Humanities 303: Cultural Periods and Styles

Spring 2011

T/Th 12.35-13.50 HUM 408

Sean Connelly

Office: HUM 336

Contact: 338-3127/ connelly@sfsu.edu

Office Hours: MTW 11.30-12.30

PDF version of this syllabus: HUM303PDFFIN

Course Description:

“Cultural Periods and Styles” introduces students to critical perspectives on the relationship between culture and history. How does a given cultural “text” (a term which encompasses not only speech and written language but fashion, social practices and values) address its moment of production? What meanings does its audience (its readers, its practitioners) generate from that artifact in terms of a given historical period? How do those meanings change over time? In this course we will focus on the category of youth as a cultural concept— one that is highly inflected with various values and associations— over the course of the Modern Era and across disparate regions, from Early Modern Europe to Postcolonial West Africa. The cultural texts that we will examine include the novel, film, popular music, “graphlit” and photography.

Goals: Students who take the course seriously can expect to complete the semester with a general knowledge of the periods in question and a basic toolkit of theoretical concepts with which to analyze cultural production and the making of meaning (semiosis or signification). Students will also gain some degree of fluency with discourses of youth over the long arc of modernity from its inceptions in the 15th century to the present.
Protocol/Decorum/Ettiquette:

It’s expected that students will arrive on time having completed the assigned work and in possession of the appropriate text for the class meeting. With the exception of the midterm and in-class work, all assignments should be typed with name/date/course. In the interests of basic courtesy, please do not text, sleep, or surf in class.

Academic Integrity:

Cheating/plagiarism will be met with the full force of academic sanction-- an F for the semester-- and could result in expulsion from SFSU. see http://www.sfsu.edu/~vpsa/judicial/titlev.html

Accessibility:

If you have particular needs or challenges that you think I should know about, please discuss them with me at the beginning of the semester and I’ll do my best to accommodate you. See also: Disability Resource Center (338-2472 or dprc@sfsu.edu).

The Rubric:

Attendance (More than 3 absences will result in a “no pass” for this portion of your final grade and possibly being dropped from the course. Please arrive on time and stay until the end of class.) 15%

Midterm (A simple identification test using key terms that we have discussed in class.) 20%

Final Exam (Identification and an in-class essay) 20%

Final Paper (6-8 pages) 25%

Class Work (participation, random pop quizzes, in-class writing) 20%

Required Texts:
William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (1603)

Johann Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship* (1795)


**Films:**

We will screen clips from some of the films listed below.

The Musketeers of Pig Alley (1912)

Traffic in Souls (US 1913)

Broken Blossoms (US 1919)

The Soul of Youth (US 1920)

The Crowd (US 1928)

The Sierra Leone Refugee All-stars

Sin Nombre (Mexico 2009)

Ratcatcher (UK 1999)

Kids (US 1995)

All Over Me (US 1997)

Suburbia (US 1984)

Over the Edge (US 1979)

Dazed and Confused (US 1993)
The Closed Doors (Egypt 1999)

36 Fillette (France 1988)

4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days (Romania 2007)

400 Blows (France 1959)

Udaan (India 2010)

This is England (UK 2006)

Beneath Clouds (Australia 2002)

eReader:

Raymond Williams, “Culture”: RWmsCultPop

Peter Brooker, "Culture": BrookerCulture

Peter Toohey, “The Cultural Logic of Historical Periodization”: histper

Michel Pastoureau, “Emblems of Youth: Young People in Medieval Imagery”: newmedimage

The above pdf is missing pages 226-227. Go to this post on the main page of the blog to read them.

The images from Pastoreau's article are included in this PDF (2.6 MB): medimg12

Recommended: Thomas Jeffers, “The Idea of Bildung and the Bildungsroman” ApprenticeshipsChap2

"Bildungsroman" (Routledge Dictionary of Literary Terms): BildungRoutledge

Catherine Belsey, "Constructing the Subject, Deconstructing the Text": belseysubject
Recommended: Joseph Kett, “Reflections on the History of Adolescence in America”: KettReflections

Jean and John Comaroff, “Reflections on Youth: From the Past to the Postcolony”: comaroff

“Picaresque” from the OED: OED_picaresque

Recommended: Danny Hoffman, "Disagreement: Dissent Politics and the War in Sierra Leone": 52.3hoffman

**Schedule:**

(Note: this schedule of readings and screenings is intended to be elastic.)

**Week One: Introduction**

Goals: To establish key terms such as Culture, periodization and youth. Screen music videos. (The Replacements, Lesley Gore, Iggy Pop)

1/25: Introduction: What is Culture, what is Youth?

Assignment for Thursday: Print and read the following pdfs: Raymond Williams, “Culture”; Peter Brooker, “Culture”; “The Cultural Logic of Historical Periodization”


**Week Two: Hamlet**


Feb. 1:

Feb. 3: LAST DAY TO DROP CLASSES: FEB 4.
**Week 3: Hamlet**

Goals: Establish historical context of Renaissance England and discuss the valence of youth in *Hamlet*.

Feb. 8: *Hamlet*


**Week 4: Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship**

Goals: Discuss the bildungsroman and the concept of bildung. Consider several conventional periodizations— the Enlightenment, the Age of Revolution and the Romantic Era— and their relationship to Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship. Total this week: 118 pages.

Feb. 15: “Bildungsroman”; Book I of *WMA*

For Thursday: Books II and III (pp. 41-118)

Feb. 17:

For Tuesday: Books IV and V (pp. 119-216)

**Week 5: Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship**

Goals: Continue discussion of *WMA*. Total: 137 pages.

Feb. 22: Books IV and V

For Thursday: Book VI (pp. 217-256)

Feb. 24: Book VI

For Tuesday: Book VII (pp. 257-304)

**Week 6: Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship**
Goals: Continue discussion of WMA. Total: 118 pages.

Mar. 1: Book VII

For Thursday: Book VIII (pp. 305-374)

Mar. 3: Book VIII

Week 7: Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship/ Review/ Midterm

Goals: Complete WMA. Gauge our progress thus far. Reconsider key terms and texts in preparation for the midterm.

Mar. 8: WMA. Review key concepts.

Mar. 10: Midterm

Assignment for Tuesday: Read “Constructing the Subject, Deconstructing the Text” and as much of Book First of Mill on the Floss as you can. Recommended: Kett, “Reflections on the Concept of Adolescence in America.

Week 8: Theories of Text and Subject/ Mill on the Floss


Mar. 15: Discuss Belsey, “Constructing, etc.” Begin discussion of MOF

For Thursday: Read Book First in Mill on the Floss (pp. 1-130)

Mar. 17: MOF

Assignment for Tuesday: Read Book Second in Mill on the Floss (pp. 131-192)

Week 9: Mill on the Floss

Goals: Establish the contours of several possible periodizations: the Age of Empire, the Age of Incorporation, the Age of Adolescence. Total: 137 pages.
Mar. 22:

For Thursday: Read Book Third in MOF (pp.193-268)

Mar. 24:

**Week 10: SPRING RECESS**

Goals: Recuperate, but keep your eyes on the prize.

Mar. 28- April Fool’s Day

assignment for Week 11: Read *Mill on the Floss* in its entirety.

**Week 11: Mill on the Floss**

Goals: Contrast Eliot’s dual-protagonist bildungsroman with Goethe’s late 18th century model. Consider the character of Maggie Tulliver in light of claims that she represents a paradigm of adolescence.

Apr. 5: Review Belsey, first three books of MOF.

Apr. 7: Discuss MOF, focusing on 3rd and 4th books.

**Week 12: Mill on the Floss**

Goals: Complete *Mill on the Floss*.

Apr. 12: Discuss MOF, focusing on last three books.

Apr. 14: Discuss MOF, focusing on last three books.

For Tuesday: Read “Picaresque”; “Reflections on Youth: From the Past to the Postcolony”; begin *Allah is not Obliged*.

**Week 13: Allah is Not Obliged**

Goals: Establish historical context for the civil wars in West Africa. Examine the notion of the Picaresque.

Apr. 19: “Picaresque”/ Comaroff, “Reflections, etc.”
Apr. 21: Discuss AINO.

**Week 14: Allah is Not Obliged**

Goals: Develop the critical periodization of “the Postcolonial.” Screen *The Sierra Leone Refugee All-stars.*

Apr. 26:

Apr. 28:

**Week 15: Allah is Not Obliged/ Aya**

Goals: Discuss methods for the analysis of “graphlit.” Contrast the explicit counter-narrative of Aya with AINO.

May 3: Complete *Allah is Not Obliged*

For Thursday: Read *Aya.*

May 5:

**Week 16: Aya/ Course Review**

Goals: Complete *Aya* discussion. Review course materials since the midterm.

May 10:

May 12: LAST DAY OF CLASSES: FINAL PAPERS DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS.

COURSE REVIEW.

**THURSDAY MAY 19**

10.45-1.15

FINAL EXAM