

Fall 2016

CULT 806

Research Seminar in Cultural Studies

Tuesday 4.30 (Innovation 338)

Professor Paul Smith

psmith5@gmu.edu

<http://mason.gmu.edu/~psmith5/>

Office hours by appointment only

SCHEDULE

August 30	Introductory class
Sept 6	No class
Sept 13	Discussion in class
Sept 20	Discussion in class
Sept 27	Discussion in class
Sept 28 – Oct 24	Individual tutorials
Oct 25	Check-in class meeting
Oct 26 – Nov 28	Independent research
Nov 29	In-class presentations
Dec 6	In-class presentations

Aug 30: In the Introductory Class we will review the syllabus and discuss our general goals for the seminar.

Sept 13-27: For three weeks we will investigate what are the standing assumptions, methods and various methodologies in the field of Cultural Studies. We will, of course, be free to critique and attempt to hone already existing practice in the field.

Sept 28 thru Oct 24 : There will be no seminar for these weeks, but each student will make appointments with me for at least two one-on-one tutorials of half an hour or more each. In these tutorials we shall establish individual research projects and research questions and begin to elaborate them.

Oct 25: For this class session we will discuss as a group some of the issues that you will have encountered with your projects.

Oct 26 – Nov 30: There will be no seminar for these weeks. Instead you will each continue your research project as you can. You should keep in regular e-mail contact with me during these three weeks, to apprise me of your progress and to have any questions answered. You should also make an appointment for one more tutorial session during this time.

Dec 1 & Dec 8: Two meetings wherein each student will disseminate their work to the class and give a short presentation.

GOALS

The course is largely concerned with what I call the epistemology of research in Cultural Studies. That is, you will be expected to learn how to think through the assumptions, methods, and methodologies appropriate to Cultural Studies from the ground up. There will be a strong emphasis on the question of what distinguishes both the guiding epistemology and the actual research undertaken in Cultural Studies. You will then be expected to begin a research project that reflects the specificity of the field of Cultural Studies. The course and its tutorials are designed to teach you how to do this systematically and methodically, and the final document that you hand in and present will be expected to reflect such a methodical approach. The final product will not be a completed research project or standard term paper; rather, it will be an account of how you would go about a major research project. In that sense it will be essentially a proposal, more akin to a grant application, book manifesto, dissertation proposal, or even a field statement.

ASSESSMENT

Grades will be assigned on the basis of a final account of your chosen research project and on your presentation of it in the final two weeks of class. Since the projects will be the direct product of the needs and interests of each individual student, expectations will necessarily vary. I will elaborate on the process verbally in class.

Your final documents should be submitted by close of business December 5th, if your class presentation is on the Nov 29th; or on December 12th if your class presentation is December 6th.