

# Theory and Practice of Cultural Studies

ENGL 705 | Eisenhower Hall 16 | MWF 9:30 | Fall 2006

Course Website: [www.ksu.edu/english/eiselei/engl705/](http://www.ksu.edu/english/eiselei/engl705/)

Gregory Eiselein | Phone: 532-0386 | Email: [eiselei@ksu.edu](mailto:eiselei@ksu.edu) | Office: ECS 108-C

Office Hours: MWF 11:30-12:30, M 3:30-4:30, and many more by appointment



## Course Description

Theory and Practice of Cultural Studies is an introduction to the theories that have defined the emerging field of cultural studies. First institutionalized in Great Britain in the 1960s, cultural studies devotes itself to the critical analysis of and engagement with "culture," defined as the whole network of meanings and practices in everyday life. Attuned to the importance of context and to issues of power, inequality, and difference, cultural studies does not limit itself to the study of high culture (what Matthew Arnold called "the best that has been thought and said in the world") but instead opens itself to a range of cultural activities, artifacts, and texts, their makers and audiences, and their interconnections. Thus, we will learn various approaches to the analysis and interpretation of cultural activities and texts *as they are embedded in social contexts*.

The course begins with attention to key concepts and practice with various ways of reading and interpreting culture. We will then survey, discuss, and ask questions about important theories of identity, postmodernism, and globalization—three themes that should provide us with a perspective on cultural studies right now.

## Course Goals

When you finish ENGL 705, you should be able to do the following:

- Demonstrate familiarity with the history of cultural studies as an emerging intellectual practice, including prominent theorists and critics, important theories, and the historical and cultural contexts important to those theories.
- Demonstrate an understanding of key concepts in cultural studies.
- Perform a semiotic analysis—that is, an interpretative examination of some aspect of culture as a text, as a collection of signs, symbols, and codes that interconnect.
- Draw on theories of culture to analyze and interpret selected cultures or sub-cultures, texts or artifacts, contexts, movements, and/or cultural practices.
- Think analytically and critically about a range of cultural theories.
- Explain to others the meaning, significance, and value of specific cultural studies texts.
- Write in an insightful and informed way about specific cultural studies texts.

This course also aims to intensify students' proficiency in the skills at the heart of a liberal education: the ability to reason, think critically, communicate effectively, and appreciate excellent writing and thinking.

## Course Requirements

***In-Class Work.*** Because one of our course goals is learning how to discuss these texts critically, attendance and class participation are vital to the work in this course. You will also take part in some in-class activities and writing exercises. I will not assign letter grades to this in-class work, but I will factor attendance, class participation, and in-class writing into your final grade.

***Written Work.*** The writing in the course will consist of four papers ranging in length from four to seven pages: Paper #1: Summary and Response (3-4 pages), Paper #2: Semiotic Analysis (4-5 pages), Paper #3: Comparative Analysis (5-7 pages), and Paper #4: Metacritical Analysis (5-7 pages). During the semester, I will distribute handouts describing these four assignments in detail.

***Examinations.*** There will be a midterm examination on Wednesday, October 18th and an in-class comprehensive final examination on Wednesday, December 13th from 11:50 to 1:40.

**Grades.** In determining final grades, each course requirement carries the following relative weight:

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| • Attendance, Participation, and In-Class Work | 10% |
| • Paper #1: Summary and Response               | 10% |
| • Paper #2: Semiotic Analysis                  | 15% |
| • Paper #3: Comparative Analysis               | 15% |
| • Paper #4: Metacritical Analysis              | 20% |
| • Midterm Examination                          | 10% |
| • Final Examination                            | 20% |

### Course Policies

**Late Papers.** I do not typically accept late papers, but in certain, limited circumstances I will accept papers after the due date. Assignments will lose a letter grade for every class period that they are late. I collect papers at the beginning of class on the due date.

**Revisions.** You may choose to revise *one* of your four papers for a higher grade. If you would like to revise a paper, the revision would be due one week after the papers have been returned. To submit a revision, please write a one-paragraph summary explaining why and how you revised and hand it in with both the revised version and the old version with my comments. A revision must be substantially improved to merit a grade change.

**The Honor Code.** Kansas State University has an Honor Code, which stipulates that you should do all your academic work at the university individually. Do not collaborate on any academic work unless approved by your instructor. On all of your assignments, exams, and other course work, the following pledge is implied, whether or not it is explicitly stated: "On my honor, as a student, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this academic work." Perhaps the most serious violation of the Honor Code in an English course is plagiarism—taking or copying someone else's words or ideas as if they were your own. Plagiarism and cheating are serious offenses and may be punished by failure on the exam, paper, or project; the truly gnarly XF grade for the course; and/or expulsion from the university. Complete copies of the academic dishonesty policy are available in the Office of Student Activities and Services in the Union, or you may visit the Honor System web page at [www.ksu.edu/honor](http://www.ksu.edu/honor).

**Students with Disabilities.** If you need special accommodation for a learning or physical disability, please contact Disabled Student Services in Holton Hall 202 (532-6441), so that they may assist us in making arrangements.

### Course Resources

**Course Website.** The URL for the course website is [www.ksu.edu/english/eiselei/engl705](http://www.ksu.edu/english/eiselei/engl705). You may find there a online resources related to the course, assignments and handouts, as well as basic information about the class.



**Course Listserv.** You have also all been subscribed to a course listserv, and we can all post comments, information, and queries by sending messages to [CS705@k-state.edu](mailto:CS705@k-state.edu). The purpose of this listserv is to try out ideas and facilitate communication among class participants outside of class. Posting to this listserv is not required; it is here for our convenience. The only rule is this: all postings to the list should be related to our class in some way or another. If you have your K-State e-mail forwarded to another address, the University will subscribe you to that address also so that you can send messages to this list from either address.

**Texts.** The following books are available at the K-State Union Bookstore and Varney's Bookstore in Aggieville:

- Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas M. Kellner, eds., *Media and Cultural Studies: Key Works*, revised edition
- Daniel Chandler, *Semiotics: The Basics*
- Sigmund Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*
- Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*
- Michael Denning, *Culture in the Age of Three Worlds*

*Photographs: Antonio Gramsci (front), Ien Ang (back)*