

**Ethnic Studies 106**  
**Tuesday & Thursday**

**Life, Death, and the Human**  
**9:30-10:50 A.M.**

**Spring 2018**  
**HSS 2154**

**Instructor:** María Céleri  
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**Office:** Muir Woods Coffee House  
**Office Hours:** Tuesdays 11AM-Noon; or by appointment



**Image:** Micha Cárdenas in “Becoming Dragon” (2008)

**Course Description:** This is an interdisciplinary survey course that considers human/non-human, animate/inanimate and life/death dichotomies as racialized, gendered, and sexual constructs. This course not only examines colonial and capitalist histories of commodification and disposability of human, animal, and plant life, but also how artists of color, specifically anti-racist, trans-activist and disability studies scholars use new media technology to challenge hegemonic constructions of life, embodiment, and humanity. The course will critically engage ethnic studies, critical race studies, and trans studies scholars such as Christina Sharpe, Dennis Childs, Dean Spade, Mel Chen, Micha Cárdenas, and Kalindi Vora, among others.

**Required Reading:**

All readings will be available in .pdf format on TritonEd or online.

**Course Assignments and Requirements:**

Assignments		94-100	A	73-75	C
Attendance	15%	90-93	A-	70-72	C-
Participation	20%	86-89	B+	66-69	D+
Reading Responses	30%	83-85	B	63-65	D
Final Project	35%	80-82	B-	60-63	D-
<b>TOTAL</b>	100%	76-79	C+	0-60	F

**Attendance:** Attendance is mandatory. You are allowed one unexcused absence throughout the quarter; thereafter, all absences will require a documented excuse due to illness, appointments, conferences, and/or tournaments.

**Participation:** This course is discussion heavy and your active participation is required. All readings and assignments should be completed before class. To come prepared to class you must have done all the readings, highlighted key passages, and have questions for discussion. Here are some ways you can participate: ask/answer questions, participate in in-class activities, and write down your thoughts and hand it in after section. Full credit will require active participation throughout the entire course.

**Guiding Questions:** Use the following questions as a guide to critically reflect on the materials and concepts raised in this course. You can use these questions to prepare for class.

- What is the author's main argument?
- What sources of evidence does the author use to build their argument?
- What key question is the author trying to raise or address? What other questions does the text generate for you?
- How do the various readings relate to each other or to prior readings for this course?
- How do the readings relate to the lecture or to films and other class media?
- What new terms/concepts/or ideas did you learn? How do these things help you understand a phenomenon differently?

**Reading Responses:** You will have a total of three [3] video reading responses due on the dates stated on the syllabus. Each response will be worth 10%. You will have to create a 3-4 minute video that reflects on the reading, articulates the main argument(s) by the author(s), and poses a question for the class. The video does not need to be edited or show film technique(s). *Little film knowledge is required.* You must post the video on class TUMBLR by 5pm, the day before class meeting. If you do NOT want to be videotaped, for any reason, you may choose to write your response. Written responses should be 2-pages, double-spaced. These should be uploaded to class TUMBLR by 5pm, the day before class meeting. Written assignments should adhere to the following format: 12-pt font, Times Roman Numeral, 1-inch margins all around.

**Final Project:** Throughout the quarter, you will be working in groups towards your final project—a multimedia project that answers the following question: What does it mean to be alive/human? The group will determine how to approach and answer the question in a 6-8 minute video. This video may integrate, but is not limited to: song, spoken word, poetry, a skit, dancing, etc. The group will have [4] in-class workshops to work on the project and to meet with me, but it will require that the group meet outside of class. Proposals and groups will be determined by Week 4. For your final, you will screen your videos during Week 10.

**Community Guidelines:** 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. Please engage one another in discussion with respect and consideration. Abusive and harsh language, intimidation, and/or personal attacks will not be tolerated.

- Be respectful: challenging someone should come from a place of curiosity and respect.
- Do not interrupt other while they are speaking.
- Step up/Step back: if you do not like speaking in class, challenge yourself to do so. If you feel like you have been taking over a discussion, step back and let others take the floor.
- Active listening: be patient and generous when listening.

**Electronic Devices:** You may use your laptop or tablet to take notes or for readings if it better suits your learning needs. If anyone in the class interrupts others because they are using their device for anything other than taking notes or scanning the readings, everyone will lose the right to these electronic devices. Silence cellphones before entering the classroom.

**Grading Policy:** You must complete all assignments and receive a passing grade in your discussion section in order to receive a passing grade in the class. For the P/NP option, a “Pass” requires the equivalent letter grade of C or above.

**Accommodations:** If you have a disability or condition that compromises your ability to complete the requirements of this course, you should inform me as soon as possible of your needs. I will make all reasonable efforts to accommodate you. If you have a note from the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD), please present your note to me within one week of the start of the course. For further information on OSD, please visit <http://disabilities.ucsd.edu> or call 858.534.4382.

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

Many students take an Ethnic Studies course because the topic is of great interest or because of a need to fulfill a college general education requirement. Often students have taken many ETHN courses out of interest; yet do not 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 law, education, medicine, public health, social work, counseling, public policy, and many other careers. If you would like information about the Ethnic Studies major or minor, please visit <http://ethnicstudies.ucsd.edu>

## **COURSE SCHEDULE:**

### **Week 1: Necropolitics**

TUE 4/3 Course Introduction & Syllabus

THU 4/5 Read Achille Mbembé, “Necropolitics” in *Public Culture* 15, No. 1 (Winter 2003).

### **Week 2: Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade & Human Commodification**

TUE 4/10 Read Stephanie Smallwood, “Turning African Captives into Atlantic Commodities” in *Saltwater Slavery*

THU 4/12 Read Christina Sharpe, “The Ship: The Trans\* Atlantic” in *In the Wake*

### **Week 3: Incarceration & Captivity**

TUE 4/17 Read Dennis Childs, “Angola Penitentiary: The Once and Future Slave Plantation” in *Slaves of the State*

**Homework DUE Next Class:** Write a one-paragraph proposal that details your ideas for your final project.

THU 4/19 Read Krystal Shelley, “Krystal Is Kristopher and Vice Versa” and Paula Rae Witherspoon, “My Story” in *Captive Genders*; also, Dean Spade, “What’s Wrong with Rights?” in *Normal Life*

**VIDEO RESPONSE DUE by 5p.m. on WED.**

### **Week 4: Workshop Week**

TUE 4/24 Final Project Workshop #1

- ✓ Pick groups
- ✓ Go over project details
- ✓ Introduction to film editing

THU 2/26 Final Project Workshop #2

- ✓ Group contracts
- ✓ Member assignments and deadlines

### **Week 5: Immaterial Labor & Bodily Commodities**

TUE 5/1 Read Kalindi Vora, "Transnational Gestational Surrogacy: Expectation and Exchange" in *Life Support*

THU 5/3 Watch "Dirty Pretty Things" (Frears 2002)—Available on Reserve

### **Week 6: Speculative Fictions—"Replacing Farmworkers with Machines"**

TUE 5/8 Watch "Sleep Dealer" (Rivera 2013)—Available on Reserve

THU 5/10 Read Curtis Marez, "Farm Worker Speculative Fictions," "Replacing Farmworkers with Machines," "Farm Worker Double Consciousness," and "Aerial Perspectives" in *Cesar Chavez Video Collection*

<http://scalar.usc.edu/nehvectors/curtis-marez/index>

**VIDEO RESPONSE DUE by 5p.m. on WED.**

### **Week 7: The (In)Animate Trans Body**

TUE 5/15 Read Read Mel Chen, "Following Mercurial Affect" in *Animacies*

THU 5/17 Read Micha Cárdenas, "Becoming Transreal" in *The Transreal*

*Final Project check-in #1*

### **Week 8: Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and Indigenous Epistemologies**

TUE 5/22 Read Robin Wall Kimmerer, "Weaving Traditional Ecological Knowledge into Biological Education: A Call to Action" in *BioScience* 52, No.5 (May 2002)

*Final Project check-in #2*

THU 2/24 Read Todd C. Frankel and Peter Whoriskey, "Tossed Aside in the 'White Gold' Rush"

[HTTP://WWW.WASHINGTONPOST.COM/GRAPHICS/BUSINESS/BATTERIES/TOSSED-ASIDE-IN-THE-LITHIUM-RUSH/](http://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/business/batteries/tossed-aside-in-the-lithium-rush/)

**Guest Lecture: TBD**

**VIDEO RESPONSE DUE by 5p.m. on WED.**

### **Week 9: Workshop Week**

TUE 5/29 **NO CLASS**

THU 5/31 Final Project Workshop #3

- ✓ Begin editing process
- ✓ Consult with instructor
- ✓ Sign up for presentations

### **Week 10: Final Presentations**

TUE 6/5 Presentations

THU 6/7 Presentations

"...my mother tried to make a small path through the wake.  
She brought beauty into the house in every way that she could;  
she worked at joy, and she made livable moments, spaces,  
and places in the midst of all that was unlivable there, in the town we lived in;  
in the schools we attended; in the violence we saw...  
In other words, even as we experienced, recognized, and lived subjection,  
we did not *simply* or *only* live *in* subjection  
and *as* the subjected."

Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake*, p. 4