late will not be accepted.

### **Writing Policy**

This course carries the Writing Flag. Writing Flag courses are designed to give students experience with writing in an academic discipline. In this class, you can expect to write regularly during the semester, complete substantial writing projects, and receive feedback from your instructor to help you improve your writing. You will also have the opportunity to revise one or more assignments, and you may be asked to read and discuss your peers' work. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from your written work. Writing Flag classes meet the Core Communications objectives of Critical Thinking, Communication, Teamwork, and Personal Responsibility, established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

- I have extensively detailed my policy on citation and bibliography on my website: <http://www.jasoncons.net/formatting-and-referencing-papers.html>
- I have also provided advice for student writers that is applicable not just in my courses, but in any course you are likely to take as an undergraduate: <http://www.jasoncons.net/advice-on-writing.html>

### **Attendance Policy**

Attendance at all course meetings is required. For the first few course sessions (until I know all of your names) I will take a roll call. After that, I will simply record your presence or absence in my notes.

You are permitted two unexplained course absences per semester. After that, each absence will reduce your overall participation grade by 3.33% (i.e., by 1/3 of a letter grade). If you have a legitimate reason to miss class, it is your responsibility to let me know by email *before* class.

## Assignments and Grades

The following is a breakdown of how I will evaluate your performance in the class. More in-depth descriptions, rubrics, and prompts will be provided with each assignment.

- . *Class Participation: 20%*—Active, informed, and respectful participation in class discussions and small group work. Course leadership on days you are a course leader is a significant factor in this grade.
- . *Reading Responses: 20%*—You are responsible for writing a summary of a reading, a discussion question based on that reading, and a justification of that question's purpose at least weekly. At the end of the semester, you will collect your best 10 of these and turn them in in portfolio form.
- . *Short Papers: 60%*—There will be 5 short papers (4-5 pages) that you will complete over the course of the semester. These will all take different forms. I will grade and count your best 4 towards your overall grade.

## A note on class participation

The class participation is worth 20% of your overall grade. This is a famously fuzzy measure. Here is how I plan to assess it:

- 5% of total grade: Showing up on time
- 5% of total grade: Coming prepared to discuss the readings
- 5% of total grade: Making regular and productive contributions to class discussions
- 5% of total grade: Being an effective discussion leader during your designated course sessions

## Learning Objectives/ Goals

Upon completion, students will be able to:

- . Understand core ideas in theories of culture and society
- . Communicate in both writing and speech about social theory
- . Apply perspectives in theories of culture and society to real world contexts.
- . Identify and analyze key challenges and complexities related to addressing specific problems in social theory
- . Explain, in broad strokes, the intellectual history of social theory from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present
- . Analyze and explain different approaches to the study of culture and society (materialist, structural, poststructural, etc.)
- . Write, speak, communicate, and think more critically and clearly about the world around you

## Introduction to Social Theory

### Week 1: Course Introduction

August 31:

- Reading Theory

### Week 2: Theory: What is it Good For?

September 5—What is anthropological theory anyway?

- Ortner, S. 1984. "Theory in Anthropology since the Sixties." *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. 26(1).
- Lund, C. "Of What Is This a Case? Analytical Movements in Qualitative Social Science Research." *Human Organization*. 73(3).

September 7—Description: Thick or Thin?

- Geertz, C. 1973. "Thick Description: Towards an Interpretive Theory of Culture" and "Deep Play: Notes On the Balinese Cock Fight." In *The Interpretation of Cultures*.
- Healy, K. 2015. "F\*ck Nuance."

## Marxian Roots

### Week 3: Marx—Classes and Histories

September 12: Why should the workers of the world unite?

- Marx, K and F. Engels. "The Communist Manifesto." In *The Marx-Engels Reader*.
- Marx, K. "Theses on Feuerbach." In *The Marx-Engels Reader*.

September 14: Who were/are Lumpen?

- Marx, K. "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte." In *The Marx-Engels Reader*.

*Split Discussion:*

- Stallybrass, P. 1990. "Marx and Heterogeneity: Thinking the Lumpenproletariat." *Representations*. 31.
- Fanon, F. 1963. "The Grandeur and Weakness of Spontaneity." In *The Wretched of the Earth*. Grove.

### Week 4: Marx—Value, Society, and the Commodity-Form

September 19: What is a commodity?

- Marx, K. Pages 302-361 of "Capital: Volume 1." In *The Marx-Engels Reader*.

September 21: What is Value?

- Benjamin, W. 2007. "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproduction." In *The Cultural Studies Reader*. Routledge.
- Film: *F for Fake*. 1977. Director: Orson Welles.

**Assignment 1: Due Monday September 25 by noon.**

**Week 5: Gramsci—Hegemony, Power, and Resistance**

September 26: What is hegemony and how does it work?

- Gramsci, A. 2007. "The Organization of Education and of Culture." In *The Cultural Studies Reader*. Routledge.
- Gramsci, A. 2006. "State and Civil Society." In *The Anthropology of the State Reader*. Blackwell.

September 28: Thinking with Hegemony

- Hall, S. 1986. "Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity." *Journal of Communication Inquiry*. 10(5).

**Classical Framings, Contemporary Interpretations**

**Week 6: Freud—Uncanny States**

October 3: What is the Uncanny?

- Freud, S. 2003. "The Uncanny." In *The Uncanny*. Penguin Classics.

**Assignment 2 Due Monday October 9.**

October 5: How do we encounter the Uncanny?

- Johnson, A. 2013. "Progress and Its Ruins: Ghosts, Migrants, and the Uncanny in Thailand." *Cultural Anthropology*.

**Week 7: Durkheim—Collective Effervescences**

October 10: What is religious life and what does it "do"?

- Durkheim, E. "Book 1, Ch. 1; Book 2, Ch. 7; Book 3, Chapter 5; Conclusion." In *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*.

October 12: How does collective effervescence work (on Wall Street)?

- Appadurai, A. 2016. Chapters 5 and 6 of *Banking on Words: The Failure of Language in the Age of Derivative Finance*. University of Chicago Press.

**Week 8: Levi-Straus—Animals, Humans, and Others**

October 17: Thinking with Animals

- Levi-Strauss, C. 1966. "The Science of the Concrete" and "The Individual as Species." In *The Savage Mind*

October 19: Thinking with Animal Disease

- Keck, F. 2015. "Liberating Sick Birds: Poststructuralist Perspectives on the biopolitics of Avian Influenza." *Cultural Anthropology*.

### **Week 9: Dirty, Rooted, Betwixt, Between**

October 24: How does matter become "out of place"?

- Douglas, M. "Introduction", Ch. 1, and Ch.7. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. Routledge.

*Companion Essay*: Malkki, L. "National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity among Scholars and Refugees." *Cultural Anthropology*.

October 26: What is the liminal?

- Turner, V. 1969. "Liminality and Communitas." In *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Cornell University Press.
- Turner, V. 1967, "Muchona the Hornet, Interpreter of Religion." In *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*. Cornell University Press.

*Companion Essay*: Middleton, T. "Anxious Belongings: Anxiety and the Politics of Belonging in Subnationalist Darjeeling." *American Anthropologist*. 115(4).

**Assignment 3: Due Monday October 30 by noon.**

### **A Variety of Turns**

#### **Week 10: Foucault—Thinking Past Structuralism**

October 31: Peer Review

November 2: The History of Sexuality, Part 1--Framing

- Foucault, M. 1978. Part 1-3. *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Volume 1*. Vintage.

#### **Week 11: Foucault—Towards a Bio-Politics**

November 7: The History of Sexuality, Part 2—Towards a biopolitics

- Foucault, M. 1978. Parts 4-5. *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*. Vintage.

November 9: Biopolitics: Split Discussion

- Ticktin, M. 2006. "Where Ethics and Politics Meet: The Violence of Humanitarianism in France." *American Ethnologist*.
- Petryna, A. 2004. "Biological Citizenship: The Science and Politics of Chernobyl-Exposed Populations." *Osiris*.

#### **Week 12 Biopolitics of Gender**

November 14: The Normalization of Gender

- Butler, J. "Subversive Bodily Acts." In *The Cultural Studies Reader*.

November 16: Beyond "Gender"

- Haraway, D. "A Cyborg Manifesto." In *The Cultural Studies Reader*. Routledge.

**Week 13: Bourdieu—Forms of distinction**

November 21: What is habitus?

- Bourdieu, P. "Field of Power, Literary Field, Habitus." In *The Cultural Studies Reader*.

November 23: Thanksgiving

**Week 14: Bourdieu continued.**

November 28: What is Taste?

- Wilson, C. 2007. *Celine Dion's Let's Talk About Love; A Journey to the End of Taste*. 33 1/3 Series.

**Assignment 4: Due Monday, December 4 by noon**

- November 30: Peer Review Session

**Week 15: Provincializing Europe**

December 5: What might it mean to provincialize Europe?

- Said, E. "Traveling Theory Reconsidered." In *The Cultural Studies Reader*. Routledge.

**Assignment 5 Distributed**

December 7: Who speaks for the Subaltern?

- Spivak, G. 1984. "The New Subaltern: A Silent Interview" In *The Cultural Studies Reader*.



## POLICIES & RESOURCES

### University Policies

#### Religious Holy Days

By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, I will give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

#### Q Drop Policy

If you want to drop a class after the 12th class day, you'll need to execute a Q drop before the Q-drop deadline, which typically occurs near the middle of the semester. Under Texas law, you are only allowed six Q drops while you are in college at any public Texas institution. For more information, see:

<http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/csacc/academic/adddrop/qdrop>

#### Student Accommodations

Students with a documented disability may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 512-471-6259 (voice) or 1-866-329-3986 (video phone). <http://ddce.utexas.edu/disability/about/>

- Please request a meeting as soon as possible to discuss any accommodations
- Please notify me as soon as possible if the material being presented in class is not accessible
- Please notify me if any of the physical space is difficult for you

#### Academic Integrity

Each student in the course is expected to abide by the University of Texas Honor Code:

**“As a student of The University of Texas at Austin, I shall abide by the core values of the University and uphold academic integrity.”**

This means that work you produce on assignments, tests and exams is all your own work, unless it is assigned as group work. I will make it clear for each test, exam or assignment whether collaboration is encouraged or not.

Always cite your sources. If you use words or ideas that are not your own (or that you have used in previous class), you must make that clear otherwise you will be guilty of plagiarism and subject to academic disciplinary action, including failure of the course.

You are responsible for understanding UT's Academic Honesty Policy which can be found at the following web address: [http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint\\_student.php](http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php)

### University Resources for Students

The university has numerous resources for students to provide assistance and support for your learning, use these to help you succeed in your classes

#### The Sanger Learning Center

Did you know that more than one-third of UT undergraduate students use the Sanger Learning Center each year to improve their academic performance? All students are welcome to take advantage of Sanger Center's classes and workshops, private learning specialist appointments, peer academic coaching, and tutoring for more than 70 courses in 15 different subject areas. For more information, please visit <http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/slc> or call 512-471-3614 (JES A332).

#### The University Writing Center

The University Writing Center offers free, individualized, expert help with writing for any UT student, by appointment or on a drop-in basis. Consultants help students develop strategies to improve their writing. The assistance we provide is intended to foster students' resourcefulness and self-reliance.

<http://uwc.utexas.edu/>

### **Counseling and Mental Health Center**

The Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC) provides counseling, psychiatric, consultation, and prevention services that facilitate students' academic and life goals and enhance their personal growth and well-being. <http://cmhc.utexas.edu/>

### **Student Emergency Services**

<http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/>

### **ITS**

Need help with technology? <http://www.utexas.edu/its/>

### **Libraries**

Need help searching for information? <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/>

### **Canvas**

Canvas help is available 24/7 at <https://utexas.instructure.com/courses/633028/pages/student-tutorials>

## **Important Safety Information**

### **BCAL**

If you have concerns about the safety or behavior of fellow students, TAs or Professors, call BCAL (the Behavior Concerns Advice Line): 512-232-5050. Your call can be anonymous. If something doesn't feel right – it probably isn't. Trust your instincts and share your concerns.

### **Evacuation Information**

The following recommendations regarding emergency evacuation from the Office of Campus Safety and Security, 512-471-5767, <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/>

Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus are required to evacuate buildings when an alarm or alert is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside, unless told otherwise by an official representative.

- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building.
- Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors. Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office.
- Link to information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at: [www.utexas.edu/emergency](http://www.utexas.edu/emergency)