

Department of Humanities & Cultural Studies
HUM 6586.900 & HUM 6801.900
Theory & Methods for Film & Cultural Studies
Spring 2024, Wednesdays 5 to 7:45pm, CPR 355

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 12 to 2pm
& by appointment

Course Description

This course explores critical theory with an eye to both film studies and cultural studies. Largely a reading course, this seminar provides graduate students a background in the primary texts, history, and major topics of critical theory. Our central focus is to illuminate these theories so students can use them in their own work and go on to explore topics of specific interest. The first portion of the term will look at Marxist, Linguistic, and Psychoanalytic theories as three streams of thought that influenced many subsequent cultural and film theories. Then we will read about a range of topics, including: mediation, phenomenology, and affect; feminist, gender, and queer theories; and ethnicity and postcolonial theories.

Course Objectives & Learning Outcomes

- Develop knowledge of major ideas, history, and debates within critical theory.
- Develop skills reading and understanding critical theory.
- Apply theory as a “lens” for analyzing film, culture, and other art forms.
- Demonstrate critical thinking skills in writing by developing relevant questions, locating and interpreting appropriate sources, and using this material to develop and support analytical argumentation.

Required Readings & Screenings

All assigned readings will be posted to Canvas and must be read prior to the date they are to be discussed. Students are required to bring printed or digitally accessible versions of texts to class. Please screen all moving images and other media works on your own time before they are scheduled to be discussed in class.

Resources

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <https://plato.stanford.edu/>
Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <https://iep.utm.edu/>

Course Schedule

Week 1, 1/10: Introduction

Week 2, 1/17: *The Frankfurt School & Marxist Theories*

Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception,” from *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 120-167

Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility," 251-270

Watch: *The Last Bolshevik (Le Tombeau d'Alexandre)*, directed by Chris Marker, 1992

Week 3, 1/24: Hegemony & Structures of Feeling

Raymond Williams, selections from *Marxism and Literature*, 75-141

Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, 1-19

Examples: TBA

Week 4, 1/31: Knowledge, Culture, & Power

Michel Foucault, selections from *Discipline and Punish*, 170-213

Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 1-28

Watch: *Get Out*, directed by Jordan Peele, 2017

Week 5, 2/7: Structuralism and Post-Structuralism

Ferdinand de Saussure, *The Course in General Linguistics*, 65-70, 110-125

Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, 107-160

Judith Williamson, *Decoding Advertisements: Ideology and Meaning in Advertising*, 11-31

Examples: Advertising from Williamson essay, TBA

Week 6, 2/14: Language and Meanings

Optional: J.L. Austin, selections from *How to do things with words*, 1-11

Jacques Derrida, "Signature Event Context," 82-111

M.M. Bakhtin, "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse," 41-83

Watch: *Repentance*, directed by Tengiz Abuladze, 1987

Week 7, 2/21: Psychoanalytic Theories

Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 311-339

Bruce Fink, from *The Lacanian Subject*, xi-xvii, 3-31

Christian Metz, selections from *Imaginary Signifier*, 244-276

Watch: *Blue Velvet*, directed by David Lynch, 1986

Week 8, 2/28: Feminism, Gender, and Sexuality

Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure & Narrative Cinema," 833-844

Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," from *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory*, 401-417

Watch: *Rear Window*, directed by Alfred Hitchcock, 1954

Week 9, 3/6: Race and Postcolonialism

Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 1-27

Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "Writing 'Race' and the Difference it Makes," 1576-1588

Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 1-18

Watch: *The Battle of Algiers*, directed by Gillo Pontecorvo, 1966

Spring Break 3/11-3/15

Week 10, 3/20: No Class

Week 11, 3/27: Phenomenology

Vivian Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture*, 1-9, 53-84

Linda Williams, *Viewing Positions*, 1-19

Watch: *The Piano*, directed by Jane Campion, 1993

Week 12, 4/3: Black Feminist Aesthetics

Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, 1-43

bell hooks, "The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators," 115-131

Watch: *Daughters of the Dust*, directed by Julie Dash, 1991

Week 13, 4/10: Queer Theory

Nikki Sullivan, *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory*, chapters 5, 7, & 11

Examples: TBA

Week 14, 4/17: Affect & Reparative Modes of Theory

Steven Shaviro, *Post-Cinematic Affect*, 1-10 and 93-130

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay Is About You," from *Touching Feeling: Affect Pedagogy, Performativity*, 123-151

Watch: *Gamer*, directed by Mark Neveldine and Brian Taylor, 2009

Week 15, 4/24: Final Paper Presentations

Finals Week, 5/1 Wednesday: Final Paper Due

Important Dates

January 12th: Add/Drop period ends

January 15th: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Holiday

March 23rd: Last day to withdraw, no refund and no academic penalty
April 20th to 26th: Test Free Week
May 7th: Deadline for professors to submit final grades

Assignments and Course Evaluation

In-class Participation: 15% of course grade. This class will be run primarily as a discussion course; consequently, reading ahead of time, coming to class with an opinion and treating your classmates in a respectful manner are all crucial. There is no formal attendance policy, but if you do not attend class, you cannot participate and consequently the participation portion of your grade will suffer.

Weekly reading response papers: 30% of course grade. Students are required to submit 8 reading response papers during the course of the semester. Each journal is due by noon on the day of class, should be about 1000 words, and should address one reading assigned for class that evening. Each entry in the reading journal should (1) summarize the reading's central points; (2) include some close textual analysis; (3) evaluate the points you found important and useful in the given reading; (4) raise questions and/or criticisms. Each paper will be returned to you with comments by the following week and will be graded on a 10-point scale.

In-class Reading Presentations: 5% of course grade. Pick one reading on the syllabus to present to the class. In order to start our class discussion, you will present your reading response paper that week and prepare two questions for class discussion. Your presentation will be graded out of 10 points.

Short Formal Analysis Paper: 20% of course grade. Students will be required to write a Short Formal Analysis in which they analyze a film, or other form of media/art, through the "lens" of a particular theory. Short Formal Analysis due *no later than March 20th*.

Final Paper Assignment: 30% of course grade. The final paper should be about 15 pages and can go in one of two directions: (1) You can take a theoretical approach addressed in this class and apply those ideas to interpreting a cultural work or event. You can carry out one of the proposed ideas from one of your earlier papers or engage in a new project altogether. (2) You can write a paper that picks one theoretical approach and explores it in more detail through further reading (beyond the syllabus) and analysis. Because the subject matter of this paper is up to you, please use this opportunity to pick a topic that is relevant to your master's thesis or doctoral dissertation. Each student will present their paper on the last day of class.

Course Policies: Grades

Course assignments and final grades will be given as +/- or straight letter grades. The grading scale below will be applied to all assignments and final grades:

98–100 = A+	87–89 = B+	77–79 = C+	67–69 = D+	59–0 = F
94–97 = A	84–86 = B	74–76 = C	64–66 = D	
90–93 = A-	80–83 = B-	70–73 = C-	60–63 = D-	

Grade Dissemination: Graded assignments in this course will be returned to the students via Canvas; students can access their scores at any time using “Grades” in Canvas.

Assignment Commentary Policy: The assignments in this class build from low stakes to high stakes. I provide feedback and expect that students will implement feedback in subsequent assignments.

Late Work Policy: Late assignments will only be accepted when students notify the instructor ahead of the assignment deadline. The instructor will then decide if the student’s situation warrants a deadline extension. Points may be deducted for late work.

Extra Credit, Rewrite, and Group Work Policies: No extra credit, no rewrites, and no group work allowed.

Final Examinations Policy: All final exams are to be scheduled in accordance with the University’s final examination policy.

Academic Accommodations: Students with disabilities are responsible for registering with Student Accessibility Services (SAS) in order to receive academic accommodations. For additional information about academic accommodations and resources, go to the SAS website: <https://www.usf.edu/student-affairs/student-accessibility/>.

Religious Observances: All students have a right to expect that the University will reasonably accommodate their religious observances, practices, and beliefs. If you observe religious holidays, you should plan your allowed absences to include those dates. Students who anticipate the necessity of being absent from class due to the observation of a major religious observance must provide advance notice of the date(s) to the instructor, preferably in writing.

Grades of “Incomplete”: The current university policy concerning incomplete grades will be followed in this course. An “I” grade may be awarded to a student only when a small portion of the student’s work is incomplete and only when the student is otherwise earning a passing grade. The time limit for removing the “I” is to be set by the instructor of the course. For undergraduate students, this time limit may not exceed two academic semesters, whether or not the student is in residence, and/or graduation, whichever comes first. For graduate students, this time limit may not exceed one academic semester. “I” grades not removed by the end of the time limit will be changed to “IF” or “IU,” whichever is appropriate.

Academic Integrity of Students: Academic integrity is the foundation of the University of South Florida System’s commitment to the academic honesty and personal integrity of its community. Academic integrity is grounded in certain fundamental values, which include honesty, respect, and fairness. Broadly defined, academic honesty is the completion of all academic endeavors and claims of scholarly knowledge as representative of one’s own efforts. The final decision on an academic integrity violation and related academic sanction at any USF System institution shall affect and be applied to the academic status of the student throughout the USF System, unless otherwise determined by the independently accredited institution.

Turnitin.com: This course may utilize Turnitin.com. Turnitin is an automated system that instructors use to quickly and easily compare students’ assignments with billions of web sites, as well as an enormous database of student papers that grows with each submission. Accordingly, students may be expected to submit all assignments in electronic format. After the assignment is processed, the instructor receives a

report from turnitin.com that states if and how another author's work was used in the assignment. For a more detailed look at this process visit <http://www.turnitin.com>.

Generative AI: If students choose to use generative AI for class assignments, they must use such technology responsibly and follow these guidelines: 1. Cite all AI-generated content in your assignments; 2. Demonstrate a deep understanding of the subject matter, do not solely rely on AI-generated content. Ideally, cross-reference claims and statements with original sources; 3. Use AI as a supplemental tool, not as the primary means of generating content. It is important to know that AI tools are not infallible and can produce misinformation; also, the AI has not taken this class, and tends to produce general information and cannot demonstrate the specific skills we are building in this class. Misuse of AI tools, including use of AI that undermines the student learning objectives of this course or assignment, failing to cite AI-generated content, relying too heavily on AI for work completion, or submitting inaccurate information generated by AI tools, will be subject to academic penalties. Consequences may range from a reduction in an individual assignment grade to larger academic sanctions per USF policy, depending on the severity of the violation.

Course Policies: Technology and Media

Communication: Outside of class, I rely on Canvas and email to communicate with students. If you think you might not be getting emails, or not seeing the right stuff on Canvas, please let me know as soon as you can. Please include our course prefix and number in your email subject line, and please treat email as a formal method of communication.

Canvas: This course will be offered via USF's learning management system (LMS), Canvas. If you need help learning how to perform various tasks related to this course or other courses being offered in Canvas, please consult the Canvas help guides. If something on Canvas does not seem to be working correctly, please email the instructor and contact USF's IT department at (813) 974-1222 or help@usf.edu.

Laptop Usage: Do not use laptops in class.

Phone Usage: Please do not use electronic devices in class and put all mobile devices on silent mode. A student may record class discussion for personal use, but please consult the instructor before doing so. It is not permissible to sell either written or audio notes for this course.

Course Policies: Student Expectations

USF Core Syllabus Policies: USF has a set of central policies that apply to all courses at USF. Be sure to review these online: usf.edu/provost/faculty-success/resources/policies-forms/core-syllabus-policy-statements.aspx

Professionalism Policy: Per university policy and classroom etiquette, mobile phones and other mobile devices **must be silenced** during all classroom lectures. Those not heeding this rule will be asked to leave the classroom immediately so as not to disrupt the learning environment. Please arrive on time for all class meetings. Students who habitually disturb the class by talking, arriving late, etc., and have been warned may suffer a reduction in their final class grade.

Disruption to Academic Process: Disruptive students in the academic setting hinder the educational process. Disruption of the academic process is defined as the act, words, or general conduct of a student in a classroom or other academic environment which in the reasonable estimation of the instructor: (a) directs attention away from the academic matters at hand, such as noisy distractions, persistent,

disrespectful or abusive interruption of lecture, exam, academic discussion, or general University operations, or (b) presents a danger to the health, safety, or well-being of self or other persons.

Student Academic Grievance Procedures: The purpose of these procedures is to provide all undergraduate and graduate students taking courses within the University of South Florida System an opportunity for objective review of facts and events pertinent to the cause of the academic grievance. An “academic grievance” is a claim that a specific academic decision or action that affects that student’s academic record or status has violated published policies and procedures or has been applied to the grievant in a manner different from that used for other students.

Health & Wellness: Your health is a priority at the University of South Florida. We encourage members of our community to look out for each another and to reach out for help if someone is in need. If you or someone you know is in distress, please make a referral at www.usf.edu/sos so that the Student Outreach & Support can contact and provide helpful resources to the student in distress. A 24-hour licensed mental healthcare professional, offered through the counseling center, is available by phone at 813-974-2831, option 3. Please remember that asking for help is a sign of strength.

Title IX Policy: Title IX provides federal protections for discrimination based on sex, which includes discrimination based on pregnancy, sexual harassment, and interpersonal violence. In an effort to provide support and equal access, **USF has designated all faculty (including all instructors, adjuncts, teaching assistants, etc.) as Responsible Employees, who are required to report any disclosures of sexual harassment, sexual violence, relationship violence, or stalking.** The Title IX Office makes every effort, when safe to do so, to reach out and provide resources and accommodations, and to discuss possible options for resolution. Anyone wishing to make a Title IX report or seeking accommodations may do so online, in person, via phone, or email to the Title IX Office. For information about Title IX or for a full list of resources please visit: <https://www.usf.edu/title-ix/gethelp/resources.aspx>. **If you are unsure what to do, please contact Victim Advocacy, a confidential resource that can review all your options, at 813-974-5756 or va@admin.usf.edu.**

End of Semester Student Evaluations: All classes at USF make use of an online system for students to provide feedback to the University regarding the course. These surveys will be made available at the end of the semester, and the University will notify you by email when the response window opens. Your participation is highly encouraged and valued.

The Writing Studio: Writing Studio is a free resource for USF students. At the Writing Studio, a trained writing consultant will work individually with you, at any point in the writing process from brainstorming to editing. Appointments are recommended, but not required. For more information or to make an appointment, visit <https://www.usf.edu/undergrad/academic-success-center/writing-studio/> or email writingstudio@usf.edu.

Campus Emergencies: In the event of an emergency, it may be necessary for USF to suspend normal operations. During this time, USF may opt to continue delivery of instruction through methods that include but are not limited to: Canvas, Elluminate, Skype, and email messaging and/or an alternate schedule. It’s the responsibility of the student to monitor the Canvas site for each class for course specific communication, and the main USF, college, and department websites, emails, and MoBull messages for important general information.

Senate Bill 266: This statement addresses the implementation of Senate Bill 266 (SB 266), which was signed by Governor DeSantis on May 15, 2023 and took effect on July 1, 2023. Among other things, the law includes updates to the requirements of the state’s general education curriculum for bachelor’s degree programs. **This course is not included in Florida’s state general education curriculum; and, this course does not belong to USF’s Enhanced General Education Curriculum.**

It is fundamental to the University of South Florida’s mission to support an environment where divergent ideas, theories, and philosophies can be openly exchanged and critically evaluated. Consistent with these principles, this course may involve discussion of ideas that you find uncomfortable, disagreeable, or even offensive. In the instructional setting, ideas are intended to be presented in an objective manner and not as an endorsement of what you should personally believe. Objective means that the idea(s) presented can be tested by critical peer review and rigorous debate, and that the idea(s) is supported by credible research. Not all ideas can be supported by objective methods or criteria.

In this course, you will be asked to engage with complex ideas and to demonstrate an understanding of the ideas. Understanding an idea does not mean that you are required to believe it or agree with it. You may decide which ideas you find worthy of your personal belief.