

# ETHN 106: Life, Death and the Human

## Spring 2015

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T. Th. 2-3:20, SOL 111  
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Office Hours: T. 3:3-4:3  
and by appt.  
Office: SSB 221

### Course Description:

This course provides a comparative and relational survey of some of the global and historical contexts in which life and death become sites of political significance, ranging from ways they may reveal dehumanizing circumstances to the expression of revolutionary social politics. We examine these contexts, including life under colonization and militarization, the commodification of the human body, and the legal and cultural invisibility of some lives, with an interdisciplinary approach which pairs readings in western philosophy, medical anthropology, history, postcolonial theory, and anthropology with film and fiction.

The goal of this course is to trouble the idea of a universally understood category of 'humanity,' specifically the idea that humanity and its protections are evenly accessible across differing historical and material contexts. Instead, we can approach the conditions of life and death as revealing important aspects of the politics and economics involved in whom gets to live a fully 'human' life. Students are encouraged to approach the films and novels on the syllabus with the same rigor as scholarly texts, and to identify conversations between the topics assigned each week, as well as within one given week's readings.

### Assignments and Evaluation:

Students are expected to complete the readings for each course meeting before they attend that class, and to bring their readings for a given entire week for each class meeting. Readings will not be reviewed in lecture and advanced reading is essential for understanding lecture material.

Recommended readings are available through E-res (password: kv106) or as indicated on syllabus.

Grading is based on pop quizzes, one in-class midterm, one final project (including proposal due week 7, and final presentation), and class participation.

Participation: Attendance is mandatory and constitutes your participation grade. A maximum of 2 excused absences (note required).

Pop quizzes: A question from the reading for that class meeting will be asked. A correct answer passes and an incorrect answer does not. Pass=retaining your participation points. No pass=one point removed from participation grade at end of course for each no pass.

Midterm Exam: Format: In-class midterm composed of 2 questions with 500-word essay answers. They will cover readings, media shown in class and assigned out of class, and everything shown in student presentations. I will give hand out review guide during week 5.

Final project (Proposal+Presentation+Final Write-up): The Final project is a group-written and produced podcast. The project includes a proposal submitted during week 7 (for peer and instructor feedback). All students will join teams of 3-4 to make a 10-15 minute podcast. The podcast, with explanatory introduction, will be presented during weeks 9 and 10 (see Ted for full assignment). Folders are posted on Ted with materials to suggest topics and background relevant to class discussions and the week's readings. The final write-up describes the process of research, writing and producing the podcast, and submission of a brief self-evaluation and evaluation for your co-presenters.

\*It is highly recommended that each student follow one US newspaper, or news journal and one foreign newspaper or news journal on a regular basis. At least one exam will require the incorporation of current events and small-group discussions will utilize this exposure.

\*\* If you wish to speak with me, I will be available before and after class, as well as in my scheduled office hours. I do not answer email except when extremely urgent.

#### Percentages and Grades:

20%- Participation

5% Discussion leading

5% Pop quizzes

30%- Midterm exam

40%- Final exam

Pass/Fail: Passing is C

#### Texts and media:

E-reserves and TED site. Films will be on reserve at Arts Library counter of Geisel.

Attendance. Every unexcused absence will affect your participation grade, and two excused absences are permitted before it affects your participation grade. In order to be counted as present you must arrive on time and stay until the conclusion of lecture or section.

Electronic Devices and Laptops. Cell phones and other electronic devices (PDA/iPod/iPad, laptops etc) may not be used for talking, texting, checking email or surfing the web. You may however use such devices to take notes in class and to search for information related to class discussion when prompted by the professor. Repeated use of electronic devices for other purposes distracts others and will negatively affect your grade.

ADA Statement. If you have a documented disability needing accommodations, please inform me and bring a notification letter outlining your approved accommodations. I will make all reasonable efforts to assist you. If, as a result of a disability, you cannot accept the content or terms of this syllabus, you must notify me in writing within one week of receipt of the syllabus. You may also seek assistance or information from the Office for Students with Disabilities, 858/534/4382.

Cheating and Plagiarism. Whether intentional or inadvertent, plagiarism is a serious violation. All work submitted in this course must be your own. The use of sources such as ideas, quotations, paraphrases, or anything written by someone else must be properly acknowledged and cited. If you have questions about the proper citation of sources, please ask your Teaching Assistants. Students who plagiarize, or who cheat on an exam, will be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with University policy. Students are expected to be familiar with UCSD's Policy on Integrity of Scholarship, available at: <http://www.senate.ucsd.edu/manual/appendices/app2.htm#AP14>.

Discussion Ethics. This class is intended for students interested in challenging commonly held understandings of race, gender, sexuality, class, and nation. Given the nature of the course there will likely be a wide range of opinions. Ideally the course will prompt you to think for yourself and to raise questions about conventional views and received wisdom. However, please engage one another in discussion with respect and consideration. These norms are reflected in the UCSD Principles of Community that we are all expected to follow (<http://www.vcb.ucsd.edu/principles.htm>).

#### Course Outline

**Week 1: Intersectionality and Studying Conditions of Life, Death and the Human**

**Tuesday March 31st:** Course Introduction and syllabus overview

**Thursday April 2nd:**

- Cho, Crenshaw and McCall, "Toward a Field of Intersectionality Studies." *Signs*. 38:4. 2013. (TED)

**Week 2: "Making Live": Public Health and the Making of Modern Citizens**

**Tuesday April 7th:** No Class Meeting: See Ted for out of class assignment due today

**Thursday April 9th:**

- Nayan Shah. "Public Health, Race and Citizenship," pgs. 1-16, & "Ch. 3: Perversity, Contamination, and the Dangers of Queer Domesticity," Pp. 77-104. *Contagious Divides*. University of California Press, 2001.

**Week 3: Life with Colonialism**

**Tuesday April 14<sup>th</sup>:**

- Fanon, Frantz. Ch. 1: "Concerning Violence" *Wretched of the Earth*. New York: New Grove Press. pp. 249-310.  
Screening: *Battle for Algiers*

**Thursday April 16<sup>th</sup>:**

- Trask, "Lovely Hula Hands."
- Fanon, Ch. 5: "Colonial War and Mental Disorders," (Selections) pp. 181-199.
- Screening: *Battle for Algiers*

**Week 4: Commodification and Bodies in Parts**

**Tuesday April 21st**

- Nancy Scheper-Hughes. "Bodies for Sale: Whole or in Parts." *Body & Society*. London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: SAGE Publications. 2001. pp. 1-8.
- Lawrence Cohen. "Where It Hurts: Indian Material for an Ethics of Organ Transplantation." *Zygon* 38, no. 3 (2003): 663-88. Eres

**Thursday April 23rd:**

- Kalindi Vora. *Medicine, Markets and the Pregnant Body*. Scholar & Feminist Online. [http://sfonline.barnard.edu/reprotech/vora\\_01.htm](http://sfonline.barnard.edu/reprotech/vora_01.htm)

**Week 5: Life and Debt: International Lending and Microlending**

**Tuesday April 28th:**

- Megan Moodie. "Enter Microcredit: A New Culture of Women's Empowerment in Rajasthan? *American Ethnologist*. 35:3. 2008. Pp. 454-465. Eres.
- James Fergusson, "De-moralizing Economies: African Socialism, Scientific Capitalism, and the Moral Politics of Structural Adjustment." *Africa in the Neoliberal World Order*. Duke University Press, 2006. Pp. 69-88.  
Handout for midterm review and proposal
- Screening: (1st half) *Life and Debt*  
Final Proposal Guidelines handout

**Thursday April 30<sup>th</sup>:**

- Finish screening and discussion: *Life and Debt*. Dir: Stephanie Black. New York: New Yorker Films. 2001.
- Networking and brainstorming exercise in class

**\*Microfinance panel with Megan Moodie and Lamia Karim 3-5, SSB 107\***

**Week 6: MIDTERM**

**Tuesday May 5th: \*\*In-class Midterm\*\***

**Thursday May 7th:** Individual proposal feedback.

**Week 7: Immigration and Invisibility II**

**Tuesday May 12th:**

- “Working Under Precarity: Work, Affect and Emotional Labor.” Escholarship. (Read: pages 1-7) Introduction: Section One: Affect Commodification and the Gendered Body.
- Rhacel Salazar Parreñas, "Migrant Philipina Domestic Labor and the International Division of Reproductive Labor," *Gender and Society* 14, no. 4 (2000): 560-580.
- Begin Screening: *Dirty Pretty Things*. Dir: Stephen Frears. Miramax Films: 2002.

**Thursday May 15th:**

- Finish film screening and discussion: *Dirty Pretty Things*.
- Group check-ins

**Week 8: Capture & Incarceration**

**Tuesday May 19th:**

- Dennis Childs, *Angola Penitentiary* (Chapter 3), from *Slaves of the State*.

**Thursday May 21<sup>st</sup>:**

- Harriet Washington, “Caged Subjects: Research on Black Prisoners.” *Medical Apartheid*. Pp. 216-243.
- Group check-in and feedback

**Week 9: Political Speech, Rights, and the Human**

**5/26, 5/28 Group Presentations**

**Week 10: Life, Death and the Human in Contemporary Global Political and Cultural Economies**

**6/2, 6/4 Group Presentations**

**Tuesday June 9<sup>th</sup> 3pm: Final write-up and evaluations, and podcasts due**

### **Majoring or Minor in Ethnic Studies at UCSD**

Many students take an ethnic studies course because the topic is of great interest or because of a need to fulfill a social science, non-contiguous, or other college requirement. Often students have taken three or four classes out of “interest” yet have no information about the major or minor and don’t realize how close they are to a major, a minor, or even a double major. An ethnic studies major is excellent preparation for a career in medicine, law, public policy, government and politics, journalism, education, public health, social work, international relations, and many other careers. If you would like information about the ethnic studies major or minor at UCSD, please contact Daisy Rodriguez, Ethnic Studies Department Undergraduate Advisor, at 858-534-3277 or [d1rodriguez@ucsd.edu](mailto:d1rodriguez@ucsd.edu).