

Spring 2022

Stony Brook University

Department of Hispanic Languages and Literature

College of Arts and Sciences

SPN 609 Literary and Cultural Theories: Latin American and Iberian Contexts

Course Instructor: Joseph M. Pierce

Section: 01

Office Hours: Mon./Tues. 11am-12:30pm. (via Google Calendar appointments or by email)

Course Time: Wednesday 4:25-7:15 pm

Instructor office: HUM 2036

Instructor email: joseph.pierce@stonybrook.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

An introduction to literary and cultural theory centered on the central questions that animate theoretical discussion among literary and cultural scholars today. Special emphasis is placed on theoretical discourses and practices originating in Latin America and Spain as well as how scholars in these regions have incorporated, modified and enhanced theories produced elsewhere. A required course for students in the Spanish Ph.D. program.

Course Rationale

The history of literary and cultural theory is usually taught as a series of historical developments that relate to and inform Western philosophy, politics, and culture. This canon is typically drawn from Greek aesthetics and Enlightenment understandings of the human and nature, and then shifts toward abstract notions of liberty and freedom (aesthetic, literary, and political), and then to Marxist historical materialism, psychoanalytic approaches, structuralism, and poststructuralism (the modern and the postmodern), with so called identity-based theories serving as an addendum or coda. In this line of thinking, feminism, queer studies, trans studies, disability studies, Black studies, Latinx studies, postcolonial, decolonial, and Indigenous studies are seen as derivative categories, or else reactions to the Western philosophical tradition. We are doing something different here. The difference is not so much in constructing an alternative line of critique, which is to say, not a different history of theory, but instead a focused examination of how theory is being shaped and reshaped today across diverse disciplinary (and interdisciplinary) methodologies. Thus, rather than teach the history of theory from point A to point B, we will be looking at concrete examples of how four different scholars have developed theoretical interventions in recent years. These scholars are Sayak Valencia, Jorge Coronado, Yomaira C. Figueroa-Vásquez, and Emil' Keme. The aim is not to present theory as a historical progression, but rather to develop the tools to read for theory, on the one hand, and on the other, to develop the vocabulary to approach how scholars mobilize theory to make critical interventions.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this course students will be able to:

- Identify overarching trends in literary and cultural criticism as deployed by contemporary scholarship in Latin American, trans-Atlantic, Afrodiasporic, and Indigenous studies.
- Contextualize relations between cultural production (i.e., literature, art, and photography) and methods of researching and writing about distinct cultural productions.
- Synthesize complex arguments in literary and cultural studies and evaluate their benefits and/or limitations.
- Produce original research that is engaged with contemporary trends in literary and cultural studies, and which builds on these methodologies via close readings and critical analyses of artistic, theoretical, or cultural work.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Attendance and Make Up Policy

- Attendance: I will take attendance every day, however you are empowered to make choices about whether you are able to come to class. Please do not come to class if you are feeling unwell. If you do miss class, it is your responsibility to keep up with readings and assignments.
- Late Work: I will accept late work this semester if you let me know beforehand that you will be turning something in late.

Description and schedule of Required Readings and/or Assignments.

Note: The first three assignments are aimed at fulfilling the course objectives relating to identifying and synthesizing theoretical arguments. The last three assignments are aimed at developing your critical vocabulary, ability to contextualize arguments, and produce original research.

1. **Theory Map:** In pairs, you will produce a map (or visual representation) of the introduction of one of the four principal texts that we study this semester. This may be done by hand or using software such as Prezi, PowerPoint, or Coggle. But the goal is to graphically illustrate the critical conversation that is being staged by the selected reading. The goal is to identify overarching trends in the literature and to map them visually, drawing connections between bodies of work/archives/theories. Students will briefly present this map on the day we discuss the work in class.
2. **Oral Presentation:** Each student will select one critical text and present 1) a one paragraph summary of its methodological approach; 2) two things that you learned from the reading, and 3) one thing that left you confused or wanting a deeper engagement with the material. You should have a critical point of view and be prepared to prompt and critically intervene in the subsequent class discussion. The one paragraph summary should be typed out and distributed in print during class. The second and third parts may be presented orally or as part of discussion.
3. **Reverse Outline:** This will serve as an opportunity for critical analysis and also a tool for improving your own analytical voice. A detailed handout (and example) will be provided

on Blackboard. You will analyze the form of analysis and argumentation and produce an outline of the structure of the text, rather than its content. These should be printed and turned in on the assigned day. This outline may serve (I encourage you to do this) as a model for your final paper.

4. **Final Essay Abstract:** This should explain the object of study, methodological approach, rationale, and stakes of your final paper. It should be around 400 words.
5. **Annotated Bibliography:** This is an exercise intended to help you identify and evaluate resources for your final essay. Each of the seven entries should include a brief rationale (3-4 sentences) for its use to your project. Each entry should answer: a) what is its main point of this text, and b) why are you using this text in your research? I will provide an example on Blackboard. Your Annotated Bibliography must include the following elements:
 - 1) One historical text;
 - 2) One book about the author, artist, generation, or artistic movement;
 - 3) Four (4) peer-reviewed journal articles or book chapters;
 - 4) One book review (of a historical or theoretical text);
 - 5) One theory text;
 - 6) One dissertation;
 - 7) One website/digital archiveNote: It must be rigorously formatted according to MLA style.
6. **Final Essay:** This may, but need not, take one of our course texts as a primary object of analysis. You are encouraged to make this paper work for you, to the service of your broader thematic and/or theoretical interests. This means that transnational and/or transhistorical approaches are encouraged, though not necessary. Topics should be discussed with the professor in office hours beforehand, and the Abstract will serve as the formal proposal of your topic. These papers need to be between 15 and 20 pages (not more, not less) and strictly follow MLA guidelines for citation and formatting.
7. **Not-a-Final Essay Project:** Not everyone benefits from the Final Essay. Not everyone wants to be an academic or will end up doing this type of research, which is modeled on the demonstration of expertise that is at odds with a decolonial approach to knowledge. So, please, feel fully empowered to do a Not-a-Final-Essay Project, which may entail creating a podcast, a website, a translation, a zine (or series of zines), a digital gallery, a web series, an oral history project, etc. If you do want to do this type of work, please make an appointment with me so we can discuss how best to support you and how to evaluate this work. We'll work on this together.

Participation: To receive an A in participation you should come to class prepared and on time, ask questions, and provide insightful commentary about course materials. Students who come to class but intervene infrequently will receive a B. Those who come to class sometimes and seldom intervene will receive a C. Students who arrive unprepared or late and don't participate will receive a D. An F will be given to students who stop attending class or rarely if ever intervene.

Workload: I aim for you to read approximately 200 pages per week in this class, sometimes more, sometimes less. Some of these readings are dense, and will require careful, slow reading.

By limiting the amount of reading in this course, I want you to be able to engage deeply with fewer readings. However, if more reading is assigned, then I ask that you identify main concepts and arguments, reading the entire text, but not stopping to interrogate the details (in this case we will discuss them in class).

Languages: This course will be taught primarily in Spanish. However, students should feel free to contribute to class discussions in English, Spanish, and/or Portuguese. We will do our best to summarize/translate as needed so that we can all be on the same page. Likewise, students may write their final papers in English, Spanish, or Portuguese.

Exams

No exams in this course.

GRADING:

10%	Course Participation
10%	Theory Map
10%	Reverse Outline
10%	Oral Presentation
10%	Final Essay Abstract
20%	Annotated Bibliography
30%	Final Essay/Project

Grade System

A = 94-100 B+ = 87-89 B- = 80-83 C = 73-76 F = 0-70
A- = 90-93 B = 84-86 C+ = 77-79 C- = 70-73

Required Texts

Stein, Jordan Alexander. *Avidly Reads Theory*. New York: NYU Press, 2019.
Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, Vol. 1. New York: Vintage, 1990.
Valencia, Sayak. *Capitalismo Gore: Control económico, violencia y narcopoder*. Mexico City: Paidós, 2016.
Coronado, Jorge. *Portraits in the Andes: Photography and Agency 1900-1950*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2018.
Glissant, Édouard. *Poetics of Relation*. Trans. Betsy Wing. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010.
Figueroa-Vásquez, Yomaira C. *Decolonizing Diasporas: Radical Mappings of Afro-Atlantic Literature*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2020.
Keme, Emil'. *Le Maya Q'atzij/Our Maya Word: Poetics of Resistance in Guatemala*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2021.

Supplemental Texts

Culler, Jonathan. *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997.
Castle, Gregory. *The Blackwell Guide to Literary Theory*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007.

All other readings will be available as a .pdf on Blackboard and are marked below with BB.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Introduction: Theory!?!?

Week 1. January 26 What is Theory? What is Reading for Theory?

Tompkins, Kyla Wazana. "We Aren't Here to Learn What We Already Know"
LARB. 13 September 2016. BB.

Week 2. February 2

Stein, Jordan Alexander. *Avidly Reads Theory*. New York: NYU Press, 2019.

Part I. Living/Dying Theory

Week 3. February 9

Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 1. New York: Vintage, 1990.

Theory Map Group 1

Presentation 1

Week 4. February 16

Preciado, Paul. *Testo Yonqui*. Ch. 2, "La era farmacopornográfica," pp. 25-46. BB

Presentation 2

Mbembe, Achille. *Necropolitics*. Ch. 3, "Necropolitics," pp. 66-92. BB.

Presentation 3

Week 5. February 23

Valencia, Sayak. *Capitalismo Gore: Control económico, violencia y narcopoder*.
Mexico City: Paidós. 2016.

Part II. Writing/Picturing Theory

Week 6. March 2

Rama, Ángel. *La ciudad letrada*. Montevideo: arca, 1998. BB.

Theory Map Group 2

Presentation 4

Week 7. March 9

Cornejo Polar, Antonio. *Escribir en el aire. Ensayo sobre la heterogeneidad
socio-cultural de las literaturas andinas*. Lima, CELACEP. 2003. BB.

Theory Map Group 3

Presentation 5

Week 8. March 16. No Class--Spring Break.

Week 9. March 23

Coronado, Jorge. *Portraits in the Andes: Photography and Agency 1900-1950*.
Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2018.

Reverse Outline Due

Part III. Moving/Relating Theory

Week 10. March 30

Glissant, Édouard. *Poetics of Relation*. Trans. Betsy Wing. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010.

Presentation 6

Week 11. April 6

Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Trans. Charles Lam Markmann. New York: Grove, 1967. Ch. 5, "The Fact of Blackness." pp.109-140. BB.

Presentation 7

Alexander, M. Jacqui. *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred*. 2005. Ch. 5, "Transnationalism, Sexuality, and the State: Modernity's Traditions at the Height of Empire." pp. 181-254. BB.

Presentation 8

Maldonado Torres, Nelson. "On the Coloniality of Being: Contributions to the development of a concept." *Cultural Studies* (2007) 21:2-3. 240-270. BB.

Theory Map Group 4

Week 12. April 13

Figueroa-Vásquez, Yomaira C. *Decolonizing Diasporas: Radical Mappings of Afro-Atlantic Literature*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2020.

Abstract and Annotated Bibliography Due

Part IV. Word/Worlding Theory

Week 13. April 20

Tuhiwai Smith, Linda. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. 2nd ed. London: Zed Books, 2012. Ch. 1 & Ch. 2, pp. 20-60. BB.

Justice, Daniel Heath. *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*. Ch. 2, "How Do We Behave as Good Relatives?" pp. 71-112. BB.

Week 14. April 27

Keme, Emil'. *Le Maya Q'atzij/Our Maya Word: Poetics of Resistance in Guatemala*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press. 2021.

Week 15. May 4

Conclusions

Final Paper due by email on May 11.

CLASS PROTOCOL

We will define our own class agreements for electronic devices and interruptions.

CLASS RESOURCES

Blackboard

STUDENT ACCESSIBILITY SUPPORT CENTER STATEMENT

If you have a physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact Student Accessibility Support Center, ECC (Educational Communications Center) Building, Room 128, (631) 632-6748. They will determine with you what accommodations, if any, are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential.

Students who require assistance during emergency evacuation are encouraged to discuss their needs with their professors and Student Accessibility Support Center. For procedures and information go to the following website: <http://www.stonybrook.edu/ehs/fire/disabilities>.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY STATEMENT:

Each student must pursue his or her academic goals honestly and be personally accountable for all submitted work. Representing another person's work as your own is always wrong. Faculty is required to report any suspected instances of academic dishonesty to the Academic Judiciary. Faculty in the Health Sciences Center (School of Health Technology & Management, Nursing, Social Welfare, Dental Medicine) and School of Medicine are required to follow their school-specific procedures. For more comprehensive information on academic integrity, including categories of academic dishonesty please refer to the academic judiciary website at http://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/academic_integrity/index.html

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT:

Stony Brook University expects students to respect the rights, privileges, and property of other people. Faculty are required to report to the Office of University Community Standards any disruptive behavior that interrupts their ability to teach, compromises the safety of the learning environment, or inhibits students' ability to learn. Faculty in the HSC Schools and the School of Medicine are required to follow their school-specific procedures. Further information about most academic matters can be found in the Undergraduate Bulletin, the Undergraduate Class Schedule, and the Faculty-Employee Handbook.

You need to join a zoom meeting every class through BB. Please see instructions here: <https://it.stonybrook.edu/services/zoom/students>

All sessions will be recorded. In case of internet disruption, technology failure or any other problem to connect synchronously, the material will be posted on Blackboard and will be available for the rest of the semester.

FOR IT SUPPORT: Students can visit the Keep Learning website at <https://sites.google.com/stonybrook.edu/keeplearning> for information on the tools you need for

alternative and online learning. Need help? Report technical issues at <https://it.stonybrook.edu/services/itsm> or call 631-632-2358.

To access mental health services, call Counseling and Psychological Services at 631-632-6720; Counselors are available to speak with 24/7.

If your instructor fails to connect to one of your weekly meetings, there are no new announcements on Black Board and you cannot reach him/her/they by email after 48 hours (weekdays), please email the department chair daniela.flesler@stonybrook.edu.