

ANT 305
EXPRESSIVE CULTURE
Spring 2019

Instructor: Vasilina A. Orlova, vasilina@utexas.edu

Office hours: 4:00-5:00 Tuesdays, SAC 5.114 or by appointment.

Teaching Assistants:

Danielle Good, dlgood@utexas.edu

Office hours: 1:00-2:00 PM, Tuesdays, SAC 5.114 or by appointment.

Alexander Menaker, amenaker@utexas.edu

Office hours: 10-11 AM, Fridays, SAC 5.114 or by appointment.

Lectures: Tuesdays, 2:00 PM-4:00 PM, UTC 4.110

Discussion Sections: Fridays,

31540, 9:00 a.m.-10:00 a.m. Room: GAR 0.120, TA: Danielle Good

31545, 10:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m. Room: SZB 284, TA: Danielle Good

31550, 11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. Room: RLP 0.106, TA: Alexander Menaker

31555, 12:00 p.m.-1:00 p.m. Room: SZB 286, TA: Alexander Menaker

Course Description

This is the course exploring multiplicities of cultures and cultures' manifestations (expressions) in the world. We will be going through several blocks of things wrestling with two questions: What is culture? And: How does it express itself? On this journey, we will encounter ourselves taking selfies, robotic toys and robots, disloyal subjects, "others" of all kinds. We will dip into ethnographic practices of socio-cultural anthropology, into linguistics, media and communication studies, philosophy, and see how differently the different mindsets construct and order the world of the social. On the way of this exploration we will trace the adventures of the notions of the "self," "representation," "progress," "social media," "modernity," "power," "language," and others.

Structure of the Course

The course has three subdivisions: (1) Contemporary Expressive Cultures in the Familiar Worlds, (2) Broadening the Horizons, and (3) Multiplicity of Cultures and Ways to Approach

Them. The first division is called to demonstrate to the students how issues of expressive culture pertain to their daily life. The second division forces us to go beyond the familiarity and introduces the figures of “strangeness,” “foreignness,” and “the other,” which helps us to make sense out of others’ existence. The third division is designed to situate our inquiries in the historic context of humans who have been developing and studying expressive cultures for centuries. We will look into the methods that allow researchers to look at cultures.

What This Course is Designed to Help You With

We will perfect our skills of expressing complex thoughts in simple and clear manner, leading a productive discussion, and communicate ourselves to others. Emphasis in this course will be placed on **the close readings of the texts** and developing the ability **to creatively engage with concepts**. The goal of this course is to situate an educated person in the position of knowledge regarding the multiplicity of cultures existing in the world. As the result in this course, students will:

- * acquire a critical view on the contemporary American cultures by gaining the ability to place specific practices in wider contexts;
- * expand their understanding of the world and broaden the horizons of their comprehension of the complexities of world’s culture;
- * better their public performance skills;
- * advance their communication skills;
- * advance their skills in expressing themselves in writing and oral presentation.

The readings for this course are uploaded to Canvas for your convenience in the PDF format. Ideally, students will print articles out, annotate articles in their time, and bring in class their annotated versions.

Requirements

The commitment to work throughout the semester is required for the successful completion of this course. The readings must be done attentively and on time. All readings are required, excepted for the optional readings, which are not mandatory, but desirable. The students must take notes during the lectures and fulfill the assignments to the best of their ability. Students are responsible to show up and complete assignments on time. During discussion sections, students will practice their public speaking skills, ability to ask questions and listen to answers, and respectfully engage with those who have different perspectives.

- 1) Throughout the semester, students will complete three writing assignments.
- 2) For the main project, student must write the final piece demonstrating the progress that they have made throughout the semester in their ability to use concepts we've covered.
- 3) We will have pop quizzes throughout the semester. The purpose of the quizzes is to measure the students' familiarity with the reading material and their attendance, hence there will be no retaking of missed quizzes.

The readings, discussions, and writings are designed to develop critical thinking, ability of close and critical reading, public performance, and the production of analytical text. Students are encouraged to work in close contact with their Teaching Assistants and the Assistant Instructor to resolve possible difficulties in learning in a timely and respectful manner.

During discussion sections, students will have the opportunity to work in collaboration with Teaching Assistants and each other to discuss the material covered during the lectures and present in the readings. The discussion sections are for the students to speak, with Teaching Assistant merely mediating the conversation.

Grading layout

30% two writings throughout the semester (15% each).

20% active and engaged participation in discussion section.

20% the final writing project.

10% familiarity with the readings.

10% attendance: being present on time and consistently throughout the semester.

10% pop quizzes.

Contemporary Expressive Cultures in the Familiar Worlds

Week 1. January 22. Introduction. What is "Expressive Culture"?

No readings assigned.

Week 2. January 29. What Do We Do When We Take a Selfie? Humans' Self-Representation on Social Media and What to Make Out of It

Alice E. Marwick, “Instafame: Luxury Selfies in the Attention Economy.” *Public Culture*, 27:1, 2015.

OPTIONAL: Theresa M. Senft, “Microcelebrity and the Branded Self.”

Week 3. February 5. Cultures of the Future. Roboticized World That We Are About to Inhabit (1)

Alan Dorin, “Building Artificial Life for Play.” *Artificial Life* 10: 99–112, 2004.

OPTIONAL: John Searle. “Minds, Brains, and Programs.” In *The Behavioral and Brain Sciences* (1980) 3, 417-457

Week 4. February 12. Cultures of the Future. Roboticized World That We Are About to Inhabit (2)

Matthias Scheutz and Thomas Arnold. “Are We Ready For Sex Robots?” *Proceeding HRI '16 The Eleventh ACM/IEEE International Conference on Human Robot Interaction*, 351-358, 2016.

OPTIONAL: Alan Turing. “Computing Machinery and Intelligence,” *Mind*, vol. 59 (1950).

Week 5. February 19. Online Dating and Mating Strategies. Cheating and Loyalty in the USA: Cultural Assumptions

Melissa Greg, “Spouse-busting: Intimacy, adultery, and surveillance technology.” *Surveillance & Society* 11(3): 301-310. 2013

Esther Perel. “Why Happy People Cheat?” *The Atlantic*, October 2017

Week 6. January 26. How the Ideas of Sex and Gender are Rooted in Culture

Judith Butler. *Gender Trouble*. Part 1, “Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire” (i-iii, up to (including): “Gender: The Circular Ruins of Contemporary Debate”).

OPTIONAL: Part 1 until the ending (iv-vi).

Week 7. March 5. Performance of Queer Self

Watching film in class, *Paris is Burning*

No readings.

The first writing assignment is due.

Broadening the Horizons

Week 8. March 12. How Gender is Read Differently in Cultures

Don Kulick, *Travesti: Sex, Gender, and Culture Among Brazilian Transgender Prostitutes*.
Introduction and chapter 2.

Week 9. March 19, Spring Break (18-24, Monday-Sunday)

Week 10. March 26. What Does It Take to Understand the Other?

Renato Rosaldo, "Grief and a Headhunter's Rage." in *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis* (Boston: Beacon Press; London: Taylor & Francis, 1993 [1989]).

Week 11. April 2. Popular Culture: Looking Beyond Entertainment

Clifford Geertz. "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight." *Daedalus*, Vol. 134, No. 4, 50 Years (Fall, 2005), pp. 56-86.

Week 12. April 9.

We're watching film in class (To Be Announced).

No readings.

The second writing assignment is due.

Multiplicity of Cultures and Ways to Approach Them

Week 13. April 16. Perceptions of Culture

Bronisław Malinowski. "Introduction: The Subject, Method, and Scope of This Inquiry." from *Argonauts of the Western Pacific: An Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea*. Routledge, 1978.

Week 14. April 23. Language and Culture. Does Language Shape the Way We Perceive the World?

Benjamin Lee Whorf, "The Relation of Habitual Thought and Behavior to Language" from *Language, Thought, and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf*, edited by Penny Lee, MIT Press, 2012.

Week 15. April 30. How to Relate What We Think We Understood About Culture?

Clifford Geertz. Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture.

Final writing is due May 4th.

Supplementary Statements

Writing Assignments

The writing assignments will be delivered to students in advance by the Assistant Instructor during the lectures; the information of such assignments will be accessible through Canvas. There will be no printed handouts for written assignments.

Possible Alternatives

Throughout the course of the semester, we may or may not hear lectures from our Teaching Assistants. Should such one-time substitutions occur, there will be an announcement made to this effect. The lectures by TAs are also mandatory for attendance, and the TAs may or may not assign separate readings on the respective weeks. In the case they assign their own readings, the readings demanded by the Assistant Instructor for this week will be not required.

Documented Disability Statement

Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities at (512)471-6259 (voice) or (512)232-2937 (video) or via the website <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd>

Do not hesitate to contact the instructor or teaching assistants if you have any questions or concerns regarding accessibility.

Response Policy: The instructor aims to answer the emails within the 24-hour timeframe of receiving the email. Emails sent after 10 PM will likely be answered the next day. The instructor does *not* take it upon herself to answer emails during the weekends.

Attention! Teaching Assistant have their own politics of answering your emails.

Religious and Family Celebrations, Illnesses, Emergencies, and the Like: Should the student miss a class, they must notify the instructor of their planned absence in advance, and not

shorter than in two weeks, and of the unplanned absence at the earliest opportunity with an appropriate documented excuse.

On Favorable Environment: The University seeks to establish and maintain a favorable, creative, and friendly environment, free of discrimination, humiliation, intimidation, and harassment. The University is committed to the principles of free speech and free expression. In the absence of any specific regulation it is safe to consider the Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative, which in its third redaction sounds thusly: "Every rational being must so act as if s/he were through her/his maxim always a legislating member of the universal kingdom of ends."

Laptops in Class: During the lectures, the use of personal computers, phones, iPads, and so on, by students, are strongly discouraged. During the discussion sections, since students are working closely with the text, and have PDFs, it is understandable that students would not always have an opportunity to print the articles, hence the use of computers is allowed. However, nothing but the articles are to appear on your screens. No messaging (if there is an emergency, leave class), no shopping, not even other university-related activities. If students are noticed to be breaching this rule, they will be asked to leave the class, checked as absent, and marked lower on "active and engaged participation in discussion sections," which is 20% of the final grade.

Tape Recording: According to the University's policies, tape recorders are not to be used by students unless you obtain a permission of the instructor. But if you feel like recording, ask, and the permission is likely to be granted.

On Academic Dishonesty: A student plagiarizing does not only fail to take advantage of the learning environment that they have but infringe on others' rights to receive the due acknowledgement for their work. It is better to avoid plagiarism which should be distinguished from the free use of ideas of others with proper acknowledgement. What is plagiarism and how to avoid it: <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/services/instruction/learningmodules/plagiarism>

Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL): If you are worried about someone who is acting aggressively or is extremely upset, you may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line. Call 512-232-5050 or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>

Mental Health Issues: If you are concerned about how you feel, if you struggle with completion of everyday tasks, if you have insomnia, anxiety, stress issues, I would encourage you to make use of the resources of the Counseling & Mental Health Center: <http://cmhc.utexas.edu/>

Resources for Learning & Life at UT Austin: The University of Texas has numerous resources to ensure that students are supported in their best intentions to take the best advantage of their time in college.

Sanger Learning and Career Center: <http://lifelearning.utexas.edu/>

Writing Center: <http://uwc.utexas.edu/>

Career Exploration Center: <http://www.utexas.edu/student/careercenter/>

Student Emergency Services: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/>