

**COMPARATIVE STUDIES 597.02  
GLOBAL CULTURE**

Autumn 2006

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Office Hours: T/R 10:30 – 11:20 a.m.  
Virtual office hours (email or chat): By appointment

**Course Description**

We will begin the quarter by identifying key issues, terms, and approaches in the study of globalization and global culture(s). As we consider some of the different ways scholars, activists, and artists have defined “globalization” and “culture,” we will examine what’s at stake – in political, personal, cultural, and economic terms – in each of these definitional projects. We will explore historic representations of human difference, and will consider how specific representational practices have informed American and European ideas about culture and global hierarchies. We will develop tools for investigating how people in different locations and situations experience (and contribute to the making of) globalization, global economic systems, and global cultural flows in their daily lives. Through a set of case studies, we will examine (a few of) the forms that transnational relationships can take, and we’ll explore the subjective, ethical, political, and material implications of these relations.

To engage each student’s strengths and preferences, this class will employ a combination of teaching and learning practices: mini-lectures, small-group activities, large-group discussion, and writing assignments (informal, in-class exercises, short homework essays, and a short final paper). *This course operates from the belief that knowledge is developed collaboratively; the class emphasizes learning through dialogue, deliberation, and the sharing of perspectives.*

**Course Policies and Guidelines**

What I expect of class members:

- Engaged participation (speaking & listening) in class discussion
- Employment of critical thinking skills and a willingness to interrogate familiar ideas, terms, and practices. We will develop these skills in reading, writing, and discussion.
- Thoughtful reading and consideration of course texts and authors’ arguments
- Collegial attitude
- Engaged presence in class (with cellphones, personal videogame & mp3 players turned off, newspapers and homework for other classes set aside). Please keep your cellphone turned off unless you are a parent, guardian, or have similar caretaking responsibilities.
- Assignments turned in on time, on paper (not via email), in the appropriate location.

What I do not expect of class members:

- Certainty before speaking
- Mastery of texts
- Agreement with ideas or positions represented in course texts and discussions

**Accommodations**

If you need accommodations based on the impact of an impairment or disability, please contact me privately as soon as possible. I will be happy to work with the Office of Disability Services to coordinate accommodations for students with documented disabilities. If you want to contact the Office of Disability Services, you can visit 150 Pomerene Hall or call 292-3307.

**Academic Misconduct**

Plagiarism is the representation of another person’s works or ideas as one’s own, and/or the undocumented, unacknowledged use of quoted or paraphrased work by another person. In

accordance with University policy, all cases of suspected plagiarism will be reported to the Committee on Academic Misconduct.

### **Attendance**

Consistent attendance is integral to your success in this course. Each student is allowed two (2) unexcused absences over the course of the quarter, no questions asked, no explanation necessary. Every unexcused absence over two will result in the lowering of your final grade by a third of a grade. Excused absences, such as those for documented illness, family tragedy, religious observance, or inter-collegiate athletics, will not affect your grade. *Five unexcused absences (including the two 'freebies') will automatically result in failure for the course.*

### **Course Requirements**

#### **Participation: 15%**

Your participation in this course depends upon three things: 1) doing the reading carefully & critically in order to make relevant contributions to class discussions; 2) participating productively and respectfully in large- and small-group discussion; 3) active listening and questioning. Your participation grade includes attendance, arriving in class on time, and staying for the entire class session.

#### **Homework assignments (3; 3-4 pages each): 45%**

Over the course of the quarter, I will ask you to write three short papers. For each paper, I will ask you to respond to a specific prompt.

#### **Group Facilitation of Class Discussion (40-50 minutes): 10%**

Once per quarter, you will lead class discussion as part of a facilitation group comprised of five or six class members. Your group will provide a brief synthesis of the day's reading(s), and will lead the class in activities to analyze the text(s) under consideration. Prior to your facilitation, your group will provide me with an outline of your plans for the class, and a copy of any visual support you plan to use in the facilitation (e.g., PowerPoint presentation, handouts). You are encouraged to be creative in finding ways to get your classmates involved in a lively, productive discussion.

#### **Online discussion posts (3): 10%**

I will ask you to write three (3) informal responses to course readings over the course of the quarter, and post these responses to Carmen *before* the class meeting in which we'll discuss the reading. Each student will sign up to post during specific weeks at the start of the quarter (though I encourage you to post at other times, if a thread or reading is particularly interesting to you). These posts will allow you to offer ideas, ask questions, and articulate responses to our course readings that will inform our class discussion.

#### **Final paper (6-7 pages): 20%**

In your final paper you will explore a question, issue, or problem raised by the course.

### **Course Texts**

All texts are required, and have been ordered at the Student Book Exchange (SBX). You might also look for used copies of the books online, or via OhioLINK or the Columbus Metropolitan Library system.

Zadie Smith, *White Teeth*

Manfred Steger, *Globalization: A Very Short Introduction*

Ara Wilson, *The Intimate Economies of Bangkok: Tomboys, Tycoons, and Avon Ladies in the Global City*

You will also be required to download & print out readings on electronic reserve at the OSU Libraries.

## Schedule

Readings must be completed before each class period

Any changes to the schedule will be announced in class and by email

Readings on electronic reserve are designated with the ® symbol

9/21 Introductions

### Studying global culture

This week's materials introduce us to key terms, ideas, and approaches that will facilitate our investigation of "global culture" this quarter. Steger's book provides an overview of contemporary debates surrounding globalization; *Life & Debt* suggests what's at stake (politically, economically, culturally, and personally) for individual Jamaicans as they experience the effects of international lending and free-trade agreements on a day-to-day basis.

9/26 Steger, *Globalization: A Very Short Introduction*, ch. 1 – 3  
View and discuss *Life & Debt* (1<sup>st</sup> half)  
\*Sign up for facilitation groups\*

9/28 Steger, *Globalization: A Very Short Introduction*, ch. 4 – 6 (ch. 7 – 8 recommended)  
View and discuss *Life & Debt* (2<sup>nd</sup> half)

10/3 ® Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy"  
\*Facilitation group meetings (in class, 30 min.)\*

10/5 GROUP 1  
® Mintz, "Power," From Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History

### Representing cultures: Historical legacies and contemporary interventions

In this unit, we will explore ways in which representational practices have informed – and supported – Western attitudes about "other" cultures and peoples. In addition to examining how cultural differences were made meaningful in the context of Western imperial and colonial projects, we will consider how theorists, activists, and artists have resisted these representational practices. Finally, we will view Todd Haynes' film [*Safe*] as a work that takes two affluent, white American cultures as its objects of critique.

10/10 ® Stuart Hall, "The Spectacle of the 'Other'" [pages tba]

10/12 ® Stuart Hall, "The Spectacle of the 'Other'" [pages tba]  
View & discuss scenes from *The Life and Times of Sarah Baartman*

10/17 GROUP 2  
® Hinsley, "The World as Marketplace: Commodification of the Exotic at the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893," in *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*

10/19 Class cancelled (Alana is at a conference) – Please use this time to read Fusco's essay and to explore the following artists' websites:  
Coco Fusco: <http://www.thing.net/~cocofusco/>  
James Luna: <http://www.jamesluna.com/>  
La Pocha Nostra: <http://www.pochanostra.com/>

10/24 **Due: Homework #1**  
® Fusco, "The Other History of Intercultural Performance"  
View and discuss *Couple in the Cage* (30 min.) & artists' websites

10/26 View and discuss scenes from [*Safe*], dir. Todd Haynes

### **Intimate (Global) Economies**

The readings in this unit facilitate our investigation of some “intimate economies.” Our readings on Barbie allow us to explore the emergence of a specific kind of global consumer. Ara Wilson’s ethnography explores the co-production of gendered subjectivities and transnational capitalist markets in Bangkok. Scheper-Hughes’ essay makes an argument about what’s at stake – ethically and economically – in illicit transnational organ trading.

10/31 GROUP 3

® Inderpal Grewal, “Traveling Barbie: Indian Transnationalities and the Global Consumer,” from *Transnational America: Feminisms, Diasporas, Neoliberalisms*

Holiday Dmitri, “Barbie’s Taiwanese Homecoming: A plastic, fantastic tale of Globalization” from *Reason* magazine. URL:  
<http://www.reason.com/0505/fe.hd.barbies.shtml>

11/2 **Due: Homework #2**

Ara Wilson, *The Intimate Economies of Bangkok: Tomboys, Tycoons, and Avon Ladies in the Global City*: Introduction through Chapter Two

11/7 GROUP 4

Ara Wilson, *Intimate Economies*, Chapters Three, Five and Conclusion

*Case study: transnational organ markets*

11/9 GROUP 5

Nancy Scheper-Hughes, “Black Market Organs: Inside the Trans-Atlantic Transplant Tourist Trade” on the *LiP Magazine* website. URL:  
<http://www.lipmagazine.org/articles/featscheperhughes.htm>

Scheper-Hughes, “Organ Stealing: Fact, Fantasy, Conspiracy, or Urban Legend?” on the Organs Watch website. URL:  
<http://sunsite3.berkeley.edu/biotech/organswatch/pages/theftoflife2.html>

Optional:

Visit the Organs Watch website:

<http://sunsite3.berkeley.edu/biotech/organswatch/index.html>

Suggested (in-class) viewing: scenes from *Dirty Pretty Things*

### **Global kinships**

In this unit, we will examine how individuals (in some cases, with the help of organizations and/or scientific techniques) are assembling families across time and space, through genetic genealogy and transnational adoption. We will explore the ethical, cultural, and personal implications of producing kinship through global encounters. Our consideration of Zadie Smith’s *White Teeth* will build upon these explorations of global kinship.

*Case study: Genetic genealogy*

11/14 View: *Motherland: A Genetic Journey*

Read: Two articles of your choice from *Developing World Bioethics*, Dec. 2003, vol. 3, issue 2. Access the electronic version of the journal through the OSU Libraries website.

11/16 GROUP 6

Discuss *Motherland*

*Case study: Transnational adoption*

11/21 GROUP 7

**Due: Homework #3**

Selections (tba) from *Outsiders Within: Writing on Transracial Adoption*, eds. Jane Jeong Trenka, Julia Chinyere Oparah, and Sun Yung Shin [readings will be posted on

Carmen]

11/23 Thanksgiving break.

11/28 Zadie Smith, *White Teeth*, Archie & Samad sections

11/30 GROUP 8  
Zadie Smith, *White Teeth*, Irie & Magid, Millat and Marcus sections

12/5 **Final papers due** in Alana's mailbox, Hagerty Hall 451, by 3 p.m.