

Philos 5272
Philosophy of Culture
Lewis R. Gordon
Spring 2009, Mondays: 5 PM–7:40 PM
Office Hours: Mondays, 1 PM–2:30 PM

The purpose of this seminar is to address central themes in philosophy of culture, such as the challenges to defining culture, philosophical problems raised by the notion of cultural conditions of possibility, the debate over cultural universals and particulars, the role of signs and symbols in theories of culture, the philosophical significance of psychoanalysis, history, and religion, and the distinction between a philosophical anthropology and anthropological theory. This course is topical in nature, which means that it can be taken each year as different dimensions of the subject receive focus.

Readings for spring 2009:

Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*. Duke UP: # ISBN-10: 0822339145
ISBN-13: 978-0822339144

Norman Brown, *Life against Death*. Wesleyan. # ISBN-10: 0819561444
ISBN-13: 978-0819561442

Ernst Cassirer, *Essay on Man*. Yale. # ISBN-10: 0300000340
ISBN-13: 978-0300000344

Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*. Grove: # ISBN-13: 978-0802150271
Product Dimensions: 8.1 x 5.3 x 0.6 inches

Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*. Norton: # ISBN-10: 0393059952
ISBN-13: 978-0393059953

Lewis Gordon, *Disciplinary Decadence*. Paradigm: # ISBN-10: 1594512566
ISBN-13: 978-1594512568

Paget Henry, *Caliban's Reason*. Routledge: # ISBN-10: 0415926467
ISBN-13: 978-0415926461

Nelson Maldonado-Torres, *Against War*. Duke UP: #
ISBN-10: 0822341700
ISBN-13: 978-0822341703

Charles Sanders Peirce, *Selected Philosophical Writings of Charles Sanders Peirce*. Dover: #
ISBN-10: 0486202178
ISBN-13: 978-0486202174

Kwasi Wiredu, *Cultural Universals and Particulars*. Indiana UP: # ISBN-10: 0253210801
ISBN-13: 978-0253210807

Excerpts from additional texts will be posted on blackboard.

Evaluation and requirements:

Each students will be expected to write five one-page, single-spaced papers first formulating the theoretical question she or he brings to the course and then subsequently, through four one-page essays, addressing the question in the texts assigned the relevant week and a final critical research paper of 10-15 single-spaced pages on the posed problem(s).

Date	Assignment
1/26/09	Handout syllabus, outline of course, and discussion of administration of the course. Introduction: What is Philosophy? What is Philosophy of Culture? Discussion of myth and philosophy. Impact of transcendental idealism on the study of culture.
2/02	Culture as symbolic form. Reading: Ernst Cassirer, <i>Essay on Man</i> . Secondary readings will be posted on blackboard.
2/09	Peircean semiotics of reading culture. Reading: C.S. Peirce, <i>Selected Philosophical Writings</i>
2/16	<i>Black Over White</i> . In Philadelphia. Contact: Olivia Antsis, Director, Philadelphia Jewish Film Festival Programs, The Gershman Y, 401 S. Broad Street, Philadelphia, PA 19147 / 215-446-3019 / oantsis@phillyjcc.com
2/23	Critique of cultural relativism through philosophy of communication. Reading: Kwasi Wiredu, <i>Cultural Universals and Particulars</i> . Recommended: Chomski's writings on universal grammar.
3/02	Disciplinary production of culture as object of study and trans- versus inter-disciplinary challenges. Reading: Lewis Gordon, <i>Disciplinary Decadence</i>
3/9	Spring break
3/16	Culture as sublimation: psychoanalysis. Reading: Freud, <i>Civilization and Its Discontents</i>
3/23	Philosophy of psychoanalysis continued: Reading: Norman Brown, <i>Life Against Death</i> Recommended: Herbert Marcuse, <i>Eros and Civilization</i>
3/30	Philosophy of cultural transformation and constructivity. Reading: Frantz Fanon, <i>A Dying Colonialism</i> . Recommended reading: <i>Black Skin, White Masks</i> . See also posted readings on blackboard.
4/6	Cultural decolonization and decolonial reductions: Reading: Nelson Maldonado-Torres, <i>Against War</i>
4/13	Culture and the formation of self consciousness: Reading: Paget Henry, <i>Caliban's Reason</i> . Recommended: Hegel's <i>Phenomenology of Spirit</i> , introduction and section on the formation of self consciousness. Also Hegel, <i>Philosophy of History</i> , introduction.
4/20	Cultural critique of normativity. Reading: Sara Ahmed, <i>Queer Phenomenology</i> . Recommended: David Fryer, "African-American Queer Studies" (blackboard). Lewis Gordon, <i>An Introduction to Africana Philosophy</i> , chapter 4.
4/27	Concluding discussion. Final papers due by email attachment to the account: lewgord@yahoo.com at 12 PM on Monday, May 4, 2009

Any student who has a need for special accommodations due to disabilities should speak with me as soon as possible to discuss the specific situation and contact Disability Resources and Services, located in Ritter Annex, at 215.204.1280.

Finally, the University has adopted a policy on Student and Faculty Academic Rights and Responsibilities (Policy #03.70.02) which can be accessed at http://policies.temple.edu/getdoc.asp?policy_no=03.70.02