CAST 400: Research Seminar: Expressive Cultures and Social Justice Activism  
Spring 2016  
T: 9:00-10:50  
King 339

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**This course serves as a capstone in the Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies major**  
(Note: You must also register for GSFS 400 to receive credit)

“Hands Up, Don’t Shoot” became one of the most prominent visual symbols of the movement against state-sanctioned violence in the fall of 2014. From photographs of protesters and NFL athletes to posters and tee shirts, this symbol of raised hands signified political solidarity. Or did it? What, then, photos of white female models wearing skimpy tops with the hands up logo? Taking the conundrum of public acts of resistance and appropriation as its starting point, this seminar explores the role of expressive cultures in social justice activism, asking such questions as: Do cultural practices spur action or only reflect already consolidated viewpoints? How effective are expressive cultures in garnering support? How does one assess cultural efficacy?

Previously in CAST 400, students developed research projects based on the theme of “Expanding the Archives.” In response to student input, we have made changes to the major requirements, including this seminar. This year, as a “text-based research” seminar, we will explore the distinctiveness of interdisciplinary research focused on documents collection and textual analysis ranging from music, film and photography to archival documents, the Internet and social media. More specifically, we will focus on the politics of representation in order to address questions about expressive cultures and social justice activism that we collectively generate. In conjunction with theoretical readings, we will study text-based methodologies, including discourse analysis, content analysis, and semiotics. Grounded in a Comparative American Studies approach, intersectionality and interdisciplinarity will frame our discussions about research practices. From these foundations, students will design and conduct individual research projects.
**Course Goals:**
- To gain a broader understanding of cultural studies approaches to the politics of representation;
- To develop an effective critical vocabulary that enriches your analyses of expressive culture and social activism;
- To bring an intersectional approach to research design and methodology and to gain competency in conducting interdisciplinary research;
- To enhance analytical skills in evaluating evidence;
- To build classroom community in order to support the intellectual tasks of independent research;
- To further develop communication skills including both writing and oral presentations.

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**
**All articles can be located on Blackboard (BB)**

Even though there are no required books for this class, I expect you to be ready to discuss all the readings in depth. Therefore, you must either bring a paper copy of each reading, an e-reader or laptop, or good notes with you to class.

This course will use Blackboard for announcements, handouts, articles, and assignments. I do not use Facebook, Twitter or other social media so please check your email regularly.

**I - GENERAL POLICIES**

**Writing Associate: Eliot Hart Nelson**
Eliot Hart-Nelson is the writing associate for this class. He and I have worked on the redesign of this seminar, which he took last year. Eliot will be an integral part of the class and an important resource for you with regard to all areas of the research project, from conceptualizing your topic to designing a research question, collecting evidence and developing your analysis.

**Learning Community**
The academic study of privilege and inequality often raises issues that are controversial or evoke strong personal feelings. There are few right answers to the questions we are exploring. Therefore, I ask that everyone in this course commit to making this classroom a learning community -- a space for people to explore new ideas, take intellectual risks, and engage in open and honest debate. Certainly, people will have different opinions and everyone begins the course with a different skill set and knowledge base. Our objective is decidedly not consensus but rather to consider a range of perspectives and to develop our own positions with greater insight. In order for this to occur, we need to hear from a range of perspectives and learn communally from each other.

We are collectively responsible for creating the kind of environment we want to learn and study in, so we will collaborate on ground rules at the beginning of term. Anyone who has concerns about the classroom environment that they do not want to discuss publicly should come see me during office hours. Please let me know at the beginning of the term about anything I should know in order to make the learning environment optimal.

Content Alert: please be aware that some issues discussed in this course may provoke difficult reactions for some. I cannot always anticipate those reactions, but will always respect any student’s need to take care of themselves in response to them. For an excellent discussion, see

II - COURSE REQUIREMENTS

❖ ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION (10%)
The class requires your thoughtful and continuous participation; therefore, regular attendance is mandatory. Any absences will be deducted from your final grade. Please be punctual, as we only meet once a week and late arrivals are disruptive.

In order for the course to be effective, you must come to class having carefully read all assigned material and with all writing assignments completed on time. While some assignments are not graded, they are required and constitute a significant portion of your participation grade. The best way to advance your own research is to get substantive feedback and to revise your work in response. This requires active participation in both sides of that process. In other words, you need to be both a careful and critical reviewer and to listen with an open mind to the constructive critiques offered by your classmates.

Individual Meetings: you are required to meet with me at least twice in each half of the semester. Or, if you prefer, you can meet once with me and once with Eliot (per half semester).

❖ STUDENT REPORTS (p/np)
In the second half of the semester, half of each class session will be dedicated to three student reports. For your report, bring in one or two primary sources from your project. These are not meant to be formal presentations, but thinking sessions: you will lead us in a collective mulling over of the texts. Introduce the material briefly, offer two or three conversation openers, and be in charge of keeping the conversation usefully directed. Above all, you will want to guide us towards a collective theorization of how this poem/song/sculpture/etc. thematizes the questions we have collectively developed about expressive cultures and social justice. References to relevant theoretical works and other primary sources will enrich these sessions.

❖ CAS CONFERENCE (10%) – Saturday, May 2, 2:00-4:30
Collectively, the class will design, organize and present a public conference open to the Oberlin community. This is an opportunity for you to share with the audience some of the main concerns of the seminar and to develop your oral communication skills.

III – WRITING ASSIGNMENTS (see BB for more details on all assignments)
This W-Adv course is designed to guide students through the various steps of writing a research paper and, in the process, to further develop your analytical writing and speaking skills. We will use writing workshops, student-led discussions, and the peer-review process as classroom practices to guide you through the research and writing process.

❖ 6 SHORT PAPERS (15%)
• Response Papers: during the first half of the semester, you will choose 3 of the six class periods to write response papers (1-2pgs.) on the readings assigned for that class.
• **Secondary Source Assignment**: during the second half of the semester, you will write 3 papers (1-2pgs.) that each engages with one secondary source related to your research.

**RESEARCH PROJECT**

The different components of this assignment address the main steps required in the research process, including formulating a research question, designing a research strategy to gather a range of interdisciplinary primary and secondary sources, and integrating these materials within a theoretically grounded critical framework.

*Alternative Project*: Instead of a research paper, you may pursue a creative or performance-based project that addresses the key questions of the seminar. I will modify the assignments to suit your project, but will still ask you to do a fair amount of writing, which I believe is central to all creative endeavors.

- **Topic Proposal, 1page (p/np), due February 24 by 9am**
  Write a 1-page proposal that identifies and explains your research topic (which may be a combination of academic, social, political and/or personal issues).

- **Primary Source Analysis, 5-7pgs. (20%), due March 20 by 5pm.**
  Write an analysis of two or three different kinds of primary sources central to your project. Theoretical approaches from the readings and issues discussed in class will provide you with a foundation upon which to develop your analytical argument.

- **Paper Section, 4-6 pgs. (15%), due April 21 by 9am.**
  Write one section of your final paper. This writing should highlight both primary and secondary sources and demonstrate your analytical argument.

- **Final Paper (30%) due May 16 no later than 9pm**
  Note: Two copies of first draft of the final project is due in class on May 7
  The final project should demonstrate substantive improvement from the earlier installment. In addition to incorporating theoretical perspectives on representation, you should engage analytically with CAS concerns about nationalism, power, difference and inequality as they relate to your project.

**GUIDELINES FOR PAPER SUBMISSIONS**

Please submit ALL assignments electronically in Word format (.doc or .docx but not Pages) to BB. Papers should be double-spaced, use 12-point font, and use a standardized citation format.

**ALL ASSIGNMENT DUE DATES ARE FIRM DEADLINES**

**GRADING**

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<th>Component</th>
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<tr>
<td>Class participation (including ungraded work)</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 Short Papers</td>
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<td>Primary Source Analysis</td>
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<td>Paper Section</td>
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<td>Conference</td>
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<td>Final Project</td>
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COURSE POLICIES

Classroom Etiquette
Please arrive a few minutes early so that we may start class on time. Turn off all cell phones. No texting. Laptops are great for consulting readings and note taking, but I take exception to people who use class time to check email, surf the web, or engage in social networking. If you abuse this privilege, I will no longer permit you to use electronic devices in class.

Attendance Policy
Attendance is mandatory and any unexcused absences will impact your final grade. Tardiness: it is your commitment to this class and your classmates that you will be present and ready to begin work at the start of class. Repeated lateness (after three late arrivals) may result in significant deductions to your final grade in this course.

Late Papers and Extension Requests
All work will be graded on a 100-point scale. Assignments will be marked down 5 points for every day they are overdue, unless I have given my approval for the assignment to be handed in late before the due date. As a general rule, I will approve extensions in the case of illness or emergencies, but not because you have other work due at the same time. Assignments submitted later than 1 week past the original deadline without a written extension will be given credit only at the instructor’s discretion and will generally earn no greater than a minimum-passing grade.

P/NP
If you are taking this course P/NP, you must fulfill all course obligations and complete all assignments in order to receive credit for the course.

Academic Incompletes at the end of the semester
Extensions on final projects require an approved incomplete from the Dean of Studies. There are no exceptions to this policy.

Honor Code
This course adheres to the policies of the Oberlin College Honor Code and Honor System, which applies to all work submitted for academic credit. For papers, you must cite all written sources that you use, whether you quote directly or paraphrase. This is true whether you are using electronic or printed materials. All work must include the statement: “I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code in this assignment.”

Incomplete or improper citations are a form of plagiarism. If you are unfamiliar with proper citation formats, please consult a reference librarian, a writing tutor or me. Lack of familiarity with proper procedures is not a defense. See Oberlin Honor Code for more information: http://www.oberlin.edu/students/student_pages/honor_code2.html

Students with Disabilities
If you need disability-related accommodations for your work in this class, please let me know. Contact the Office of Disability Services for assistance in developing a plan to address your academic needs. Support is also available through Student Academic Services.

Accommodations for student athletes
If you are a student athlete and member of an Oberlin college sports team and your athletic schedule will cause you to miss class during the semester, please inform me immediately.
CLASS SCHEDULE

Feb. 3: Expressive Cultures and Social Justice Activism
Reading: Listen to Toni Morrison Nobel Prize speech

Feb. 10: The Politics of Representation
Reading: Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,”
https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/ge/benjamin.htm; Gramsci, “Art and the Struggle” (BB); Tomlinson and Lipsitz, “American Studies as Accompaniment” (BB).

Feb. 17: Representing Social Movements
Visit to AMAM – meet promptly at 8:50am at the courtyard entrance
Reading: Raiford, Imprisoned (BB); and Raiford, “Restaging a Revolution,” (BB)

Feb. 24: Cultural Activism

Topic Proposal Due

Mar. 3: Performance, Gesture, and Trace: What Constitutes Evidence?
Reading: Bakhtin, Rabelais and His World (BB); Butler, “Bodies in Alliance” (BB); Marchi, “The Moral Economy” (BB); Mitchell, “Big Judy,” (BB).

Mar. 10: Ghosts, Affect and Temporality: Re-Situating Activism
Reading: Cvetkovich, An Archive of Feelings (BB); Munoz, Cruising Utopia (BB); Schormans and Chambon, “Please Don’t,” (BB).

Mar. 17: Sound and Musical Activism: Thinking Through Interdisciplinarity
Reading: Bidaye, “Outernational Transmission” (BB); Shank, Political Force (BB); and Sterne, “Sonic Imagination” (BB)

Mar. 20: Primary Sources Paper Due no later than 5pm.

Mar. 24: *****SPRING BREAK *****

Mar. 31: Visual Methodologies
Student Listening Sessions
Readings: Rose, Visual Methodologies 51-104 (BB)

Apr. 7: Discourse Analysis I
Student Listening Sessions
Reading: Rose, Visual Methodologies 105-148,189-226 (BB)
Secondary Source Paper Due
Apr. 14: Discourse Analysis II
Student Listening Sessions
Reading: Rose, Visual Methodologies, 227-260 (BB); Booth, et. al, 105-151(BB).
**Secondary Source Paper Due**

Apr. 21: Oral Presentation Workshop and Conference Planning
Student Listening Sessions
**Paper Section Due**

Apr. 28: Research and Writing
Student Listening Sessions
Reading: Booth, et al, 173-212; 232-269(BB)
**Secondary Source Paper Due**

May 2: Conference, noon-5pm

May 5: Peer Review Session and Conclusions
**First Draft Due in Class – bring in two hard copies**

May 16: Final papers due to BB no later than 9pm

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**ARTICLES ON BLACKBOARD**


