



**AL 892: Graduate Seminar**  
**Basic Concepts in Cultural Theory**  
**What is Culture?**  
**Summer Semester 2009,**  
**Michigan State University**  
**Dr. Christian Lotz**

**Tentative Schedule (last UPDATE: November 03, 2009)**

Number	Date	Topic	Reading	Protocol	Presentation	Other
1	May 8	Introduction, 5pm, 530 South Kedzie Hall				
<b>Preparation</b>						
	June 7	Cassirer or Geertz				Response paper + abstracts due
	June 14	Simmel or Freud				Response paper + abstracts due
	June 21	Turner or Bourdieu				Response paper + abstracts due
	June 28	Stiegler or Heidegger				schedule appointment for June 22 or June 24 Response paper + abstracts due
<b>Foundations</b>						
2	June 29	Culture, Knowledge, Objectivity (Cassirer)	Cassirer, The Logic of the Cultural Sciences, Study 1-4	Terry Ann	Terry	
<b>Extensions</b>						
3	June 30	Culture (Simmel)	Simmel, Philosophical Culture (pdf) Cassirer, The Logic of the Cultural Sciences, Study 5	Jennifer	Jack	
4	July 1	Civilization, Repression, Eros (Freud)	Freud, Civilization and its Discontents Adorno, Culture and Administration (pdf)	Shannon	Natalie (Adorno)	
<b>Contemporary Approaches</b>						
5	July 2	Symbolism, Interpretation, Understanding (Geertz)	Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures, chapter 1-2, 4, 8, 15	Michael	Jennifer Ann	
6	July 3	Play, Ritual, Performance (Turner+Butler)	Turner, From Ritual to Theatre; Butler, Performative Acts and Gender Constitution (pdf)	Caroline	Dan 2 (Turner)	
7	July 6	Habitus, Practice, Body (Bourdieu)	Bourdieu, The Logic of Practice, book I	Dan 2	Shannon	
8	July 7	Technology, Memory (Stiegler)	Stiegler, Technics and Time, vol 1	Natalie	Michael	
9	July 8	Images + Modernity	Heidegger, The Age of the World Picture (pdf)	Jack	Caroline	

	(Heidegger)	(Heidegger)
August 22		Research papers and abstracts of presentations due
10	August 29	Miniconference, Student Presentations, 10am-4pm schedule TBA
11	August 30	Miniconference, Student Presentations, 10am-4pm schedule TBA

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### Class Meetings:

Days: Daily (special schedule)

Time: 5:00pm-8:30pm

Place: 530 South Kedzie

### Office:

Phone: 517.355.4490 [dept.]

Place: 501 S. Kedzie Hall

Hours: before and after class, by appointment and by phone

### Exceptions:

### Other Contact:

E-mail: [lotz@msu.edu](mailto:lotz@msu.edu)

Home Phone: please ask

### Webpage

URL: <http://www.msu.edu/~lotz/classes>

(Please check the webpage *regularly* for the current schedule)

### Box

You will find my box in the front office of the philosophy department (503 South Kedzie); you can also slip your assignments under my door if I am not in my office (501 South Kedzie)

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## Course Description

In this interdisciplinary class, which is open to all graduate students in the College, we will discuss fundamental aspects of what has been called "The Cultural Turn" in recent discussion in the Humanities and in the Cultural Sciences. What is culture? How is culture to be differentiated from nature? Is culture primarily symbolically or pragmatically structured? Which role does language play in this picture? How can the role of the cultural sciences and the humanities be defended faced with contemporary naturalism? How do gender and race theory address the culture/nature divide? We will be discussing selected concepts, such as culture, world, language, medium and addressing the culture/nature divide from different disciplines (philosophy, sociology, cultural studies, media studies, anthropology). It is expected that students *intensively* study the primary material and come *well* prepared to class. Given that this is a graduate seminar, I expect self-responsible learners in class.

## Course Goals

It is hoped for that at the end of the class participants will be able to understand the most important approaches to the phenomenon and concept of culture.

## Flexible Schedule

We will meet once at the end of Spring 09 (participation is mandatory), on a daily basis between the two summer sessions, and, in addition, we will meet for a weekend seminar at the end of the summer semester (participation in this weekend seminar is mandatory). Finally, there will be email-exchanges in May/June.

## Texts

Cassirer, Ernst, *Logic of the Cultural Sciences*  
Freud, Sigmund, *Civilization and its Discontents* (Norton)  
Geertz, Clifford, *The Interpretation of Cultures*  
Turner, Victor, *From Ritual to Theater. The Human Seriousness of Play*  
Stiegler, *Technics and Time, Vol 1* (Stanford UP)  
Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice, book I* (Stanford UP)  
Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*

### **Texts as Downloads**

Heidegger, [The Age of the World Picture](#) (pdf)  
Jonas, [Image Making and the Freedom of Man](#) (pdf)  
Simmel, [The Conflict in Modern Culture and Other Essays](#) (pdf)  
Butler, ["Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory"](#) (pdf)  
Elias, [The Process of Civilization \(excerpt\)](#) (pdf)  
Adorno, [Culture and Administration](#), in *The Culture Industry* (Routledge) (pdf)

### **Course Format**

The course will be organized such that, ideally, each class period will include [i] "interactive" lecture, [ii] protocol discussion, class presentations [iii], and [iv] paper discussion. Students will be asked to study a certain text or part of a text for the next class period.

### **Protocol (German tradition)**

The class protocol should cover our discussion in class. Protocols should have a length of 3 pages (around 900 words), and they will in and outside of the classroom force us to have *an ongoing reflection* on our texts that we study for class. They can also include problems or questions that the writers had either with our class discussion or with the texts itself, but above all protocols should cover what I lectured about in class and what we discussed afterwards. Protocols should clarify and discuss selected issues in question. Protocols have to be sent out to other students by noon the day following the class. I'll radically mark down late turn ins. The student who wrote the protocol will address questions during the first 20 minutes of the next class meeting, and he/she will lead the class discussion.

### **Presentation**

One/two students will be responsible for each class and work out an introductory presentation, which should function as a platform for our discussions. Length of presentations: up to 45 minutes. Each presenter must schedule an appointment with me in June for a brief discussion of the presentation. In addition, each presenter must two days before class send around a selection of 15 pages that have to be re-read by every participant.

### **General Remark**

Given that this is a *graduate* seminar, I expect self-motivation, autonomy, as well as self-responsibility. The attendance requires the willingness to intensively study the text selected for class.

### **Class Paper**

The class essay should be well researched and should present a substantial reflection on some parts of the material discussed in class. I expect *excellent* papers in regard to research, form, and content. I will fail papers that do not comply with formal standards (footnotes, literature, etc.)

### **Response Paper + Abstracts**

Every student will write for each of the readings an abstract and write 4 response papers about selected readings. Response paper should lay out how each author reflects on "culture." Response Papers should be accompanied by one extra page with (critical) questions about the readings, which will be used for our discussions.

### **Weekend Seminar**

Every student will present a shorter version of his/her final paper (5 pages, 1500 words), which will be followed by a 30 minute discussion of each paper.

### **Course Evaluation**

You will be evaluated on the basis of:

Protocol	pass/fail: 5 points
4 Response papers (no more than 900 words)	pass/fail: 15 points
Paper (no more than 4500 words)	70%: 70 points
Lecture (no more 1500 words)	pass/fail: 5 points
Presentation	pass/fail: 5 points

### Grading:

4.0	100 - 93
3.5	92 - 87
3	86 - 82
2.5	81 - 77
2	76 - 72
1.5	71 - 65
1.0	64 - 60
0.0	< 60

### GENERIC SYLLABUS (might not be applicable to each class)

#### Class Attendance

I do not employ in my classes a class attendance policy. Having said this, you should be aware that class attendance is very important. When engaging in a philosophical and humanistic dialogue it is necessary to be an active and present participant in the ongoing discussion. If you miss class please do not email me asking if you missed anything important. Every class is important. You should get a study buddy for the class; a student in class who will inform you of what you missed. If you miss a class you can come to my office hours or make an appointment to discuss the material, providing you have read the material and you simply want to see if your understanding of the material is on target. Time in office hours will not be used to repeat the class lectures.

#### Grading Criteria

Check out [this page for grading criteria, example of assignments, etc.](#)

#### Helpful information about oral presentations, paper writing and plagiarism

[Click here to find help on your presentations and your writing](#)

#### Online Research Sources

Unfortunately, some people think that the internet as such is a reliable source of information. If you decide to use online sources for additional information or your paper then do not just use one of the common internet search engines, such as Google; rather, use **reliable academic** sources, such as *Britannica Online*, or the [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#). Here are other resources: [Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy](#) - [Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#) - [Encyclopedia of Continental Philosophy](#) (e-book) - [The Oxford Companion to Philosophy](#). The [Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#) isn't very good, but still acceptable. Check out MSU's [library resources](#)! And, as with other sources, you must cite any online sources to which you refer in your essay.

#### Writing Center Information

MSU's writing center offers excellent help on all matters regarding writing and learning. Check the website at <http://writing.msu.edu> for an overview and hours. For more information, please call 517.432.3610 or send an e-mail to [writing@msu.edu](mailto:writing@msu.edu).

#### Plagiarism

In any essay or exam answer submitted for assessment, all passages taken from other people's work must be placed within quotation marks, with specific reference to author, title and page. *no excuse* can be accepted for any failure to do so, nor will inclusion of the source in a bibliography be considered inadequate acknowledgement. If the marker decides that plagiarism has occurred, the student may be judged to have failed the class.

#### Academic Honesty

Article 2.3.3 of the Academic Freedom Report states that "The student shares with the faculty the responsibility for maintaining the integrity of scholarship, grades, and professional standards." In addition, the (insert name of unit offering course) adheres to the policies on academic honesty as specified in General Student Regulations 1.0, Protection of Scholarship and Grades; the all-University Policy on Integrity of Scholarship and Grades; and Ordinance 17.00, Examinations. (See Spartan Life: Student Handbook and Resource Guide and/or the MSU Web site: [www.msu.edu](http://www.msu.edu)) Therefore, unless authorized by your instructor, you are expected to complete all course assignments, including homework, lab work, quizzes, tests and exams, without assistance from any source. You are expected to develop original work for this course; therefore, you may not submit course work completed for another course to satisfy the requirements for this course. Also, you are not authorized to use the [www.allmsu.com](http://www.allmsu.com) Web site to complete any course work in (insert course number here). Students who violate MSU rules may receive a penalty grade, including but not limited to a failing grade on the assignment or in the course. Contact your instructor if you are unsure about the appropriateness of your course work. (See also <http://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/honestylinks.html>)

### **Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities should contact the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities to establish reasonable accommodations. For an appointment with a counselor, call 353-9642 (voice) or 355-1293 (TTY)

### **Drops and Adds**

The last day to add this course is the end of the first week of classes. The last day to drop this course with a 100 percent refund and no grade reported is (see Academic Calendar). The last day to drop this course with no refund and no grade reported is (see Academic Calendar). You should immediately make a copy of your amended schedule to verify you have added or dropped this course.

### **Note on Attendance**

Students who fail to attend the first four class sessions or class by the fifth day of the semester, whichever occurs first, may be dropped from the course

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