CORE 104m
CHANGE AND THE FUTURE

Lecture-Discussion  TTh  11-12:40  ASC 225  76024D
Lab                 W  7:00-10:00  THH 201
                    Th  4:00-6:00  THH 201

Instructor:
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Office Hours  tba

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"The History of Human Spacetime"

This course is an investigation into the basic building blocks of the human condition and an exploration of the myriad ways in which human beings construct societies that represent truth, the good life, and justice.

Through accessible readings in literature, history, and philosophy, and especially though hands-on experimentation, we will pursue a very specific set of questions throughout the course: How is it that human being is rooted in space and time? How do the geometric structures of our lives structure our understanding of the world? How do the imagined spaces of our minds connect to the physical "realities" around us? What is real or true? How are ethics established, and how can we understand the notion of "distance" between selves, groups, and nations? We will ask how time also structures our lives, and how it operates in the very long time-scale (before and since the origin of humankind). And we will ask also what exactly is time? Is the construction of memories (social and personal) a collective or private project that can be located in places?

This course encourages students to explore the connections between representations and reality, through rigorous writing and multimedia "authoring" assignments. The largest project in the course will be a reconstruction/interpretation of a place (broadly conceived to be both real and imaginary) in textual and digital format, using multimedia tools with the intensive assistance of Teaching Assistants (no prior computer knowledge is necessary for this course).

WEEK I
September 3

Introduction
WEEK II
September 8-10

The Labyrinth of Human Knowledge

Reading: Jorge Luis Borges, “The Lottery of Babylon.” (photocopy).

EVENING EVENT
Multimedia Training Session I – Leavey Library Auditorium
Thursday, September 10, 1998, 4:00-6:00 p.m.

WEEK III
September 15-17

On Representation, Part 1

Reading: Neil Postman, Amusing Ourselves to Death.

EVENING EVENT
Multimedia Training Session II – Leavey Library Auditorium
Thursday, September 17, 1998, 4:00-6:00 p.m.

WEEK IV
September 22-24

On Representation, Part 2

Reading: Mike Davis, “Fortress LA,” and “The Hammer and the Rock,” from City of Quartz, chapters 4 and 5.

First Essay Due: Thursday, 1 October, 1998
Choose two images and interpret them (per syllabus). Post as web page.
WEEK V
September 29-October 1

Space and Time, Part 1

Reading: Shakespeare, The Tempest.

WEEK VI
October 6-8

Space and Time, Part 2

Reading: Marx and Engles, The Communist Manifesto

EVENING EVENT
Forbidden Planet
(Introduced and analyzed by Charles Tashiro)
Wednesday, October 7, 1998, 7:00-10:00 p.m.

WEEK VII
October 13-15

Reading Herman Melville

Reading: Melville, Moby Dick, through chapter 36.

EVENING EVENT
R.J. Smith: Central Avenue
Thursday, October 15, 1998, 4:00-6:00 p.m.

WEEK VIII
October 20-22

On Race

Reading: Melville, through chapter 99.

WEEK IX
October 27-29

On Social Distance

Reading: Melville, through Epilogue.

Second Essay Due: Thursday, 5 November, 1998
Conceptual Treatment of Web Site Due: submit on paper and in web version.

WEEK X
November 3-5

On Gender

Reading: Charlotte Perkins Gilman, The Yellow Wallpaper.

WEEK XI
November 10-12

On Empire

Reading: Michael Herr, Dispatches.

EVENING EVENT
Hearts of Darkness
(Introduced by Director Fax Bahr)
Thursday, November 19, 1998, 7:00-10:00 p.m.

WEEK XII
November 17

On Justice

Reading: Davis, “Junkyard of Dreams,” from City of Quartz, chapter 7.

November 19

Workshop on website
WEEK XIII
November 24

Third Essay Due: Tuesday, November 24, 1998
First Draft of Web Site; submit paper and web site draft.

November 25, 1998 – Last day to drop class with mark of “W”

UNIVERSITY HOLIDAY
November 26-28, 1998 – Thanksgiving Recess

WEEK XIV
December 1-3

Project Presentations

Reading: Fellow Students’ Web Site Drafts (Lew-Z).

WEEK XV

Project Presentations

Reading: Fellow Students’ Web Site Drafts (A-Lev).

Final Draft of Web Site Due: Tuesday, December 15, 1998

FINAL EXAMINATION
Tuesday, December 15, 1998, 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

Required Book List
Articles and Excerpts:
Borges, Jorge Luis. "The Lottery in Babylon."

Occasional short reading/viewing: From time to time, we will distribute short clippings or images to stimulate discussion in the Tuesday sessions.

Films
*Forbidden Planet* (1956), introduced by Charles Tashiro.
*Hearts of Darkness* (1991), with a guest appearance by Fax Bahr, director.

Course Mechanics

Format:
The format of this course consists of lectures on Tuesdays with discussion sections on Thursdays, and occasional special events on Wednesday nights, 7-10 p.m. or Thursday afternoon, 4-6 p.m. Attendance at all meetings is required. Attendance and participation will figure significantly in your grade. Make-up for missed meetings is the responsibility of the student.

Office Hours:
Professor Ethington is not simply available during office hours: you are required to meet with him for a half-hour session at least once during the semester. Otherwise, office hour appointments are arranged in advance during 15-minute slots. TAs Sekhon and Stoilov will hold office hours as well. Please make careful note of these schedules.

Assignments:

Reading
The most important assignments in this course are the readings. You cannot learn or produce quality written/authored assignments without doing all of the assigned reading thoroughly. The short written assignments, due at the beginning of discussion section, are intended to solidify your grasp of the readings. The lectures and larger assignments for this course are all built upon the readings. In general, students who carefully read and reflect on the assigned readings do well in every other aspect of the course.

Writing/Authoring
Building your interpretations and representations from the readings is the goal of the writing and authoring assignments. By "writing" we mean writing text in the traditional sense of "papers" composed of correctly chosen and spelled words, whole sentences, coherent paragraphs, good grammar, clear theses, and excellent overall structure. By "authoring" we mean creating multimedia "texts" with "new media," composed of text in the traditional sense in conjunction with images (still and/or moving), sounds, and any other format of non-traditional medium.
With the goal of developing your skills in the interpretation and representation of the human world, we assign you to respond to specific questions about the readings and the world, in two formats: traditional "papers" and new media, integrated through "HTML," better known as "web pages."

Your evaluation (grading) will always be based primarily on your performance in and through "natural language," (in our case, English), using concepts that we can only (or at least originally) know and discuss through a natural language such as English. Stated in the obverse: You will not be evaluated on the basis of your facility in manipulating computer programs. However, we do have the goal in this course of enhancing, in addition to your critical facilities in natural language, your interpretive and expressive skills in the "new media." That goal has been described as "enhanced literacy," and we have added resources in this course to support it.

Those resources include an additional Teaching Assistant from the School of Cinema and Television, and the Annenberg Center's New Media Lab. Any and all of your new media assignments will be preceded by and encased within a traditional medium: writing the English language using the characters A-Z plus a variety of punctuation symbols. Through that old medium, you will explicate the conceptualization of your new media project.

Collaboration with Other Students on "Term paper/Term Website"

Essay/Websites 2 & 3 are amenable to collaborative, or team projects. As you will see in the following sections, your assignment will be to conduct experiments at a "place" and to write essays/author Websites in relation to that place. Both the place and the final Website may be a team effort, but the ESSAY component must be an individual effort. Thus, you may want to investigate a site with one or several other students, conducting The Experiment there, and to conceptualize and create the Website together. However, all teamwork presupposes a division of labor, and you will thus need to define carefully the parts that are the responsibilities of each person. In any case, the "conceptual treatment" in Essay 2 and the entire written essay of Term Paper 3, will be single-author works. In the former, you will need to address those aspects of the Website which were your responsibility.

The Writing/Authoring Assignments

1. One-page Weeklies

Three short "weeklies" can be completed according to your choice of schedule, but one each must be completed during each of the following sets of dates.
   A) 9/10 or 9/24
   B) 10/1-10/15
   C) 10/22-11/05

These are due at the beginning of class on Thursdays, and there no late weeklies will be accepted. They provide you with the basis for your performance during the discussion, and so, there is no point in turning them in late. The theme of these weeklies varies as the course proceeds. The precise theme, with a set of accompanying vocabulary and identification questions, will be posted on the course web site and handed out at least one week in advance. FORMAT: Weeklies must be typed, double-spaced, with one-inch margins, and printed in 10-point font. Do not exceed one page.
2. Essays/Websites, 1, 2, and 3

There are three essays due for this course. The first is due early in the course in order to get us all established in the same universe of understanding and expectations. Each essay is grounded thoroughly in the readings, lectures, and special events, as well as in your own world-experiential experiment. This "experiment" grows throughout the course, as you deepen your understanding of the site you have chosen, your understanding of the course materials, and your abilities to translate between these two things.

The first essay is not tied to the "place" of your experiment. We want you to choose that place by 1 October, after the first few weeks of the course have given you a chance to understand the main themes we will be exploring at those sites.

Essay/Website 1 (5 pp): Representing "racism," "exploitation" or "sexism."

Take two images from any source (you can make these images yourself with a camera or you can cut them from magazines, capture them from your television set, or whatever). Locate the "punctum" and "studium" (per Barthes), and explain how these (perhaps in different ways) represent "racism," "exploitation" or "sexism." Take at least one main idea from Borges, Davis, and Postman as an interpretive tool for your treatment. Helpful hints: Remember that "racism," "exploitation" or "sexism" are by definition forms of injustice. Their specific forms and definitions are not fixed. These terms are also by definition descriptions of relationships between human beings, and claims made by some human beings against others. Thus, these are political terms. There are no "correct" answers to questions about them. Your responsibility is to justify an interpretation of them.

Essays/Sites 2 and 3

Now that you have selected your "places" for The Experiment (see below), you will build your second and third essays/sites from your investigations of it, building interpretations and representations from the materials read/encountered and ideas/skills gained in the course.

Essay/Website 2 (10 pp): Conceptual Treatment of Website

You are building a Website from materials that include images and other nontraditional materials. The first part of this process is to write a conceptual treatment of this "site." The purpose of the site is to deliver your answer to "The Central Question." Defining truth, the good life, and justice are matters that must be taken-up through the readings, lectures, discussions and screenings of the course. Answering The Central Question is a matter that will require a mobilization of your interpretive and expressive skills.

The assignment is to write an essay explaining how an answer to The Central Question will be structured, both as a "traditional" argument (logical, evidence-based, and narratively
persuasive), and as a "new media" presentation (hyperlinked, using images and other nontraditional sources, non-narrative or narrative)

Core questions: How does the structure of your representation represent the structure of the world? How can the "fictional" as well as the "non-fictional" materials we have read and viewed, support your interpretation? (PLEASE NOTE, THAT THIS ESSAY CAN BE REVISED AND BUILT UPON FOR ESSAY/WEBSITE 3.

**Term Paper/Term Website 3 (20 pp)**

*In a world mediated by representations, how are truth, the good life, and justice possible?*

This is the "final" project toward which you have been building during the entire course. You are to answer the preceding question to the best of your ability, mobilizing as much of the course materials as you can in support of your case. There are two components. The first and major component is to answer the question directly. The second component is "reflexive." Here you want to turn your own tools upon yourself, addressing in your "term paper/term site" the reality of your own representation of the world. How does your representation reach out and "touch" reality, and how can or should any reader/viewer feel confident in your assertions?

The final project is built from "The Experiment," and that is carefully explained below. The exercises in The Experiment are all required and results from those exercises need to be included in your Term Paper/Term Website.

**The Experiment**

By 1 October 1998, choose a "place," defined as a specific spatial location that is inhabited by human institutions, *around but not specifically on* USC's campus, and conceptualize it as an intersection, or node in the greatest fabrics of human institutions, in both space and time. Conceptualize it as a node also at the intersection between "image" and "practice." Begin an investigation of this site using the conceptual tools acquired in this course. The methods you employ will be a mix of those suggested to you by the instructor, and any that you might invent on your own. Your mission is to "see" in this site the breadth and depth of human history, regardless of (or perhaps because of) its apparent banality. This place is your laboratory for the duration of the semester, and will be the starting-point for your "term paper/term site."

The following exercises are required of all students, and must be included in the final term paper/term site. However, remember that these are only the core, common exercises. You are also expected to explore the central question for the "term paper/term site," through as many pathways and themes as possible, based in the materials for this course.

Observational Exercises:

1) Record every object within the field of your place. Categorize these objects by meaningful relationships to the larger world.

2) Record/map every movement of a person or persons into or out of your site within a specific time frame (one hour, one day, or whatever is practical) Construct a time-geography representation, representing connections to the larger world (surrounding your place, in time and space).

3) Interview a participant in this place, to ascertain her/his mental map of that place in her/his larger universe.
Interpretive Exercises:
For each exercise, write a brief treatment of what you learned about Moby-Dick, the Tempest, or Vietnam from the exercise, and what you learned about your place from the exercise).

1) Set Moby-Dick in your place, or set your place in Moby-Dick.
2) Set the Tempest in your place, or your place in The Tempest.
3) Set Vietnam in your place, or your place in Vietnam.

Representation Exercises:
1) Represent truth in your place.
2) Represent the good life in your place.
3) Represent justice in your place.

Multimedia Training
To gain the basic skills necessary for the multimedia component of this course, we are providing initial, "intensive" training sessions, as well as continuous support from the TAs throughout the course. The "intensive" training sessions will be held at the very beginning of the course, on Thursday 10 September and Thursday 17 September, 4-6 PM. The TAs will also arrange office hours and availability at the Annenberg Center's Multimedia Lab, where you will have equipment available to create your Websites.

APPENDIX:

Selective Reading of Melville's Moby-Dick
Because you are reading a great deal as Thematic Option students, I have developed a "selective reading" strategy toward Moby-Dick. In essence, this strategy emphasizes intimate knowledge of selected chapters of this very long work. It is always ideal for you to read every page of the book, but it will be sufficient for you to have read carefully only the following chapters. Thus, the chapter ranges designated in the syllabus refer primarily to the following chapters.

TO 104 Fall 1998
Moby-Dick: Chapters to Read

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Week 6
Chapters:
Introduction
1-4
9-10
12
14
16 (first six pages only)
19
25-29
31
33
34-36

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Week 7
*Chapters:*
41-42
47-48
50
56
58
61
93-96
99

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Week 8
*Chapters:*
102
105-106
109
113
117-119
124
126
128
132-Epilogue