

POL 0139B
Cannibals and Conquistadores: The Philosophy of the Other

Professor Daniel R. Brunstetter

Email: dbrunste@uci.edu

Office #: 5289 SSPB

Office Hours: TH 2:30-3:30; or by appointment

Classroom: RH 190, Tuesday 7-9:50 pm

Course Description: The purpose of the course is to examine critically the notion of the 'other' by looking at the philosophical challenges difference poses in the context of the European discovery of the New World. The goal is to understand the naissance of the concept of human rights as well as the importance of tolerance and the potential explosiveness of difference in a world in which interaction with the 'other' is an inevitable and fundamental component of our existence.

Course Requirements:

Class Participation: 30%

Two (2) one page, single spaced papers: 30%

Final Project: 40%

Required Books:

*Todorov, Tzvetan. *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other.*

*Satrapi, Marjanne. *Persepolis*

*Mills, Charles. *The Racial Contract*

*Montaigne, Michel de. *Essays*

*Le Clezio, *The Mexican Dream*

Las Casas, Bartolome de. *In Defense of the Indians*

*Khadra, Yasmina, *The Attack*

*Le Clezio, *Wandering Star*

Books with an * are available in the original French

Readings with an ** are available online or on the class webpage

Course Schedule

Week 1 (1/5) -Introduction

Week 2 (1/12) - Marvel and Conquest

Lecture: The Making of Modernity

Discussion: Todorov 1-120

Le Clezio, *The Mexican Dream* ch.1

Week 3 (1/19) – The Nature of Barbarians

Lecture: Defining the Other as Barbarian

Discussion: Todorov 127-167

Week 4 (1/26) – The Argument for Human Equality

Lecture: Defending the Other

Discussion: Las Casas 3-9, 24-98, 212-48, 249-303, 337-41

Todorov 168-201

Week 5 (2/2) - The Voice of Other

Lecture: The Aztec View of the Conquest

Discussion: Le Clezio, *The Mexican Dream*, chs 5, 7

Todorov 202-41

Week 6 (2/9) – The Banes and Boons of the Enlightenment

Lecture: The Noble Savage, the Theory of Progress, and the Exclusion of the Other

Discussion: Laura Janara, “Brothers and Others: Tocqueville and Beaumont, U.S.

Genealogy, Democracy, and Racism,” *Political Theory* 32, 6 (2004), 773-800**

Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract* (41-130)**

Film: *Black Robe* (selections)

Week 7 (2/16) – Human Rights

Lecture: Otherness and Human Rights

Discussion: A. Pagden “Human Rights, Natural Rights, and Europe’s Imperial Legacy”,

Political Theory (2003), 171-99**

Todorov 245-54

Week 8 (2/23) – Otherness Today

Film: *Vukovar*

Discussion: Yasmina Khadra, *The Attack*

Le Clezio, *Wandering Star*

Week 9 (3/2) – Alternative Modernities

Lecture: Rethinking the Modern Narrative: Toleration and the Intolerable

Discussion: Montaigne; *Of Custom, Of Cannibals, Of Coaches, Of*

*Presumption***

Week 10 (3/9) – Axis of Evil: Iran

Film: “Plastic Flowers Never Die”

Discussion: Marjanne Satrapi, *Persepolis*

Class Policies

No extension will be given for any assignment without a written medical excuse or without prior approval.

Absolutely NO cell phones! All ringing cell phones will be answered by me, then confiscated and sacrificed in the Pacific Ocean to the Sea Deity of your choosing. Please, no food in class, though beverages are permissible.

Each session will be divided into two parts: a lecture that will last roughly 1:15 minutes, and a seminar discussion section. There will be a 15 minute break between each session. The lecture will broadly present the theme of the day, often referring to topics not covered in the reading. The discussion section will offer the chance to engage in deeper reflection and dialog on the lecture as well as the assigned reading.

Reading: The assigned reading must be done *before* class. This will facilitate class discussion and participation.

Class Presentation: Each week, a student, or group of students will lead the discussion. They will give a brief over-view of the assigned reading(s) as well as prepare a list of questions to facilitate the discussion. This list of questions must be sent to me before 5 PM on the day of class (Monday). Occasionally, I will provide extra readings which will help prepare the students for leading the discussion.

Class Participation: Attending class and participating in discussion is imperative. In lecture, I encourage student participation by asking frequent questions. In the discussion seminar sections, participation is a must. The second part of class is a seminar – thus it is not my job to lecture. I will take attendance and verify that students actively participate. Each class is worth three points of your final grade – so do not miss class because each missed class lowers your final grade by one third of a letter. If you must miss class for a verifiable and legitimate excuse, valid according to university policy, you will be required to make up this class by submitting a 3 page paper on the subject of that particular class. Please note - getting stuck in traffic is NOT an excuse for missing class. Being late to class will incur my wrath, and I reserved the right not to let you in depending on my mood, the weather, the alignment of the stars, etc..

Paper Assignments: The papers for this class are supposed to be analytical arguments supported by relevant textual evidence. Your paper is not supposed to be an opinion piece or personal philosophical statement.

Criteria for assessing your paper:

1. Do you have a clear statement of your argument?
2. Do you provide relevant evidence?
3. Are your reasoning and writing clear and effective?
4. Do you demonstrate understanding of the works/arguments you are analyzing?

Warning: If your paper is effectively a summary of or your opinion about the works/arguments rather than an interpretation, then the best grade you can receive is a C (75).

SHORT PAPERS: The two short papers will be 1 page, single-spaced papers in which you offer a critical reflection on the lecture/readings of a particular week. You choose the weeks you want to analyze. The paper is due the following week in class. We will discuss the particulars of this assignment in class.

LONG PAPER: The long paper will be a 5000 maximum word research paper on a topic of your choosing dealing with Otherness. This paper is due on the day of the final exam. Please send your papers to me via email. I will not accept printed copies – save the planet!

Late Paper Policy: All late papers will be graded down one portion of a grade (eg. From a B+ to a B) for every day late, including Saturday or Sunday, without exception.

Midterm and Final Exams: There are no exams.

Quizzes: I reserve the right to have un-announced pop quizzes to test whether you have done the reading.

Grading: A (93-100); A- (90-92); B+ (87-89); B (83-86); B- (80-82); C+ (77-79); C (73-76); C- (70-72); D+ (67-69); D (63-66); D- (60-62); F (0-59)