Dredging Operations: The Old and New North/South Divide and the Politics of Location

FINA 571
Instructor: Maureen Ryan
Fall 2001

Description

Dredging Operations," a term borrowed from Gayatri Spivak's Critique of Post-Colonial Reason (1999), signals an underlying goal of this seminar: to juxtapose and assess recent theoretical interventions and methodological strategies in relation to the complex, asymmetrical and shifting power relations that have marked the early modern and modern periods. The class will explore a set of critical debates that have transformed the ways in which culture and representation are theorized and approached. These will be situated within the dynamic of changing global configurations where dichotomies such as 'Europe and its others', 'East and West,' 'First and Third Worlds,' and 'North and South' (in fact historical constructs and overlapping categories) still resonate as ideological polemics, requiring ongoing destabilization. As the theoretical problems of knowledge, power and agency we will be investigating have had to negotiate the notions of reason, rationality and progress of the Eurocentric 'Enlightenment project,' so the class will explore the roles of visuality, viewership and the concepts of the 'look' and the 'gaze' in case studies that give particular attention to 18th, 19th and 20th century France, England and India.

In the first term, course readings will assess how competing theories of the subject and of history, space and time have played a role in problematizing categories of class, gender, ethnicity and race, and in articulating how meanings are produced and circulated for particular communities and viewers. These debates are re-investigated in the second term, where the major trajectory will be to follow post-colonial theory from its emergence in the 1980s, with its insistence on historicity and difference, as a critique of Orientalist, nationalist and evolutionary discourses. Post-colonial criticism has forced a radical re-thinking and re-formulation of forms of knowledge authored and authorized by colonialism and western domination. As well as addressing a particularly crucial cluster of recent theoretical texts, the course seeks to develop analytical skills and tools that will enable students to take up further areas of theoretical inquiry and historical research.

The seminar will be structured around sets of readings which you will be expected to have read with care. Over the course of each term, students will take turns facilitating class discussion. This will entail situating the reading both historically and in terms of its contribution to contemporaneous theoretical issues and debates, as well as providing a
brief precis and critical assessment of the reading's arguments and strategies. The facilitator will also be responsible for raising useful points for further class discussion. Students will be asked to develop and present a project in each term in both oral and written form. These projects will be designed to encourage students to grapple with a particular historical and visual problem in relation to the course materials.

Course Requirements for each Term

Class discussion and participation - 20%

Presentation/Facilitation of Readings - 20%

Term Project (oral and written) - 60%

Course Outline

Sept. 10/01  **Introduction: Goals and Aims of the Course, Requirements, Term Projects**

Sept. 17/01  **Discourse, History and the Archive**


Sept. 24/01  **Re-Theorizing Gender and Sexuality: the Historical Trajectory**


September 27th, 28th, 29th  **Visiting Lecturer: Lynda Nead: Guest Speaker: Victorian Studies Conference and the Department.**

Oct.1 /01  **Discourse, Gender and Sexuality: Re-Framing the Body**

1) Lynda Nead, "Theorizing the Female Nude, " in *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity and*

Oct. 8/01 Thanksgiving Holiday: No Class. Read: 1) Jurgen Habermas, The Transformation of the Public Sphere, Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 "Social Structures of the Public Sphere," pp. 1-88 and "Political Functions of the Public Sphere," pp. 89-129.

Oct. 15/01 Debates on Public and Private: Theorizing the Bourgeois Public Sphere

1) Jurgen Habermas, The Transformation of the Public Sphere, Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 "Social Structures of the Public Sphere," pp. 1-88 and "Political Functions of the Public Sphere," pp. 89-129. 2) Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," pp. 109-142 in Craig Calhoun, Habermas and the Public Sphere, MIT University Press, 1993. (You might also want to consider Nancy Fraser's analysis of Habermas, Gender and the Public Sphere, in Unruly Practices, Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory, 1989.)

Oct. 22/01 Definitions of Public and Private: Vision, Ritual and the Definition of Boundaries


Oct. 29/01 Deconstructing the Archive: Feminist and Post-colonial Histories


Nov 5/01 Social Space and Social Bodies


Nov. 9/01 Reconsidering the Body, Space and Time

Nov. 26  **Destabilizing Vision**


Dec.3/01  **Presentation of Topics**