Graduate Program in Culture and Theory

Please visit the Culture and Theory Program website (http://www.humanities.uci.edu/cultureandtheory) for contact and admissions information.

Overview

The Ph.D. program in Culture and Theory provides a strong theoretical and critical approach to race, gender, and sexuality studies. It is the Ph.D. graduate program that is constituted by several interdisciplinary units including African American Studies and Asian American Studies, and works integrally with the Critical Theory Emphasis. Interdisciplinary in nature and buttressed by the established strengths in critical theory at UCI, the program uses a problem-oriented approach to issues of race, gender, and sexuality in diasporic, transnational, and postcolonial contexts, as they are engaged broadly in the humanities, social sciences, and arts.

The Ph.D. program in Culture and Theory is designed to take full advantage of the combined expertise of the nationally and internationally prominent faculty at UCI whose work exemplifies the best in contemporary, critical, interdisciplinary studies in the humanities, social sciences, and the arts.

Admission

Applicants must have earned a bachelor’s, master’s, or equivalent degree in any discipline in the humanities, arts, or social sciences.

Applicants submit official transcripts, statement of purpose, personal history (U.S. citizens and permanent residents only), three letters of recommendation, aptitude scores from the Graduate Record Examination, and a sample of written work. In addition, an interview may be required. Incoming students are admitted for fall quarter only.

To be admitted formally into the doctoral program, students must satisfactorily pass an evaluation at the end of their first year of study; this includes students who entered with an M.A. from another institution.

NOTE: Ph.D. students will receive the M.A. after the satisfactory completion of specified requirements, as a step toward the Ph.D. Those students who complete the M.A., but whose committees assess their work as not meeting the standard for the Ph.D., will receive a terminal M.A. Students who enter the program with an M.A. from another institution may receive full or partial credit for the M.A., depending on the assessment of the Executive Committee at the time the student is admitted or on the assessment of the student’s faculty advisor and committee during the student’s first year. Students who receive full credit for the M.A. will be exempt from writing the master’s paper.

Requirements

1. CLT&THY 200A, CLT&THY 200B, CLT&THY 200C. Basic to the curriculum, this three-quarter core sequence provides a solid foundation in critical and cultural theories, their philosophical genealogies and institutional histories, and interdisciplinary methodologies. The core sequence also provides the space for an intellectual coherence and cohort building for Culture and Theory graduate students who will be taking most of their other courses in supporting departments and programs.

2. Seven additional theoretical courses selected, in consultation with the student's faculty advisor, from CLT&THY 240-CLT&THY 260, sets of offerings in the core supporting interdisciplinary units, the Critical Theory Emphasis, and other course offerings by core and affiliated faculty, which may include HUMAN 260A-HUMAN 260B-HUMAN 260C and HUMAN 270. One of these courses must be focused on research methods. Typically the seven courses will revolve around a set of theoretical problems, e.g., feminist theory and practice, critical race studies, sexualities, postcolonialism, transnational circuits, globalization, theorizing the political, philosophical debates on ethics, the intersections of visuality and textuality, to name a few. The theoretical problem courses are centered on the philosophical and theoretical approaches that form the basis of much work in critical, cultural, and social theory regarding race, gender, and sexuality studies.

3. Six courses on a focused area of study selected, in consultation with the student's faculty advisor, from CLT&THY 215-CLT&THY 235, concentrations within and across a department, within the Critical Theory emphasis, or in one of the core supporting interdisciplinary units. The courses in a focused area of study address a particular field in which various forms of critical theory have been applied, as well as a focus on groups, nations, and regions: examples include globalization, racism and the welfare state, diasporas of particular kinds, human rights, anti-colonial resistance movements in particular regions, modernity, and race.

4. CLT&THY 280. In this independent study course taken during their second year, students expand and develop a seminar paper into the master’s paper, with the guidance of their faculty advisor.

5. Students must TA in a Humanities or Social Sciences department or program for a minimum of three quarters. They are also required to take the teaching seminar and workshops associated with the course in which they teach.

6. Additionally, students are expected to participate regularly in the Culture and Theory Colloquium, a series of events comprised of lectures, conferences, and performances sponsored by the program and allied units, particularly in the social sciences and the arts. Each year, the Colloquium will also include academic workshops (e.g., faculty and student works-in-progress, as well as on grant writing and on framing the dissertation project) and professionalization workshops (e.g., preparation for conferences and, later, for the job market). In addition to exposure to diverse ideas and development of practical techniques, participation in the Colloquium is intended to strengthen relations among students, and between students and faculty who are otherwise stretched across several units and schools.
Master’s Paper and M.A.: During their second year, students work with their faculty advisor to expand and develop a seminar paper into a master’s paper. A master’s paper expands a seminar paper to a version that is of near-publishable quality. Upon completion of the paper, the faculty advisor and two other core faculty members will participate in an assessment of student’s work to date.

Ph.D. students will receive the M.A. after the satisfactory completion of the three core courses, seven theoretical problem courses, six courses on a focused area of study, and the master’s paper. Those students who complete the M.A. requirements, but whose committees assess their work as not meeting the standards for the Ph.D., will receive a terminal M.A.

Qualifying Examination: Students work with a committee comprised of five faculty members, including one outside member, to draw up reading lists and head notes on four topics, as well as a dissertation prospectus. Three of these topics should relate to the major areas of study outlined in the 200A, B, C core course sequence, and one should relate to the student’s area of disciplinary or focused study. The examination itself will be comprised of a written and oral exam. A student shall advance to candidacy upon successful passing of the Qualifying Exam and fulfillment of the language requirement, normally by the end of the third year.

Language Requirement: By the time they qualify for candidacy, students must demonstrate through course work or examination the ability to do research in one ancient or modern language (other than English).

Dissertation: The dissertation topic should be drawn from a focused area of study, chosen in consultation with the dissertation advisor and other committee members. Students will draw up their dissertation committee, which must consist of at least three members, at least two of whom must be drawn from the core faculty in the program whose interests match the topic chosen for the thesis. Dissertations must be approved by the student’s dissertation committee and submitted to the executive committee.

Time to Degree: The normative time for advancement to candidacy is four years. The normative time for completion of the Ph.D. is seven years, and the maximum time permitted is eight years.

Faculty

Jonathan Alexander, Ph.D. Louisiana State University, Campus Writing Coordinator and Professor of English; Culture and Theory; Education; Gender and Sexuality Studies; Informatics (writing studies, sexuality studies, queer theory, new media studies)

Christine Bacareza Balance, Ph.D. New York University, Associate Professor of Asian American Studies; Culture and Theory; Gender and Sexuality Studies (Performance studies, popular music, critical race and ethnic studies, Filipino/Filipino American studies, queer & feminist theory)

Vinayak Chaturvedi, Ph.D. University of Cambridge, Associate Professor of History; Culture and Theory; Religious Studies (modern South Asia, social and intellectual history)

Bridget R. Cooks Cumbo, Ph.D. University of Rochester, Associate Professor of African American Studies; Art History; Culture and Theory; Visual Studies (African American art, museum studies, feminist and post-colonial theory)

Sora Han, Ph.D. University of California, Santa Cruz, Associate Professor of Criminology, Law and Society; African American Studies; Culture and Theory; School of Law (law and popular culture, critical race theory, philosophies of punishment, feminism and psychoanalysis)

Rodrigo Lazo, Ph.D. University of Maryland, College Park, Associate Professor of English; Culture and Theory (hemispheric American studies, nineteenth century, Latino studies and the Americas, Cuba, immigrant literature)

Mark A. LeVine, Ph.D. New York University, Professor of History; Culture and Theory; Religious Studies (modern Middle Eastern history, Islamic studies, histories of empire and globalization)

James K. Lee, Ph.D. University of California, Los Angeles, Associate Professor of Asian American Studies; Culture and Theory; Religious Studies (Asian American literature and culture, contemporary U.S. literature, race and ethnic studies, urban studies, religious studies)

Jerry Won Lee, Ph.D. University of Arizona, Associate Professor of English; Anthropology; Culture and Theory

Julia Hyoun Joo Lee, Ph.D. University of California, Los Angeles, Associate Professor of Asian American Studies; Culture and Theory (Asian American literature and culture, African American literature and culture, ethnic literature, twentieth-century American literature.)

Kevin E. Olson, Ph.D. Northwestern University, Professor of Political Science; Culture and Theory (contemporary European political theory, cultural politics, politics of diversity, popular sovereignty, citizenship, nineteenth- and twentieth-century political theory)

Rajagopalan Radhakrishnan, Ph.D. Binghamton University, State University of New York, UCI Chancellor’s Professor of English; African American Studies; Comparative Literature; Culture and Theory (critical theory, postcoloniality, nationalisms and diasporas, poststructuralism, postmodernism, democracy and minority discourse, cultural studies, globalization and transnationalism)

Jared Charles Sexton, Ph.D. University of California, Berkeley, Associate Professor of African American Studies; Culture and Theory; Film and Media Studies; Visual Studies (race and sexuality, policing and imprisonment, contemporary U.S. cinema and political culture, multiracial coalition, critical theory)
Damien Sojoyner, Ph.D. University of Texas at Austin, Assistant Professor of Anthropology; Culture and Theory

Rei Terada, Ph.D. Boston University, Professor of Comparative Literature; Culture and Theory (theory, poststructuralism, nineteenth- and twentieth-century poetry)

Keith Topper, Ph.D. University of California, Los Angeles, Associate Professor of Political Science; Culture and Theory (political theory, critical theory, poststructuralism, theories of power, language and politics, theory and politics of interpretation, politics of culture, philosophy of the social sciences)

Frank B. Wilderson III, Ph.D. University of California, Berkeley, Director of the Graduate Program in Culture and Theory and Department Chair and Professor of African American Studies; Culture and Theory (Afro-Pessimism, film theory, Marxism, narratology)

Tiffany Willoughby-Herard, Ph.D. University of California, Santa Barbara, Associate Professor of African American Studies; Comparative Literature; Culture and Theory; Political Science (South Africa, poor whites, race in foreign policy, diaspora, comparative racial politics, third world feminisms, feminist pedagogy, black political thought)

Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, Ph.D. Stanford University, Department Chair and Professor of Asian American Studies; Culture and Theory (Asian American history; comparative racialization and immigration; empire and decolonization; gender and sexuality)

Affiliate Faculty

Catherine Benamou, Ph.D. New York University, Associate Professor of Film and Media Studies; Culture and Theory; Visual Studies (Hispanophone and Lusophone cinema and television, U.S. Latino media, Orson Welles and maverick cinema, transnational flows, spectatorship, cinematic memory and cultures of preservation)

Victoria Bernal, Ph.D. Northwestern University, Professor of Anthropology; Culture and Theory; Gender and Sexuality Studies; Religious Studies

Victoria E. Johnson, Ph.D. University of Southern California, Associate Professor of Film and Media Studies; African American Studies; Culture and Theory; Visual Studies (television, critical race theory, sound, media policy, sport)

Claire J. Kim, Ph.D. Yale University, Professor of Asian American Studies; Culture and Theory; Political Science

Jessica Millward, Ph.D. University of California, Los Angeles, Associate Professor of History; African American Studies; Culture and Theory (U.S., slavery, African diaspora, African American gender and women)

Fatimah Tobing Rony, Ph.D. Yale University, Associate Professor of Film and Media Studies; Culture and Theory; Visual Studies (ethnographic film, race and representation, film production)

Gabriele M. Schwab, Ph.D. University of Konstanz, UCI Chancellor's Professor of Comparative Literature; Anthropology; Culture and Theory; European Languages and Studies (modern literature, critical theory, psychoanalysis, comparative literature)

Roxanne Varzi, Ph.D. Columbia University, Associate Professor of Anthropology; Culture and Theory; Film and Media Studies; Religious Studies; Visual Studies (Iran, media, war, visual anthropology, film studies, ethnographic and fiction writing)

Linda T. Võ, Ph.D. University of California, San Diego, Professor of Asian American Studies; Culture and Theory; Sociology; Urban Planning and Public Policy (race and ethnic relations, immigrants and refugees, gender relations, community and urban studies)

Courses

CLT&THY 200A. Political Economy: Methods and Critique. 4 Units.
Introduction to canonical texts in Marxism coupled with an examination of the questions of race, gender, ethnicity, and sexuality that distend the calculus of the canon’s assumptive logic. May be taken after CLT&THY 200B.

Same as CRITISM 200A.

Restriction: Graduate students only.

CLT&THY 200B. Libidinal Economy: Methods and Critique. 4 Units.
Introduction to canonical texts in psychoanalysis coupled with an examination of the questions of race, gender, ethnicity, and sexuality that distend the calculus of the canon’s assumptive logic. May be taken before CLT&THY 200A.

Restriction: Graduate students only.
CLT&THY 200C. Theory from Below. 4 Units.
Introduction to systems of thought understudied or undervalued in academic canons—for instance, systems constituted in communities' practices or theories that do not seek permanence or generality.
Prerequisite: CLT&THY 200A and CLT&THY 200B
Restriction: Graduate students only.

CLT&THY 215. A Critical Theory of Subalternity. 4 Units.
Examines the importance of subaltern studies for the study of modern history, postcolonial studies, social theory, and cultural studies. Also considers subaltern studies within a larger set of debates in structuralism, post-structuralism, Marxism, and post-Marxism.
Restriction: Graduate students only.

CLT&THY 216. Crossing Borders: Empire and Im/migration. 4 Units.
Utilizes historically-based intersectional analysis to explore the connections between U.S. empire and migration; border formation and incarceration; as well as identity and structural forms of hierarchy.
Restriction: Graduate students only.

CLT&THY 217. Freedom Dreams: Subaltern Forms of Resistance. 4 Units.
Explores how subjugated peoples have creatively and collectively resisted oppression. Explores how individuals and communities envision a more just society, experiment with political strategies, and create meaningful legacies.
Restriction: Graduate students only.

CLT&THY 240. Resistance Spaces. 4 Units.
Examines the relationship between the production of space and the operation of power in cultural studies and critical social theory.
Restriction: Graduate students only.

CLT&THY 241. Ethics, Erotics, and Will: Gendered Black Politics, Sexualized Racisms, and the Humanities. 4 Units.
Introduces doctoral students to an interdisciplinary conversation about black queer sexuality and black heteropatriarchy. Uses disciplinary formations as a tool for understanding knowledge formations about the shifting relations that constitute sexuality, gender, and racial blackness.
Restriction: Graduate students only.

CLT&THY 242. Afro-Pessimism and the Status of the Subject. 4 Units.
Afro-Pessimism theorizes the Black as a being against which all other beings become legible as human subjects. Focuses on either the subject of psychoanalysis or the subject of capital accumulation in their explorations of the antagonism between Blackness.
Restriction: Graduate students only.

CLT&THY 243. Introduction to Performance Studies. 4 Units.
Introduces students to key issues and critical methods within the field of performance studies. These include performance/performativity, liveness, everyday life, auto-ethnography, archive/repertoire, affect and performance, and disidentificatory practices.
Restriction: Graduate students only.

CLT&THY 280. Independent Study. 4 Units.
Limited to students who have not yet received the M.A. degree.
Repeatability: May be repeated for credit unlimited times.

CLT&THY 289. Topics in Culture and Theory. 4 Units.
Seminars on various topics in Culture and Theory.
Repeatability: Unlimited as topics vary.

CLT&THY 290. Research and Prospectus Seminar. 2 Units.
Bi-weekly seminar required for third- and/or fourth-year students. Students make presentations of dissertation prospectus for discussion. All graduate students welcome to attend and participate. Meant especially for students preparing for formal presentation of prospectus.
Grading Option: Satisfactory/unsatisfactory only.
Repeatability: May be repeated for credit unlimited times.
CLT&THY 298. Directed Reading. 4-12 Units.
Directed readings on a specific topic agreed upon by students and their instructors. Limited to students who have completed their M.A. degree and are preparing for their qualifying exam.

Prerequisite: Completion of the M.A. degree.
Repeatability: May be repeated for credit unlimited times.

CLT&THY 299. Dissertation Research. 4-12 Units.
Dissertation research in Culture and Theory.

Grading Option: Satisfactory/unsatisfactory only.
Repeatability: May be repeated for credit unlimited times.