

## | eng 691: politics of culture

**semester** | fall 2018  
**time** | m 11:00-13:50  
**location** | 201 chapman

**professor** | dr. josé m. cortez  
**email** | [jmcortez3@uoregon.edu](mailto:jmcortez3@uoregon.edu)  
**office** | 319 PLC  
**hours** | t/th 12:00-14:00 & by appt.

### course description

this course will provide an overview of the dominant strands of contemporary theoretical discourse relevant to thinking and writing about the politics of culture. the objective of the course is to provide introductory knowledge in these intellectual discussions and to facilitate their incorporation into work produced at the graduate level. informed by readings in critical theory and subaltern studies, the course will offer not only an examination of still-pervasive categories such as politics, hegemony, and representation but will also assess the continuing vitality of culture as a category to account for contemporary neoliberal conditions. course requirements include weekly response papers, active participation, individual class presentations, and a final essay.

### required texts

Agamben: *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*  
 Chandler: *X: The Problem of the Negro as a Problem for Thought*  
 Derrida: *Of Grammatology*  
 Lyons: *X-Marks: Native Signatures of Assent*  
 Foucault: *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*  
 Rancière: *Disagreement*

### grading and assessment

class attendance & participation	15%
response papers	30%
seminar paper	40%
presentation	15%

#### class attendance & participation—15%

attendance is mandatory. please show up to seminar on time. discussion and participation in class are also mandatory. it is therefore important that you come to class prepared, **with a printed copy of the assigned reading**, and ready to contribute to discussion on the assigned texts.

#### response papers—30%

response papers as a way for you to explain what you've read to yourself and others. this is the first step in working with and eventually producing theory. each week, i'd like you to post a response to the assigned reading, again, as a way to begin digesting and mapping out ideas. think about response papers as the very first, very early drafts of some writing that might eventually make it into your seminar project,

your dissertation project, or an article. response papers will be graded on a pass/fail basis. to receive full credit, your response paper needs to:

- 1) address the reading
- 2) be at least 500 words
- 3) present a claim with at least two paragraphs that support this claim
- 4) use at least 2 quotations from the text to support a claim
- 5) be posted to Canvas by 11:59pm on Sunday before class (i want us all to be able to read them before seminar on monday)

*seminar project—40%*

i typically advise students to craft seminar projects that will culminate toward examinations and dissertations. as such, i often advise students to create a project that, for example, traces a critical category from the course into your own interests and field of study. you will choose a topic, but it will be grounded in the material and themes of the course. we will talk in great detail about how to write a seminar paper and what will be expected, and we will meet individually twice during the semester to discuss your ideas. i would like to see between 10-15 pages. due 12.07.18.

*presentation—10%*

on the last day of the course, you will present your seminar project to your peers.

**course policies**

*technology*

please use your computer only in ways that are related to class activities. please put your mobile phones away unless you are using them to take notes.

*respectful conduct*

seminar can be a wonderful intellectual space for you to experiment with ideas. still, reading theory is very difficult. formulating questions about sensitive topics is very difficult. engaging both tasks alongside your peers can be daunting.

cultivate a culture of intellectual rigor. challenge and dialogue with your colleagues. expect each other to produce unending conversation. but be good to each other. we all enjoy different forms of privilege, but we all have blind spots, too. cultivate a seminar space that is both demanding and nurturing.

i will promote difficult and sometimes spicy discussions, but i will not tolerate disrespectful or inappropriate behavior.

## course schedule

- week 1 | **09.24 the sign**  
 Nietzsche: “On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense”  
 Saussure: *Course in General Linguistics* (selections)
- week 2 | **10.01 the sign II**  
 Derrida: *Of Grammatology*
- week 3 | **10.08 the subject**  
 Butler: “Doing Justice to Someone”  
 Althusser: “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses”  
  
 [supplementary readings]  
 gramsci: *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*  
 lacan: “The Mirror Stage as the Formation of the *I* Function”
- Week 4 | **10.15 the subject II**  
 Foucault: *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1*
- week 5 | **10.22 politics**  
 Agamben: *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (selections)  
 Acosta: “Hinging on Exclusion and Exception: Bare Life, the US/Mexico Border, and *Los que nunca llegarán*”  
  
 [supplementary readings]  
 Urra: *The Devil’s Highway: A True Story*
- week 6 | **10.29 politics II**  
 Rancière: *Disagreement*
- week 7 | **11.05 subalternity**  
 Spivak: “Can the subaltern speak?”  
 Guha: “The Prose of Counter-Insurgency”  
 Prakash: “The Impossibility of Subaltern History”
- week 8 | **11.12 disidentifications**  
 Muñoz: “The White to be Angry”: Vaginal Davis’ Terrorist Drag  
 Cárdenas: *Constituting Central American-Americans* (selections)  
  
 [supplementary readings]  
 Fusco: “The Other History of Intercultural Performance”

week 9 | **11.19 assent**

Lyons: *X-Marks*

[supplementary readings]

lyons: "The Fine Art of Fencing: Nationalism, Hybridity, and the Search for a Native American Writing Pedagogy"

week 10 | **11.26 X**

Chandler: *X: The Problem of the Negro as a Problem for Thought*