

Final Examination Review

The final examination is worth 200 points or 20% of your final grade this semester. The examination will be held on Wednesday, December 13th from 11:50 to 1:40 in Eisenhower Hall 16. Please bring a blank blue book or blank loose-leaf paper for your answers. You may also bring with you one 4" x 6" index card with notes, a card that you will hand in with your answers.

There will be four parts to the exam.

Part I (20 points). This part of the examination will have some short answer questions.

Part II (80 points). Write an extended (approximately 500-800 words) definition of **two** of the following four terms:

culture
postmodernism
cultural studies
globalization

Please illustrate and support your definition with examples and citations from the texts that we have read this semester.

For this question only, you may bring your (typed, double-spaced) definitions with you to class and hand them right before the examination begins. Or you may write your two definitions in class.

Part III (40 points). This question will appear on the final examination, though the list of texts will be reduced from ten to five. Summarize briefly the main ideas and argument of **one** of the cultural studies classics listed below. Then explain the significance and value of this text, its aims, and its methods.

Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"
Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses"
Stuart Hall, "Encoding/Decoding"
Frederic Jameson, "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism"
Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*
Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy"
Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema"
Richard Dyer, "Sterotyping"
bell hooks, "Eating the Other"
Michael Denning, *Culture in the Age of Three Worlds*

Part IV (60 points). I will provide you with questions selected from the following list. You will write an essay in response to **one** of them.

1. Despite its focus on "culture" and "social change," the field of cultural studies has been fascinated with theories of identity and subjectivity. Some of these theories have focused on the construction or development of the subject (psychoanalysis, the social construction of subjectivity, the discursive construction of individuals), and some have focused on the cultural aspects of identity (such as class, gender, sex, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and nation). What are some of the strengths of this focus on identity? What are the pitfalls? Write an essay that addresses these questions and makes specific reference to theories and texts we studied this semester.

2. Write an essay that discusses Judith Halberstam as an analyst or critic of subcultures? What are her most important influences as an analyst of subcultures? What does she add to the scholarship on subcultures? Do you think she helps revive interest in subcultural studies and make it fresh again? If so, how so? Or is her analysis marked by significant problems or weaknesses? If so, what is the primary problem or problems with her work?

3. Write an essay that briefly summarizes Freud's theory of identification, idealization, love, and identity as it appears in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*. Then explain how and why his work could be of use to *cultural studies*?

4. Write an essay-length defense of cultural studies in the form of a letter. And tackle the question, "What's wrong with cultural studies?"

Imagine that President Wefald has called for the elimination of ENGL 705 Theory and Practice of Cultural Studies from K-State's curriculum. He wants English majors and graduate students to focus on studying literature, not theory and popular culture; he's worried that the course raises too many sensitive and controversial issues (from race to propaganda to the transgender, etc.); and, finally, he's worried about the political nature of the theories and methods (feminism, Marxism, post-colonialism, etc.). His proposal has some support among students and even a few professors. Thus, you feel as if you should write a letter in defense of the theory and practice of cultural studies. Your letter might draw upon other defenses (Denning, for example), or it might draw upon a few theoretical texts that you see as especially significant or valuable as examples. Whatever your approach, your letter should make use of specific reference to ideas and texts studied in ENGL 705.

5. How might you use some of the concepts, theorists, books, or articles studied this semester to analyze and interpret an object within or some aspect of culture? Select one of the following ten cultural texts and draw on specific theories and methods studied this semester to analyze it, to interpret it, and to comment on its significance and/or its cultural context.

- David Trinidad's poem "Double Trouble" [attached]
- Union Plaza (once called the "Free Speech Zone," now known as "Bosco Plaza")
- YouTube
- A specific instance of sports at Kansas State: for example, the women's basketball team, intramurals, football, cricket in the parking lots, ultimate, frisbee golf, the rec, etc. [if you choose this option, you can assume some familiarity with sports, but not specific experience with any particular sport]
- A magazine advertisement of your choice [if you select this option, you need to bring the ad to class on the day of the final and hand it in with your exam]
- Léopold Sédar Senghor's "Speech and Image: An African Tradition of the Surreal" [attached]
- *V for Vendetta*
- A "reality" TV show of your choice [if you choose this option, you can assume general familiarity with reality TV, but not specific experience with any particular series or episode]
- The Mark Foley / congressional pages / texting and email scandal
- Operation Iraqi Freedom

6. Which of the theories or texts we studied this semester seems to you the most useful for the analysis and interpretation of literary texts? Which of these seems the most distant from the actual practice of interpreting and analyzing literary texts? Write an essay that explains your answer to these two questions and compares the two selected texts.

Note: Your answer does not need to be evaluative or polemical. For example, you do not necessarily have to argue that the more practically useful approach is by definition better than the one with more "theoretical" or less obvious literary critical concerns.