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Curricular Unit

Theories of Representation (5.5 ECTS) – 45 hours

Study cycle to which the curricular unit belongs (with academic semester and scholar year)

BA in Social and Cultural Communication and BA in Applied Foreign Languages (1st semester 2014-2015)

Responsible academic staff member and lecturing load in the curricular unit

Maria Luisa Homem Leal de Faria Geraldés Barba

Learning outcomes of the curricular unit

The curricular unit aims at giving the students knowledge about the main theoretical positions on cultural representation through the study of the systems of representation. The study of the production and circulation of meaning through language is designed to foster competences of cultural analysis, within the concept that culture is more than a set of things (like novels, painting, music or TV programs) but that it is also a process and a set of practices. Through the study of representations, the students will develop competences for the interpretation of shared meanings in the same culture and a better understanding of the way cultural meanings organize and regulate social practices, influence our conduct and consequently have real, practical effects.

The study of different theories of representation and of different case studies, both in time and space, should contribute to the development of the awareness about difference and “the other” and to a better understanding of the instruments that have built and legitimized discursive formations that led to specific “regimens of truth”.

Syllabus

1. The study of systems of cultural representation in modernity
 - a) Codes of linguistic and visual representation – the constructionist approach
 - b) Saussure and Barthes: from linguistics to semiotics
 - c) From language to discourse: Michel Foucault
 - d) Cultural Hermeneutics: Clifford Geertz
 - e) Images, power, politics
 - f) Media and representation: fine art, photography, film, television, new media
2. The study of representations as discursive practices:
 - a) Representations of the nation and of national identity
 - b) Representations of class



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- c) Representations of gender
- d) Representations of ethnicity
- e) The consumer society and representation

Teaching methodologies (including evaluation)

Attendance in class is compulsory, according to University regulations. A reader of fundamental texts will be made available to the students. Based on the concept of student centered methodologies, the work program will articulate theory and practice in order to provoke both debate and autonomous research. The students will be encouraged and to use, under the teacher's guidance, the many on-line resources made available by the University. At the end of the first part of the program, which is mainly theoretical, the students will have a written test for the assessment of their knowledge of the theories of representation. During the second part of the semester, work will center on presentations by the students, either individually or in small groups. The presentations will follow rules of articulation between theory and practice, and will be followed by debate. At the end of the semester there will be a second written test, for the assessment of both knowledge and competences.

- 1st written test: 30%
- Presentation and debate: 30%
- 2nd written test: 35%
- General continuous assessment: 5%

General bibliography:

Dines, Gail and Jean M. Humez, eds., *Gender, Race and Class in Media*. London, Sage Publications, 2003.

Durham, Meenakshi Gigi and Douglas M. Kellner, eds., *Media and Cultural Studies: Keywords*. Malden, Mass., Oxford, Blackwell Publishers, 2001.

Evans, Jessica and Stuart Hall, *Visual Culture: The Reader*. London, Sage Publications, 2001.

Hall, Stuart, ed. *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London, Sage Publications, 2012.

Howells, Richard, *Visual Culture*. Cambridge, Polity Press, 2003.

Mirzoeff, Nicholas, *An Introduction to Visual Culture*, London, Routledge, 2004.

Mirzoeff, Nicholas, ed., *The Visual Culture Reader*. London, Routledge, 2004.

Sturken, Marita and Lisa Cartwright, *Practices of Looking: an Introduction to Visual Culture*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001.



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Specific bibliography will be recommended according to the subject of each project to be presented and debated in class.