NYU, Department of Media, Culture and Communication
GLOBAL CULTURES & IDENTITIES
MCC-UE 1401.001

Mondays: 4:55-7:25 pm
Room: TBA
Office hours: by appointment

Course Description
Globalization and transnational influences have profoundly complicated the idea of cultural difference in contemporary life, through the transnational migration. This course examines the production and reproduction of culture through communicative practices. We will critically explore how theory in communication advances an understanding of issues such as stereotypes, prejudice, hybridity, border crossing, authenticity, and cultural identity. A central focus of the course will be to critically examine how questions of identity, difference and representation affect the construction of everyday life.

Course Requirements
Discussions will be an important part of the class. Hence, you will be required to complete the readings assigned for each week. It is to your credit to come prepared with critical notes, comments or questions based on the readings in order to be able to participate effectively in class discussions. Attendance at all meetings is taken for granted; unexcused absences will harm your participation grade. Three or more missed classes without prior notices or excuse will result in your grade being dropped by one half letter. Coming to class late, leaving class early, sleeping in class, playing on your laptop or other electronic device, doing work for other courses in class – these activities will negatively affect your participation grade. Before class begins, please turn off all cell phones, pagers, global positioning devices, and any other items that might ring, buzz, play music, or otherwise call attention to themselves and disrupt class.

Please bring a printed copy of the assigned readings to class each week. Class discussion will call for reference to reading material.

To aid our discussion and to improve your writing skills, you will be required to turn in 4 Blackboard posts (250-300 words) where you will (1) provide a brief, one-paragraph summary of the argument of a chosen reading (2) pose at least one conceptual question about the readings and/or topics under discussion. **Two of them** must be posted before class on October 21st, other two – by the last class on December 9th. **Your summary/question must be posted on Blackboard by 7pm the day before those dates. Responses that are not posted in time will not be considered.**

In addition, you are required to give 1 presentation (usually 2 people each class, it can be also a group presentation) during the semester. The presentations should highlight and explain a few key points of a chosen reading, give examples which these theoretical points can be applied to, and pose questions about those readings. Students should choose the text/film/book from the sessions’ topics (below) in the beginning of the course. Please let me know before the second week what your choice is.

Also, there will be two essays. The first will be 5 pages and the second 10 pages. Topics and guidelines will be handed out in class.

Because this syllabus is a guide, changes in schedule, readings, or assignments may occur. You will be notified in advance if changes need to be made.
Grading
- 1st Short Paper (5 pages): 20% (due Oct 18th)
- Final Project (8-10 pages): 30% (due Dec 20th by noon)
- Class participation, presentation and 4 blackboard posts: 50%

Evaluation
A= Excellent
This work is comprehensive and detailed, integrating themes and concepts from discussions, lectures and readings. Writing is clear, analytical and organized. Arguments offer specific examples and concisely evaluate evidence. Students who earn this grade are prepared for class, synthesize course materials and contribute insightfully.

B= Good
This work is complete and accurate, offering insights at general level of understanding. Writing is clear, uses examples properly and tends toward broad analysis. Classroom participation is consistent and thoughtful.

C= Average
This work is correct but is largely descriptive, lacking analysis. Writing is vague and at times tangential. Arguments are unorganized, without specific examples or analysis. Classroom participation is inarticulate.

D= Unsatisfactory
This work is incomplete, and evidences little understanding of the readings or discussions. Arguments demonstrate inattention to detail, misunderstand course material and overlook significant themes. Classroom participation is spotty, unprepared and off topic.

F= Failed
This grade indicates a failure to participate.
Plus and minus grade indicate the standing within the above grades.

Students with disabilities
Any student attending NYU who needs an accommodation due to a chronic, psychological, visual, mobility and/or learning disability, or is Deaf or Hard of Hearing should register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212 998-4980, 240 Greene Street, www.nyu.edu/csd.

Religious observance
Students who follow special religious holidays that may interfere with the class schedule need to see me at the beginning of the semester to talk about your schedule.

Academic dishonesty and plagiarism
Plagiarism or cheating on any assignment will not be tolerated under any circumstances and will result in a failure of the assignment and possibly failure of this class. “Academic integrity is the guiding principle for all that you do…you violate the principle when you: cheat on an exam; submit the same work for two different courses without prior permission from your professors; receive help on a take-home courses without prior permission from your professors; receive help on a take-home that calls for independent work; or plagiarize. You plagiarize when, without proper attribution, you do any of the following: copy verbatim from a book, article, or other media; download documents from the Internet; purchase documents; paraphrase or restate someone else’s facts, analysis, and/or conclusions…” (see School of Education Bulletin, 2004-6, p. 174)

Readings
• Most readings are available on Blackboard. The following three texts are required and are available for purchase at the NYU Bookstore.
  - Cheikh Hamidou Kane, The Ambiguous Adventure, (Heinemann, 1972)
  - Hergé, Tintin in America (Little, Brown Young Readers, 1979)
  - Marguerite Aboué & Clément Oubrerie, Aya, 1st Volume (Drawn and Quarterly, 2007)
• Selected articles are available on Blackboard. Please print them for each class.
Films (all films are on reserve in Avery Fisher Film Center at Bobst library):

Sans Soleil (1983)
Belizaire, the Cajun (1986)
Notes towards the African Orestes (Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1970)
Happy Together (1997)
The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith (1978)
The River (Jean Renoir, 1951)
Black Girl (Ousmane Sembene, 1966)
Touki Bouki (1973)
The Battle of Algiers (1966)
Imitation of Life (1959)
When a Woman Ascends the Stairs (1960)
Persepolis (2007)
The Voyage to Italy (Roberto Rossellini, 1954)
The World (Zhang Ke Jia, 2004)
The Power of Nightmares (BBC documentary, 2004)
Hiroshima Mon Amour (Alain Resnais, 1959)

Part I – Negotiating cultural diversity in a global world

Week 1

Sept 9. Introduction: Syllabus, requirements, etc. What is Culture? Culture and Proxemics

Reading:
• Edward T. Hall, *The Hidden Dimension* (p. 1-6 and p.188-189)
• Edward T. Hall, *Beyond Culture* (chapter 3 and 7, pp. 41-56; 105-116)

Week 2


Reading:
• Michel de Certeau, *Culture in the Plural* (chapter 4, pp. 39-68 & 85-87)
• Edward T. Hall, *The Hidden Dimension* (chapter 11 & 12, pp. 131-164)

Week 3


Reading:
• Michel de Certeau, *Culture in the Plural* (Chapter 6 “Minorities”, pp. 69-80).

Watch: Film *Sans Soleil* by Chris Marker (1983).

Part II – Conceptualizing Hybridity: “Metissage,” Acculturation, Cosmopolitanism, Transculturation

Week 4
Sept 30. “Metissage”: cultural hybridization as a form of resistance to cultural domination.


Watch: film *Belizair, the Cajun* (1986) – discussion in class.


Reading:  
Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint. Tobacco and Sugar* (PP: 3-34; 97-103)

Watch: Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Notes towards the African Orestes* (documentary, 1970) – we will discuss it in class.

Week 6

Oct 14.
No class

Week 7.


Reading:  
Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism* (Introduction, Chapter 1, pp. xi-xxi, 1-12)  
Cheikh Hamidou Kane, *The Ambiguous Adventure* (Senegalese novel) – Read the book.

Watch: *Happy Together* by Kar Wai Wong (1997)  
*The Chant of the Jimmie Blacksmith* (1978)

Part III – Perceiving the Other: Eurocentrism, Identity, Gender, and Stereotypes

Week 8.

Oct 28. Orientalism and Eurocentrism

Reading:  
• Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, introduction (p. XI-XXVIII)  
• E. Said, *Orientalism*, p. 1-9;  
• Michel de Montaigne, *Of Cannibals* (essay, 3 pages)

Watch:  
*The River* by Jean Renoir, 1951 (required)  
*Black Girl* by Ousmane Sembene (1966), or *Touki Bouki* by Mambety (1973)
**Short paper due in class.** Please send a digital version to me by Monday, Oct 28th, noon.

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**Week 9**

**Nov 4. Introduction to Semiology: definition of mythologies. Race and identity**

Reading:
- Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (Chapter. 5. Pp: 82-108)

Watch:  
*The Battle of Algiers* (1966) – class presentation;  
*Take this Hammer* (with James Baldwin, a film produced by KQED in 1963): https://diva.sfsu.edu/bundles/187041

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**Week 10**

**Nov 11. Stereotypes**

Reading:
- Hergé, *Tintin in the Congo / Tintin in America* (Comic strips)
- Richard Dyer, *White* (pp. 41-70)

Watch: *Who is the Nigger?* – James Baldwin (video, 1963)

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**Week 11**

**Nov 18. On Gender and Race. Gender and Representations**

Reading:
- Marguerite Aboué & Clément Oubrerie *Aya* (graphic novel, vol. 1)

Watch:  
*Imitation of Life* by Douglas Sirk (1959)  
*When a Woman Ascends the Stairs* by Mikio Naruse (1960)

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**Week 12**

**Nov 25. Culture and Migration. Cross-Cultural Perspectives in Communication**

Watch: *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* by Alain Resnais (France, 1959)  
*Persepolis* by Vincent Paronnaud & Marjane Satrapi (France, 2007).

**Week 13**

**Dec 2. Clash or encounter?**

**Reading:**
- Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations?* (essay, 28 pages)

**Watch:** Part 1 and 2 (at least) of *The Power of Nightmares* by Adam Curtis (BBC documentary, 2004).

**Case study:**
Simon Shuster, “Underground Islam” at: *Slate*:  
http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/roads/2013/08/moscow_s_underground_mosques_russia_s_intolerance_toward_muslims_may_be.single.html

**Week 14**

**Dec 9. Globalization and transnational influence. What is universal?**

**Reading:**
- Jan Aart Scholte, “Defining globalization” (essay, 40 pages)
- Chinua Achebe, “Colonialist Criticism” (in *The Post-Colonial Reader*, p. 57-61)

**Watch:**  
*Voyage to Italy* by Roberto Rossellini (1954)  

**Final papers due on Dec 19th, noon.**