

Mapping the Minor

Comparative Literature 318

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Tu 3:15-6:05, 260-004

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Course topic:

While we speak all the time of “minorities,” we have yet to seriously explore several central conceptual and historical issues which would allow us a deeper understanding of not only the minor, but its inscription in our most profound senses of community and social and cultural life. This course addresses several key questions: How can we understand notions of community and otherness in philosophical and social theoretical discourses? What is the connection between theory and social practice? What is the distinction between “minorities” as conceived of as “lesser” entities and minorities as exceptional elites? What has been the particular valence of the “minor” within both cultural and political worlds? What is the rhetorical and practical power of a “minority opinion”? How have minority cultures been at once protected and put into pressure to assimilate? How are these distinctions discursively mediated and practically installed in various historical situations and locations?

Students will:

- come to class with two written questions on the day’s reading assignment;
- present one reading to the class for discussion;
- write one midterm essay of 5-7 pages outlining a key problem;
- participate in all class meetings;
- turn in a final essay of 12-15 pages.

Below is the schedule of readings. All course readings are in a course reader which will be placed in Building 250 by the office of the Program in Modern Thought & Literature on the ground floor (rear of building). Please sign out each reading you take out for copying, and indicate when it will be returned.

- 1 Introductions
- 2 Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism* (Essays by Gutman, Taylor, Habermas, Appiah).
- 3 from Will Kymlicka, ed., *The Rights of Minority Cultures*:
Jeremy Waldron, “Minority Cultures and the Cosmopolitan Adventure” (93-119)
Darlene Johnston, “Native Rights as Collective Rights” (179-201)

- Chandran Kukathas, "Are There Any Cultural Rights?" (228-256)
- Leslie Green, "Internal Minorities and Their Rights" (257-272)
- from Monique Deveaux, *Cultural Pluralism and the Dilemmas of Justice*: pp. 1-39; 180-88.
- 4 from Jodi Dean, ed., *Cultural Studies and Political Theory*
- Max Reinhardt, "The Song Remains the Same: Communitarianism's Cultural Politics" (95-114)
- Paul Passavant, "The Governmentality of Discussion" (115-131)
- from Lani Guinier, *The Tyranny of the Majority*
- "The Tyranny of the Majority"; "Keeping the Faith"; "The Triumph of Tokenism"
- 5 Butler, Laclau, Zizek, *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality*
- "Introduction"
- "Questions"
- Butler, "Restaging the Universal and the Limits of Formalism"
- Laclau, "Identity and Hegemony"
- Laclau, "Structure, History and the Political"
- 6 from Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox*
- pp. 1-59; 80-140
- 7 from Seyla Benhabib, *Situating the Self*:
- "Communicative Ethics and the Claims of Gender, Community and Postmodernism" (1-22)
- "The Generalized Other and the Concrete Other" (148-177)
- "The Debate Over Women and Moral Theory Revisited" (178-202)
- 8 from Smelser and Alexander, eds., *Diversity and Its Discontents*.
- Benhabib, "Civil Society and the Politics of Identity and Difference in a Global Context"

from Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity*: "The Other Face of the Earth: Social Movements against the New Global Order" (68-83)

9 from Castells, "The End of Patriarchalism" (134-221).

10 Review and discussion of final papers.