

Sergio Muñoz-Sarmiento

## The Subject and Representation: The Untimely

Occidental College

Subject and Representation, H385, Fall 2002

Instructor: Sergio Muñoz-Sarmiento

T/Th: 3:30-4:55, Office Hours: by appointment, or after Thursday's class.

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Taking into consideration our current global, political and economic scene, a scene at large of war, violence, social dissatisfaction and micro and macro confidence games, we simultaneously see a growing desire for empathy, volunteerism, and social activism. The crucial question must be asked: In which, if any, does **one** participate?

The main concern of this course will be threefold: One, to take an introductory look at how the notion of "the subject" was constructed; Two, to analyze, via visual works, films and written texts, how "the subject" is represented and represents; lastly, to ask the pertinent question: Does the subject still exist, and if not, how would one manifest this "new subject" or mode of thought and being?

This course will attempt to give some timely answers through the work of some thinkers that have, for the most part, always been thought of as "untimely". We will look to disturb and displace our past and current beliefs in order to reach a more intimate and pertinent level of thought and practice

Additionally, we will ask some very difficult, uncomfortable, and unsettling ethical and political questions regarding our preconceived notions of individuality, community, the social, violence, morality, and ethics. This will be done by juxtaposing visual with written works, that at one and the same time will enable us to comprehend our own "consciousness" and, therefore, participation in or refusal of a social space.

Thus, we will view and read works by artists, filmmakers, and thinkers who have been historically categorized as difficult and "radical": Works by Frantz Fanon, Jean-Paul Sartre, Georges Bataille, Hannah Arendt, and Friedrich Nietzsche.

It is through films such as *Taxi Driver*, *Once Were Warriors*, *All About My Mother*, *Clockwork Orange*, and *The Terrorist* that we will discuss socio/political issues such as race, gender, sexuality, class, violence and colonialism. (Note: Some films may be substituted if need be.)

Concurrent with our investigation, we will use varied strategies to facilitate and complicate our research, such as class lectures and discussions, readings, films, field trips, and slides. A crucial component of this course is class participation. It is my belief that only through a conscious articulation of one's position(s) is one then able to strategize an act or acts.

### Required textbooks:

*Existentialism and Human Emotions*- Jean Paul Sartre

*On Violence*- Hannah Arendt

*The Wretched of the Earth*- Frantz Fanon

*Critical terms for Literary Study*- Lentricchia and McLaughlin

*On the Genealogy of Morals/Ecce Homo*- Friedrich Nietzsche

CLASS ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY! YOU ARE PERMITTED TWO (2) ABSENCES, ANY ABSENCE OVER THIS WILL AUTOMATICALLY REDUCE YOUR GRADE BY A FULL GRADE POINT. (Three absences will lower an A to a B, or a B to a C)

**Your final grade will depend on:**

1. One 10 page essay. (I will give a handout with guidelines): 40%
2. Class participation (will include weekly “questions and comments”): 20%
3. 4, 250-word essays on films (to be viewed in class): 40% (10% each)

RE: “Questions/comments”. You will be required to hand in ONE critical question and ONE critical comment regarding the class readings EACH day of class. You may of course write down more than one question or make more than one comment!

- **If you miss any class material (i.e.-lectures, videos, slides, etc.), it is your responsibility to view and/or read the material before the next class date.**
- **No extra-credit work will be given or accepted.**

As always, the logic of the syllabus falls prey to chance and improvisation, thus, *we might sidetrack where deemed necessary.*

The Semester!

THURSDAY, AUGUST 29<sup>th</sup>:

Class introduction. Review syllabus.  
Read: “Representation” from CTLS

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 3<sup>RD</sup>:

Introduction to: Modes of representation. (Slide presentation of media images, visual artworks).  
Read: “The Subject” (electronic/library) by Kaja Silverman, for next Tuesday.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 5<sup>TH</sup>:

Introductory lecture to: What/who is a subject? The subject and language.  
Read: “Suture: Discourse and Subjectivity” (electronic/library), by K. Silverman, for next Thursday.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10<sup>TH</sup>:

Continue lecture on Subject(ivity)  
Read: “Suture: The Cinematic Model” (electronic/library), by K. Silverman, for next Thursday.  
Lecture on “Discourse and Subjectivity”.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 12<sup>TH</sup>:

Read: “Suture and Ideology” (electronic/library), by K. Silverman, for next Tuesday  
Read: “Ideology”, in CTLS, by Lentricchia & McLaughlin  
Lecture on: “Suture: The Cinematic Model”

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TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17<sup>TH</sup>:

Read: “Suture and Sexual Difference” (electronic/library), by K. Silverman, for next Thursday.

Read: “Gender”, in CTLS

Lecture on: “Suture and Ideology”

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 19<sup>TH</sup>:

Lecture on: “Suture and Sexual Difference”

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24<sup>TH</sup>:

View Pedro Almodovar’s, “Todo Sobre Mi Madre/All About My Mother”

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 26<sup>TH</sup>:

Finish viewing “Todo Sobre Mi Madre/All About My Mother”

Write short 250-word essay on film. Essays to be discussed in class next Tuesday.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 1<sup>ST</sup>:

Class discussion on essays regarding “Todo sobre mi madre/ All about my mother”

Read: “Maculinity, the rule of law, and other legal fictions”, by Kendall Thomas (electronic/library)

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 3<sup>RD</sup>:

Lecture and class discussion on “Masculinity...and other legal fictions”.

Read “Class” and “Race” from CTLS for next week.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 8<sup>TH</sup>:

View: “Homicide”, by David Mamet

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10<sup>TH</sup>:

Finish Viewing “Homicide”, by David Mamet

Write short 500 word essay on “Homicide” to be discussed on Oct. 17<sup>th</sup>.

Read for Thursday, October 22<sup>nd</sup>: pp.7-106 of “Wretched of the Earth”, by F. Fanon

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 15<sup>TH</sup>:

**No class, fall break.**

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 17<sup>TH</sup>:

Discuss “Homicide” essays.

Read: “Imperialism/Nationalism” in CTLS

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 22<sup>ND</sup>:

Class discussion on violence section from “Wretched of the Earth”.

Read: “Chains of Madness, Chains of Colonialism: Fanon and Freedom”, by Francois Verges (electronic/library), for next Tuesday.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 24<sup>TH</sup>:

Class discussion on: “Chains of Madness...” and “Imperialism/Nationalism”.

Read: Section I of “On Violence”, by Hannah Arendt by next Tuesday.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 29<sup>TH</sup>:

Begin viewing: “Once Were Warriors”.

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THURSDAY, OCTOBER 31<sup>ST</sup>:

Finish Viewing: “Once Were Warriors”

Write a short 250-word essay on film, to be discussed Tuesday.

Read: pp. 9-60 from “Existentialism and Human Emotions” book by Thursday, Nov. 12<sup>th</sup>.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 5<sup>TH</sup>:

Discuss 500 word essays on “Once Were Warriors”.

Read: Section II of “On Violence”, by H. Arendt by next Tuesday, Nov 12<sup>th</sup>.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 7<sup>TH</sup>:

Discuss Sections I and II of “On Violence” by Arendt.

Read: Section III of “On Violence” by Arendt.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 12<sup>TH</sup>:

Discuss: pp.9-60 of “Existentialism and Human Emotions”

Read: Nietzsche pp. 15-97,

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 14<sup>TH</sup>:

View: “Taxi Driver”

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 19<sup>TH</sup>:

Finish viewing: “Taxi Driver”

Write a short 250-word essay on “Taxi Driver”

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 21<sup>ST</sup>:

Discuss essays and “Taxi Driver”

Read: Nietzsche, pp. 97-167, 276-283

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 26<sup>TH</sup>:

Brief lecture on: “The Untimely Ones”, pp.276-283, from *Ecce Homo*

View: “A Clockwork Orange”

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 28<sup>TH</sup>:

**No class, Thanksgiving break.**

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 3<sup>RD</sup>:

Finish viewing: “A Clockwork Orange”

Write a 250-word essay on “A Clockwork Orange”.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 5<sup>TH</sup>:

Discuss essays, film, and Nietzsche’s, “What is the Meaning of Ascetic Ideals?”