

# Race, Culture, Civilization

## Historical Perspective and Current Debates

HON 4350-001

SPRING 2009

PROFESSOR: GABRIEL ROCKHILL

**Time:** 4:30-5:45 p.m.

**Location:** Driscoll 248

**Office Hours:** MW 11-12 or by appointment (St. Augustine Center, office 171)

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### COURSE CONTENT

This seminar will take as its point of departure the historical synchrony, visible most notably in the work of Rousseau, between the modern conception of the social contract and the anthropological investigation of “savage” cultures. It’s in this light that we will examine the emergence of what’s referred to as modern democracy and its relationship to three keywords—as Raymond Williams understands the term—of the modern era: *race*, *culture* and *civilization*. Following this historical investigation, we will study the evolution of the relationship between democracy and culture by analyzing both the renewal of social contract theory in contemporary liberalism and recent controversies concerning cultural diversity. One of the central goals of the seminar will be to familiarize students with current debates on multiculturalism, race theory and post-colonialism within the overall historical framework of the relationship between liberal democracy and cultural pluralism. Authors to be studied include Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Edward Said, Charles Taylor, Jürgen Habermas, Frantz Fanon, Cornel West, Pierre-André Taguieff and Etienne Balibar.

### REQUIRED MATERIAL

1. Books available in the bookstore (you are free to use other editions or photocopy the relevant sections, depending on the length):
  - a. Jean-Jacques Rousseau. *The Discourses and other early political writings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
  - b. Jean-Jacques Rousseau. *The Social Contract and Other Later Political Writings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
  - c. Edward Said. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.
  - d. Charles Taylor. *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.
  - e. Frantz Fanon. *Black Skin, White Mask*. Trans. Richard Philcox. New York: Grove Press, 2008.
2. Essays and articles will be made available to you electronically via WebCT and placed on reserve in the library. **It is required that you print or photocopy them so that you can bring them to every class.** It is highly recommended that you collect them all together in a binder so that you have all of the course readings in one place.
3. The films we will watch will be available at the library and/or on Internet.
4. It is highly recommended that the students keep abreast of current events through the course of the semester by consulting and comparing various media sources

(conservative and progressive, American and foreign, etc.). In addition to well-known sources of news (the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, major network news, the BBC, etc.), it is recommended that you look at alternative sources like [www.democracynow.org](http://www.democracynow.org), [www.fair.org](http://www.fair.org), [www.truthdig.com](http://www.truthdig.com), [www.english.aljazeera.net](http://www.english.aljazeera.net) and [www.informationclearinghouse.info](http://www.informationclearinghouse.info).

## REQUIREMENTS

1. **Attendance and Participation – 15%.** The class will be conducted as a seminar so it will be very important for you to come to class having engaged with the required material. This means taking notes on the readings, preparing informed questions and comments, and re-reading the material after class discussion. A cursory, passive overview of the material will prove insufficient. In addition, you should make sure that you organize your time wisely since some sessions will require more out-of-class work than others.
2. **Response Papers – 20%.** You will be required to write **a single one-page paper per class** (1 or 1 ½ spaced) that concisely presents and critically responds to the material. You should spend approximately one paragraph outlining the core of the argument, one paragraph engaging in more detail with key issues that relate to the seminar, and a final paragraph raising questions or highlighting passages for discussion.

Unlike the “graded response papers” (see below), your grade for the response papers will be calculated based on the number of papers you complete and turn in **on time**. This means that you will not receive individual grades on each of the papers. Instead, you will receive a proportional grade based on the number of papers you successfully complete (26 out of 26 = 100% (A), 24/26 = 92.3% (A-), 22/26 = 84.6% (B), etc.). However, since you will not know in advance which assignments will be graded, it is highly recommended that you prepare each response paper as if you were handing it in for a grade. It is also recommended that you make use of the Villanova Writing Center for your response papers, particularly at the beginning of the semester (please turn in your Writing Center form with your paper). You can use their pamphlet *How to Write a College Paper* as a useful starting point.

3. **Graded Response Papers / Oral Presentations – 20%.** **Two** of your response papers (see above) will be orally presented in class and graded. Since I will not tell you in advance who will be presenting their papers for a grade, it is highly recommended that you prepare every response paper as if it were going to be turned in for a grade.
4. **Research Presentation – 15%.** You will prepare a 5-10 minute presentation of your final research project during the last few weeks of class. You should outline your argument and explain what sources you will use to support your project. The research presentations will provide us with an opportunity to critically reflect on one another’s ongoing work.
5. **Final Exam (Research Project) – 30%.** You will be required to write one 8-10 page double-spaced research project. You will be free to choose the topic based on the material covered, and I recommend that you develop and explore one of the central themes of the seminar.

## POLICY ON E-MAILS AND COMPUTER USE

1. I will try to respond to all e-mails in a reasonable time frame. As a general rule of

- thumb, this means that you will get a response within 24 to 48 hours. If you send an email over the weekend or late at night, do not expect to receive a response back immediately, even if you deem it to be an emergency.
2. I will **not grant extensions via e-mail**. If you have a last-second problem printing your response paper, print it after class and drop it in my box before 7 p.m. that day (see “Policy on Grade Changes” below).
  3. In general, I will not provide my lecture notes or other material that you could have obtained in class. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to obtain this material.
  4. I will not provide information already available in the syllabus via e-mail.
  5. Please do not take offense to laconic e-mails since I find it preferable to respond to as many e-mails as possible within the shortest amount of time.
  6. **No computers** will be allowed in the classroom unless you obtain explicit consent from me.

#### **POLICY ON GRADE CHANGES, LATE WORK AND ABSENCES**

1. I will not change grades based on oral negotiation. If you feel that I have overlooked something in my grading policy, please submit a detailed written explanation of what has been overlooked along with the graded copy of your work.
2. **No late work will be accepted**. Rather than looking behind in class, you should plan on looking ahead and catching up on future assignments any points you may have lost on past assignments. You will only be able to make up for late work in the most extreme cases, and preferably when you have let me know ahead of time that you have a serious extra-curricular problem. Since a “lost paper” does not constitute a valid excuse in the computer age, **always back up your work**. If you have problems printing at the last second, you should plan on **printing the paper immediately after class** so that you can place it in my mailbox in the philosophy office before 7 p.m. the same day (**do not e-mail me the paper**). You have the right to turn in two—and only two—papers like this through the course of the semester.
3. If you absolutely have to miss class, **make arrangements to turn in the paper ahead of time or ask a friend to turn it in for you**.

#### **POLICY ON PLAGIARISM AND RESEARCH RESOURCES**

Any form of plagiarism is unacceptable. This includes, but is not limited to, referencing or paraphrasing someone else’s ideas without proper citation as well as handing in someone else’s work as your own. This also includes using any part of an Internet resource without proper citation. Any assignment that is at all plagiarized will automatically receive an F and, depending on the circumstances, may constitute grounds for failing the course. Moreover, every incident will be reported to the university and could constitute grounds for expulsion. For a good list of resources on what counts as plagiarism and how to avoid plagiarizing see <http://directory.google.com/Top/Reference/Education/Educators/Plagiarism/Prevention/>

You should be aware of the fact that not all of the information on the Internet is equally accurate. This is why I strongly encourage library research over Internet research and require that you do most of your work in the library. Of course, you should also be wary of the quality of published sources and try to get a feel for what is reliable (based on the

author's name, the publisher, journals' reputations, etc.). If you have any questions regarding the quality of Internet or published resources, please contact me.

**PROGRAM** (subject to change)

### **SECTION I: INTRODUCTION**

- 1/12 Introduction: The Semantic and Conceptual History of Race, Culture, and Civilization  
Raymond Williams, *Keywords* (selection).
- 1/14 Emile Benveniste, "Civilization: A Contribution to the History of the Word."  
Michael Banton, "The Concept Popularized" in *The Race Concept*.

### **SECTION II: HISTORICAL INTERLUDE VIA ROUSSEAU**

- 1/19 *Martin Luther King Day: No Class.*
- 1/21 Jean-Jacques Rousseau. *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Men* (Preface, Exordium, Part I).
- 1/26 Jean-Jacques Rousseau. *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Men* (Part II).  
*Optional Reading:* Claude Lévi-Strauss, "Jean-Jacques Rousseau."
- 1/28 Jean-Jacques Rousseau. *On the Social Contract* (Book I).
- 2/2 Jean-Jacques Rousseau. *On the Social Contract* (Book II).
- 2/4 Jean-Jacques Rousseau. *On the Social Contract* (Book III).
- 2/9 Jean-Jacques Rousseau. *On the Social Contract* (Book IV).

### **SECTION III: HISTORICAL INTERLUDE VIA ORIENTALISM**

- 2/11 Edward Said, *Orientalism* ("Introduction").
- 2/16 Edward Said, *Orientalism* ("Knowing the Oriental").
- 2/18 Edward Said, *Orientalism* ("Imaginative Geography and Its Representations").
- 2/23 Edward Said, *Orientalism* ("Projects" and "Crisis").
- 2/25 Edward Said, *Orientalism* ("Projects" and "Crisis").

### **SECTION IV: CONTEMPORARY DEBATES ON LIBERALISM AND CULTURE**

- 3/2-3/8 *Semester Recess.*
- 3/9 Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism*. Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition."
- 3/11 Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism*. Jürgen Habermas, "Struggles for Recognition in the Democratic Constitutional State."
- 3/16 Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations* (selection).

### **SECTION V: ETHNOCENTRISM AND POST-COLONIALISM**

- 3/18 Jean Rouch, *Moi, un noir* (film).
- 3/23 Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Mask* (Introduction, Chapter 5).
- 3/25 Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Mask* (Chapter 6).
- 3/30 Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Mask* (Chapters 7 and 8).

### **SECTION VI: RACISM, NEO-RACISM, META-DISCRIMINATION, ISLAMOPHOBIA, AND TRIBALISM**

- 4/1 Cornel West, "A Genealogy of Modern Racism" in *Prophesy Deliverance!*

- Cornel West, “The New Cultural Politics of Difference.”  
*Optional Reading:* Cornel West, “A Prisoner of Hope in the Night of the American Empire”  
 (Interview with Gabriel Rockhill).
- 4/6 Etienne Balibar “Is There a ‘Neo-Racism?’”  
 Sophia Coppola, *Lost in Translation* (film).
- 4/8 Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu, *Babel* (film).
- 4/9-4/13 *Easter Recess*
- 4/20 Edward Said, *Orientalism* (“The Latest Phase”).
- 4/22 Etienne Balibar, “Uprisings in the *Banlieues*.”
- 4/27 Delphine Abadie, Alain Deneault and William Sacher, “This Is Not an Ethnic Conflict.”
- 4/29 Molly Bingham and Steve Connors, *Meeting Resistance* (film).

### **FINAL EXAM (RESEARCH PROJECT)**

**5/5 4 p.m.**