Philosophy 216—Philosophy and Cultural Diversity

University of Oregon
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CRN: 16926
MTWR 9-10

Instructor: Fulden Ibrahimhakkioglu
Email: fulden@uoregon.edu
Office/Hours: 158 Susan Campbell Hall MW 10-11

Course Description:

One of the most widely used notions in legal, academic, and professional settings over the past decade is diversity. As the legal and political discussions are shifting from a language of discrimination to that of diversity, and thereby from harm (i.e. harmful to some) to benefit (i.e. beneficial for all), we are in urgent need of developing frameworks to understand this shift. The purpose of this course is to think critically about diversity and its terms, explore its history and precisely the very historical moment we are in that precipitated its invention, and finally, to develop conceptual tools through which we can evaluate its applicability and utility. What are the assumptions behind an inclusive politics motivated by cultural diversity? What does integrative politics entail, and what are its shortcomings? Does our current political framing adequately address the issues that arise in the American society?

To address these questions we will follow certain themes like culture, multiculturalism, and modernity rather than specific figures or philosophical traditions. The purpose of this course is to give you a strong background in and a detailed introduction to the debates around cultural diversity. It is hoped that by the end you will not only be fluent in the positions taken in these debates, but also have a refined outlook on the matters of cultural diversity as it relates to your and others’ lives. This course can be applied to the Arts & Letters group requirement and the university multicultural requirement (as an American Culture course).

I reserve the right to make changes on the syllabus as I see fit, so if you miss a session, make sure to check Blackboard for an updated version of the syllabus.

Required Texts:

Please find all the required readings on Blackboard. Please print these out and bring them to class. This is a reading intensive course. You are expected to come to class having
studied the assigned readings *closely* and *carefully*. Since we have class four days of the week, you may find it less stressful to get the readings done over the weekend for the given week, and then skim through your notes and passages you highlighted the day before class.

**Course Assignments:**

**4 Response Papers (20%)**

These will be short assignments (2-3 pages) that are explanatory, reflective or argumentative; depending on the question you are given. The purpose of these response papers is to get you to work on the readings on your own by building on our discussion. They should help you practice your critical thinking skills and prepare you for the exams. In order to get *any* credit for these, all four papers must be submitted. That is to say, if you submit three response papers but skip the fourth one, you will get no credit. They will be graded on the overall effort quality, that is, holistically, and not separately. Improvement is highly valued and will not go unappreciated.

All response papers are to be submitted to SafeAssign on Blackboard. See below for deadlines.

**Midterm 1 (15%)**

**Midterm 2 (20%)**

**Take Home Final (25%)**

The format of these exams will be some combination of short essay and long essay. The questions can be explanatory, argumentative or both. We will have review sessions before the exams, for which you are expected to bring in questions. We will work with your questions to review the material. This means that better your questions, more in-depth our review will be.

**Workshops & Participation (20%)**

Participation is the most crucial part of this course. You are expected to come to class: 1) having printed out the reading and brought it to class, 2) having read it, 3) having thought about it, and 4) having written down notes and questions that demonstrate your thinking on the material. You are expected to contribute to the discussion based on your notes, questions, and comments. Failure to do any one of these things will result in a lower participation grade.

We will devote most Thursdays to workshops where we will work on in-class assignments in groups on that week’s material. These workshops comprise a significant part of your grade and the effort you put into them will reflect on your grade.

Please bring all the readings of the week for the workshops.

**Extra Credit:** For those of you who are willing to give a brief presentation on the assigned material and lead the discussion for the rest of the session, extra credit (up to 5 points) is available. You must come and talk to me ahead of time for us to schedule this.
All written work must follow the same format: Double spaced, Times New Roman 12 pt. font, standard 1 inch margins.

Attendance Policy:

Since this is a discussion oriented course, you are expected to attend every session and contribute to the discussion. However, since life is full of unexpected things, you are allowed four unexcused absences with no penalty. Your fifth unexcused absence will result in a lowering of your final grade by one third of a letter grade, and from that point on, every unexcused absence will have the same effect on your grade. Eight unexcused absences will automatically result in an F.

It is your responsibility to contact the instructor in case of emergency prior to class (unless there are special circumstances where you cannot contact prior to class). These absences can be counted as excused with the instructor’s permission. If you are uncertain about what would qualify as an emergency, please contact the instructor. All emergencies must be documented, otherwise the absences will not be excused.

For instance, going home to visit your family for an extended weekend is NOT an emergency even if you had already booked your flight.

Late Assignments:

You will lose 10% of the credit for a given assignment for each day that you fail to submit after the deadline.

Tardiness:

I will take attendance at exactly 9AM. If you are late to class three times, this will count as one absence. If you come in at any time after 9:15, you will automatically be counted as absent.

Coming in late distracts everyone and must be avoided at all times. If it cannot be avoided, be as quiet as you can and shut the door.

Electronics:

No electronics. No exceptions. If I warn you to put an electronic device away, expect it to reflect on your grade. If I have to warn you a second time, I will ask for you to leave and/or you will be marked absent for that day.

Please come and talk to me for disability accommodations.

Academic Honesty:

If you are not doing the work yourself, it is plagiarism, cheating, or some other form of academic dishonesty. Any act of plagiarism will be reported to the university and will result in an automatic F. If you are unsure about what counts as plagiarism or academic
dishonesty in general, come and talk to me first so that we make sure that we are on the same page.

*** I will do my best to create a productive environment and inspire free thinking throughout the course. I will treat everyone fairly and with respect. In return, I expect you to do your best and treat everyone with respect. I want all of us to hold each other accountable. For this, communication is the key. Please come and talk to me if anything is bothering you. The subject matter will at times be sensitive and the discussions may be heated – and this is quite alright, as long as we don’t stop communicating. We shall build our classroom community together and contribute in our own unique way.

**Important Dates:**

**Oct 13 Sunday 5PM** – First Response Paper Due.

**October 27 Sunday 5PM** – Second Response Paper Due.

**October 31 Thursday 9AM** – Midterm 1.

**November 17 Sunday 5PM** – Third Response Paper Due.

**November 21 Thursday 9AM** – Midterm 2.

**Dec 11 Wednesday 12PM** – Fourth Response Paper Due.

**Dec 11 Wednesday 12PM** – Take Home Final Due.

**Class Schedule:**

**PART 1: CULTURE AND COMMUNITY**

**Week 1 (9/30-10/3) Culture and Multiculturalism**

**M 9/30:** Introduction & course overview.

**T 10/1:** Cabral, “National Liberation and Culture.”

**W 10/2:** Appiah, “Identity Against Culture.”

**R 10/3:** Workshop.

**Week 2 (10/7-10/10) Diversity, Identity, and Community**

**M 10/7:** Wood, *Diversity: An Invention of A Concept*, “Preface” and “Diversity in America.”

**T 10/8:** Wood, cont.


**R 10/10:** Workshop.

**Sunday by 5PM:** Response Paper 1 Due on Blackboard.
PART 2: MODERNITY AND COLONIALISM

Week 3: (10/14-10/17) The Enlightenment and the Modern Subject

M 10/14: Kant, “What is Enlightenment?”


W 10/16: Quijano, “Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality”

R 10/17: Quijano, cont. Workshop on the modern subject.

Week 4: (10/21-11/24) Colonialism and the Modern Subject


T 10/22: Césaire, Discourse on Colonialism.

W 10/23: Césaire, cont. (Recommended Reading: Ndlovu-Gatsheni’s “What is Decoloniality?”)

R 10/24: Workshop on coloniality.

Sunday by 5PM: Response Paper 2 due on Blackboard.

Week 5: (10/28-10/31) Orientalism and the Third World


T 10/29: Said, cont.

W 10/30: Q&A/Review.

R 10/31: MIDTERM I

PART 3: IDENTITY AND POLITICS

Week 6: (11/4-11/7) Identity & Recognition


T 11/5: Alcoff, cont.


R 11/7: Workshop on identity.
Week 7: (11/11-11/14) Racial Identity and Racism


R 11/14: *Crash* (2005) Final Part & Discussion on the film in relation to readings. **Film Workshop:** Discussion on racial identity & racism today.

Sunday by 5PM: Response Paper 3 Due on Blackboard.

Week 8: (11/18-11/21) Privilege and its Invisibility

M 11/18: McIntosh, “White Privilege.”

T 11/19: McIntosh, cont.

W 11/20: Q&A/Review.

R 11/21: MIDTERM 2

**PART 4: WHO SINGS THE NATION STATE?**

Week 9: (11/25-11/28) Singing the National Anthem & Questions of Belonging, Power, and Abandonment


R 11/28: THANKSGIVING

Week 10: (12/2-12/5) Reconstructions & Resiliencies

M 12/2: Boggs, “These are the Times to Grow Our Souls” in *Next American Revolution*.

T 12/3: Anzaldúa, “La conciencia de la mestiza, Towards a New Consciousness” in *Borderlands/La Frontera*.

W 12/4: Anzaldúa, cont. (Recommended: Lugones, “Playfulness, ‘World’-Travelling, and Loving Perception” in *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes*.)

Week 11: Wednesday by 12PM: Take Home Final AND Response Paper 4 Due on Blackboard.