Proseminar: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Culture and Society

NYU Gallatin School of Study
CORE-GG 2028

FALL 2016 MON 6:20 – 9 PM
One Washington Place, Room 601

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Aimed at the needs and interests of students embarking upon the Gallatin MA, this proseminar provides a broad introduction to theories and methods, many of which were developed by humanities scholars, but which also have been influential within social, cultural, and/or political research. Thus, while it will easily accommodate those working within the traditional borders of the humanities, this class is also a good choice for students whose concentration will take a humanities-oriented approach to the study of, for example, media, audiences, gender and sexuality, education, or cultural identity. We will at times focus on fundamental questions such as those used to distinguish art from other forms of human expression—what is “form”? what is “meaning”? Generally, though, our conversations and readings will gravitate towards issues more commonly associated with “society”—although that is yet another term we will have to define. We will read and analyze classic and modern texts (in fields ranging from philosophy, religion, and cultural theory to literature, film, visual art, and music, to anthropology, sociology, and political economy); map major historical periods and schools of thought; develop critical vocabularies; visit common debates (can art be political? should governments fund the humanities? how have technological changes affected culture?); and explore the relationship between the study of the humanities, the making of art, and the structures of society and culture we create and labor within. By the end of the semester, students will have played a strong role in deciding the particular issues we address. In past semesters we have considered affect and public policy, cross-cultural exchange in the globalized present, the (alleged) decline of the humanities in modern education, post-humanism, and the emergence of digital humanities.

In addition to writing short responses and a midterm paper, students will conduct a research / critical project on a relevant topic of their own choosing that will culminate in a 15 – 20 page final paper.