

Racial and Gendered Selves in Popular Culture

(Spring 2005)

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What is the role of popular culture in the construction of self among individuals? Specifically, how do popular culture constructions of social identities such as race and gender shape and conflict with individual notions of those identities? This class analyzes the relationship between cultural representations of race and gender to constructions of the self through an examination of the experiences of artists and audiences in contemporary popular media such as film, music, performance, and art. Through weekly reading assignments, media presentations, and original research projects, students will develop theoretical, analytical, and research skills to better understand the complex and dynamic relationship between popular culture and the social self.

Seminar Format:

Our weekly format will begin with discussions of readings led by students (this will be divided evenly among students). In addition, most weeks will contain media presentations which compliment the weekly readings. Finally, to prepare for their own research projects, students are also expected to identify potential methodological approaches in the weekly readings and media presentations. Students will be required to play an active role in the course, sharing with peers and the instructor responsibility for leading the weekly discussions as well as discussing weekly issues pertaining to their own research.

Requirements

- 1) Written synopses of selected course readings, presentation and critique of selected course readings during class, weekly presentation of research progress and active participation in seminar discussion
Attendance is key to your participation grade. You must contact me at least 12 hours before class if you have a legitimate reason for not being able to make class (illness, family emergency, etc.) 40%
- 2) VC film festival--attendance and write up of film/talk attended 10%
- 3) Preparation of a research question, proposal, presentation, and the completion of a 10-15 page research paper and/or equivalent creative project based on original research in the areas of popular culture and racial/gendered selves. Suggestions include interviews of cultural producers, ethnography of cultural production site or audience, focus group of media presentation, film documentary, and original performance. 50%

Course Schedule:
(unless indicated, all readings are in course reader)

April 4

Overview: The Self

Discussion of types of research projects and methods

Film screening: My America (...or honk if you love Buddha) (1996, 87 minutes; NAATA)

April 11

Investigating the Self

How is the Self constructed and how do issues of power, stereotypes, and agency play in that construction?

- Anderson, L. and D. A. Snow. 2001. "Inequality and the self: Exploring Connections from an Interactionist Perspective." *Symbolic Interaction* 24:395-406
- Jenkins, Richard. 1997. "Categorization and Power," in *Rethinking Ethnicity: Arguments and Explorations*. London: Sage. Pp. 52-73
- Cerulo, Karen A. 1997. "Identity construction: New issues, new directions." *Annual Review of Sociology* 23:385-409
- Berg, Charles Ramirez. 2002. *Latino Images in Film: Stereotypes, Subversion, Resistance*. Austin: University of Texas Press, pp. 15-28

Methodological Approaches to Studying Media Producers and Receivers

What approaches do researchers take to study the relationship(s) between popular culture and the self?

- Selections from *A Handbook of Qualitative Methodologies for Mass Communication Research*, edited by K. B. Jensen and N. W. Jankowski. London and New York: Routledge, 1991
 - Newcomb, Horace M. "Media Institutions, The Creation of Television Drama." Pp. 93-107.
 - Jensen, Klaus Bruhn. "Media Audiences, Reception Analysis: Mass Communication as the Social Production of Meaning." Pp. 139-148.

TENTATIVE RESEARCH QUESTION/FOCUS DUE (break up into small groups to discuss)

April 18

Authenticity, Popular Culture, and the Self

How do constructions of "authenticity" in popular culture intersect with racial, classed, and gendered concepts of self?

- Fine, Gary Allan 2003. "Crafting authenticity: The validation of identity in self-taught art." *Theory and Society* 32(2):153-180. [**Download from class website (list of links) at <http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/05S/ge20cw-6/fine2003.pdf>**]
- Grazian, David. 2003. *Blue Chicago: The Search for Authenticity in Urban Blues Clubs*. University of Chicago Press, pp.1-59. (**Passed out in class 4/11/05**)
- McLeod, K. 1999. "Authenticity within hip-hop and other cultures threatened with assimilation." *Journal of Communication* 49(4):134-150.

Film screening: Hollywood Shuffle (80 minutes)

April 25

Racially-Gendered Stereotypes and the Self

How do racially-gendered stereotypes contribute to constructions of identity and the "self"?

- Spelman, Elizabeth. 1988. "Gender & Race: The Ampersand Problem in Feminist Thought," Ch. 5 in *Inessential Woman: Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought*. p. 114-132.
- Fong, Timothy. 2002. "Charlie Chan no More: Asian Americans and the Media," in *The Contemporary Asian American Experience : Beyond the Model Minority*, p. 173-202.
- Hagedorn, Jessica. "Asian Women in Film: No Joy, No Luck," in *Signs of Life in the USA: Readings on Popular Culture for Writers*, ed. Sonia Maasik and Jack Solomon. Boston: Bedford, pp. 306-313. (**Passed out in class 4/18/05**)

Film screening: *Slaying the Dragon* (1988; 60 min; Deborah Gee; Asian Women United)
RESEARCH PROJECT PROPOSAL DUE
VC film festival April 28- May 5

May 2

Cultural Receivers: Racial and Gendered Ways of Seeing

How do cultural receivers mediate and interpret racial and gender stereotypes?

- Smith, Philip. 2001. *Cultural Theory: An Introduction*. (Blackwell), 171-174
- Hunt, Darnell. 1999. "Raced Ways of Seeing O.J.," in O.J. Simpson: Facts & Fictions. Cambridge: Cambridge University. Pp. 181-215.
- Radway, Janice. 1984. *Reading the Romance : Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature*. Chapel Hill : University of North Carolina Press, pp.3-18 and pp.231-240.
- Morley, David and Roger Silverstone. "Media Audiences, Communication and Context: Ethnographic Perspectives on the Media Audience." *A Handbook of Qualitative Methodologies for Mass Communication Research*, edited by K. B. Jensen and N. W. Jankowski. London and New York: Routledge, 1991. Pp. 149-162.

Guest Speaker: Noriko Milman on reception study of kids watching race

May 9

Cultural Producers of Color: Negotiation and Subversion 1

How do cultural producers of color resist dominant stereotypes and create alternative definitions of "self"?

- Hall, Stuart. 1997. "The Spectacle of the "Other" in Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices, edited by Stuart Hall. (Sage) 269-274
- Berg, Charles Ramirez. 2002. "Subversive Acts: Latino Actor Case Studies," in *Latino Images in Film: Stereotypes, Subversion, Resistance*. Austin: University of Texas Press, Pp. 87-108.
- Berg, Charles Ramirez. 2002. "The Mariachi Aesthetic Goes to Hollywood: An Interview with Robert Rodriguez" in *Latino Images in Film: Stereotypes, Subversion, Resistance*. Austin: University of Texas Press, Pp. 240-261
- "Missing in Action: Latinos In and Out of Hollywood." March 1999. Tomás Rivera Policy Institute.
 - Download from http://www.trpi.org/PDFs/missing_in_action.pdf and
- "Still Missing: Latinos In and Out of Hollywood." May 2000. Tomás Rivera Policy Institute.
 - Download from http://www.trpi.org/PDFs/still_missing_in_action.pdf

Film screening: *Los vendidos* (30 minutes; El Teatro Campesino; Producer KNBC-TV, Los Angeles)

VC FILM FESTIVAL REPORT DUE

May 16

Cultural Producers of Color: Negotiation and Subversion 2

- Munoz, Jose Esteban. 1998. "Pedro Zamora's Real World of Counterpublicity: Performing an Ethics of the Self" in *Living Color: Race and Television in the United States*, edited by Sasha Torres. (Duram and London: Duke University Press), 195-218
- De la Fuente, Joel. 1999. "An (Asian American) Actor's Life." in *Struggle for Ethnic Identity: Narratives by Asian American Professionals*, edited by Pyong Gap Min and Rose Kim. (Alta Mira Press), 156-167
- hooks, Bell. 1996. "The Cultural Mix: An Interview with Wayne Wang," in *Reel to Real: race sex and class at the movies*. New York: Routledge, 124-140.

ROUGH DRAFT (I): PRELIMINARY RESULTS AND ANALYSIS DUE (bring four copies—enough for instructor and members of your research discussion group)

Peer editing session

May 23: Student presentations

May 30: No class (Memorial Day)—ROUGH DRAFT (II) DUE BY MONDAY 11:59PM electronically to nansee@ucla.edu.

*June 1-3 Research discussion group consultations—bring four copies of rough draft (II).

June 6: Student presentations

June 13: (FINAL PAPERS AND PROJECTS DUE)

Syllabus revised 4/02/05