Description

Students study the Contemporary Era, examining, among many topics, this period's numerous changes, agents of change, and varied reactions to change. A prominent theme of this course is that of identity and identity politics, explored via literature and art in particular. This course also surveys some of the major social issues in the contemporary world, with an emphasis on the effort to derive a sense of meaningful identity in the face of forces leading to globalization and an integrated transnational economy.

Prerequisite(s)
None

Course Outline:

In the Contemporary Era, the world, which was already splintering in the Modern Age, is now so shattered that it becomes questionable whether any of the shards can be reassembled, or whether unity is even desirable. The world is changing at a breathless pace, driven by electronic technology, a global economy, and the diffusion of certain values, among them materialism and individualism. You will explore the globalization process which is transforming the world; globalization is a unifying force forging an unprecedented interconnectedness of the world, and yet it also contributes to ever greater fragmentation. The globalization process is distant and impersonal, sharpening the divide between “haves” and “have-nots,” and calling forth resistance movements from those who disdain its power and values.

During this course, you will study the dialectic of globalization and resistance through a focus on literature, art, and social movements. In Modules 1-2, we frame the dialectic and describe it using tools from communication studies, political science, and cultural studies. In Modules 3-4, we explore the dialectic using examples from the literature and art of the US and Central America. In Modules 5-6, we explore the dialectic using examples of social movements from around the world. We conclude in Modules 7-8 with some reflection on the theoretical integrity of the dialectic, and by speculating on what the future might bring.

A prominent theme of the course is that of identity and identity politics. In previous eras, identity was largely constructed and assigned by the powerful, and was heavily dependent upon position in the social hierarchy. In the Contemporary Era many individuals and groups insist upon self determination and demand recognition as equals. You will examine the "politics of recognition" by reading some postcolonial writers who reflect upon the impact of colonial rule, upon the fracturing of identities, and who confront new forms of control in the world today. You will read an African-American who offers his vision on the future of racism, and you will hear the voices of women from many races and cultures who write or create art from their distinctive social locations. In the Contemporary Era, the world is freed from some of the constrictions of the past, and the fragmentation lamented by some is embraced and celebrated by some others who were formerly without a voice.

The changes of the Contemporary Era are profound, transforming the family by weakening patriarchy, shifting the nature of marriage, parenthood, and sexuality, in one of the most fundamental of revolutions. You will analyze these changes and consider their impact.

As in previous eras, art reflects society on many levels. The fragmentation of the social world is echoed in the world of art, and postmodernists write of a corresponding shift in aesthetic sensibility. You will consider some characteristic art of the Contemporary Era, and weigh its meaning and message.

This course examines some of the reactions to cultural fragmentation and some of the responses to the new global order. Fragmentation may result from dissolution of power and weakening hegemony; usually no single group can impose its will on others in an uncontested fashion. Fragmentation can be liberation. On the other hand, as more self-determined groups find their voice, there
is a certain cacophony. Each group demands its rights, moral relativism becomes pervasive, and there is no apparent common good. Some wonder about what will hold societies and the world together if there are no agreed-upon rules. Is unity (albeit a coercive brand) dependent upon the power of some over others?

You will look at the position of the "communitarians" who seek a new moral and social ecology, and who seek new recognition of our interdependencies which must supercede individual rights. Liberals object to their arguments. You will also read about some social movements spawned by globalization, groups who refuse to accept the new global order, and who have their alternative visions for the world.

We conclude by considering one of the problems with the new "identity politics." We ask whether the "identities" of the desperately poor, refugees, and poor or working-class immigrants, are "liberated" through "fragmentation." Are these fellow human beings finding their own voice in the new networked society, or do we find that their identities are still determined by the same centers of power that supposedly belong to previous eras: powerful economic and political interests, and social hierarchy? In what ways do their experiences illustrate tensions between the forces of globalization and local concerns? Is there a way to make "identity" more human, and more humane, or is "identity" every bit as much socially constructed as it was before the Contemporary Era? Then again, there is always the possibility for technological leaps, for multiple alterations of our very species. As the line between machines and humans blurs, what new forces are emerging?

Finally, the course looks ahead by considering the possibilities for global citizenship. Will some of us move beyond local identities and beyond nationalism, to become "citizens of the world" with all the responsibilities that citizenship demands? There are some new models for us, "transcultural identities", as more and more cultures are blended under globalization. You will read an Indian-American author who depicts these sensibilities.

### Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. compare and contrast the contemporary forces of globalization and resistance with specific reference to social movements and historical events by applying concepts from sociology, literature, communications, art, and political science
2. construct connections between feminist issues and those of race, gender and class, giving evidence from contemporary writings
3. examine cultural differences and contributions from various cultures with reference to African-American, Asian-American, Central American, Israeli/Palestinian, and East Indian American works
4. examine the dilemmas of contemporary art and the creative impetus of artists
5. expertly use the skills necessary for reading at the graduate level
6. design and implement a substantive research investigation
7. demonstrate the integration and application of knowledge in two or more liberal arts and science disciplines

### Deliverables

Click [here](https://my.excelsior.edu/web/syllabus-library/8-week-term-schedule) to view the 8 week Term Schedules.

Click [here](https://my.excelsior.edu/web/syllabus-library/15-week-term-schedule) to view the 15 week Term Schedules.

### Course Schedule

Weeks start on Monday, 12:01 AM ET and end on Sunday, 11:59 PM ET, US.

Unless otherwise noted, all assigned items are due at the end of the module (by 11:59PM, Sunday).
| Week 1 | Module 1: Introduction to Contemporary Society: Globalization and Identity Formation | Read all the contents in Module 1, along with assignments and due dates, pay special attention to the documents titled, "Reading at a Graduate Level," and "How to Study in This Course."

Chapter 1 from Manuel Castell's *Power of Identity: Communal Heavens: Identity and Meaning in the Network Society"

Skim through all the readings for the course & acquaint yourself with them. |
| M1D1: The Power of Identity | M1D2: Tension in the Network Society |

| Week 2 | Module 2: Art and Literature in the Contemporary Era: Postcolonial and Postmodern | Postcolonial: Ashcroft, et. al., *The Empire Writes Back* esp. Introduction, Chapters 1, 3, 5, 6

Postmodern: [Postmodern Art](http://www.visual-arts-cork.com/postmodernism.htm)

Graffiti and Street Art:

[Banksy](http://www.banksy.co.uk/)

[BLU](http://blublu.org/)

[West Bank Separation Wall Photo Gallery by Brian McMorrow at pbase.com](http://www.pbase.com/bmcmorrow/thewall&page=all) |
| M2A1: Short Paper | M2D1: Living in the "Post-" Era |

| M3D1: Language and Place II: Colonialism and Indigenous Women | M3D2: Language and Place III: Resisting European Cultures |

| Week 4 | Module 4: Race - Social and Political Conflict | Derrick A. Bell, *Faces at the Bottom of the Well* |
| M4A1: Short Paper | M4D1: Language and Place IV: Minority Achievement in the USA |

<p>| M4D2: Language and Place V: Achieving Success in the American University | M4D3: Progress and Pessimism in a Rapidly Globalizing World |</p>
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<th>Week</th>
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<td><strong>Module 5:</strong> Sexuality and Gender</td>
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<td><strong>Module 6:</strong> The Reaction to Postmodern Fragmentation and Globalization</td>
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<td><strong>Module 8:</strong> Global Visions: Identity in Transition II</td>
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**Evaluation**

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<tr>
<td>A=90-100%</td>
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<td>B=80-89%</td>
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<td>C=70-79%</td>
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<td>D=60-69%</td>
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<td>F=below 60%</td>
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**Breakdown**

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<th>Discussion Participation</th>
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<td>Short Papers</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Project</td>
<td>35%</td>
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Criteria

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Course Activities:

Before beginning your course work, be sure to review the Excelsior College Guidelines for Online Interaction (http://www.excelsior.edu/netiquette) (a.k.a. Online Etiquette or "Netiquette"). If you have any questions regarding these guidelines, please feel free to direct them to your instructor. All student work in this course may be submitted to plagiarism detection software.

Short Papers - 30%
Within Module 2, 4, and 6 you will write and turn in a short paper 3 to 5 pages. Potential topics for papers are given for each unit. Note that your first paper might deal with a topic from Module 1 or a topic from Module 2, but it is due at the end of Module 2 no matter which topic you choose to write on. This is the First Short Paper. For the Second Short Paper you may choose from the topics in Module 3 or Module 4, but it is due at the end of Module 4. Finally, the Third Short Paper is based on topics from Module 5 or Module 6, and it is due at the end of Module 6. These short papers form the second component of your course grade.

Final Paper - 35%
In addition to working papers (short essays and critiques) done during the course of a graduate study seminar, it is traditional for such a seminar to culminate, for each student, in the presentation of a research paper related to the topics of the seminar.

We call it the final paper because it is due at the end of the course - in the last week, in fact.

Guidelines for the paper:

1. The final paper is worth 35% of the course grade
2. Your paper will be 15 pages, double-spaced, 12 point font. The length does NOT include any of the following components of your paper:
   a. the title page
   b. footnote pages
   c. bibliography
3. The complete paper is due at the conclusion of the course. Late papers WILL NOT be accepted for grading.
4. The only exception to (3) above is where there are medical or other good reasons for failure to complete the work on time.
   The instructor is the final arbiter of whether there exists good reason, and formal written application for any extension of time for any reason must be made prior to the deadline expiring.
5. The standards for grading this paper are the same as those used for grading the short topic papers in the course:

Each paper will be graded on the following factors: accuracy, completeness, use of critical thought, and writing ability. In determining the grade, the faculty member may allow exceptional performance in one area to offset a shortcoming in another area.

A: Provides a complete, accurate, and well-written response, which shows critical thought.

B: Provides a response which is in general complete, accurate, and well-written, but contains minor flaws in one or more of those areas, or does not display critical thought.

C: Addresses most of the issues or topics in the question in a comprehensible form, although without critical thought. However, it contains major shortcomings in accuracy, completeness, and/or writing quality.

F: An incoherent or incomprehensible response, and/or one which does not address most of the issues or topics in the question, and/or which has repeated, major errors in accuracy and/or writing.

Remember that there is a tutorial service available to you: Smarthinking.

Discussion Participation - 35%
Discussion group activities are designed to facilitate the exchange of ideas and information with your classmates and with your instructor. There are two ways you will do this:

Asynchronous discussion board (required! - 35% of course grade).

Each Module will have a posted forum where you, with your classmates will address important issues about the readings you have been doing for the Module. This forum, which is called an “asynchronous discussion board,” is a place on this web site where students post responses (and questions!). We call it asynchronous, because, although you can read other’s contributions and post your own, you don’t have to be online at the same time. (Unlike a live or synchronous "chat" room session.)

You will be required to read other students’ postings to this forum (and the instructor’s responses) and post replies and additions of your own.

You will be graded at the end of Module 1, Module 3 (on both Modules 2 and 3), Module 5 (on both Modules 4 and 5), and Module 8 (on Modules 6, 7 and 8).

Note carefully! The asynchronous discussion board group activities are required. You will receive a very significant portion of the grade for this course on the basis of regular and thoughtful participation in these activities. The separate section, Using the Discussion Board effectively, will give you specific details on how your participation in the forum will be evaluated.

By registering for a web-based course, you have made a commitment to participate regularly with your instructor and other students in online discussions. You will be expected to use online course tools (Discussions and Chat rooms) to interact with your peers and work collaboratively to improve your understanding of underlying course ideas and issues.

To lessen the risk of losing your work, do not write major discussions directly into a discussion posting. Instead, compose and check your work in other software (such as Microsoft Word) and then use the Create Message button and copy and paste your text into the new posting.

FORMATTING AND STYLE FOR WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS:

APA, MLA, or CBE

Course Policies

Turnitin.com:

Excelsior College subscribes to Turnitin.com, the world’s largest plagiarism-detection service, and reserves the right to check all student work to verify that it meets the guidelines of this policy.

Institutional Policies

COURSE PARTICIPATION:

Weekly course participation is required. Please see the Student Participation Policy for more details.

Instructor Participation

Your instructor will:

- Post a welcome message during the first 24 hours of the course.
- Schedule real time office hours through the chat room and/or by individual appointment.
- Communicate with you through the Blackboard communication tools, including internal course messaging.
- Respond to student communications within two business days.
- Log into the course to review and participate at least three different days a week in 15-week courses, or four different days a week in 8-week courses.
- Provide you with formative feedback midway through the course based on work submitted to that point.
- Grade all formative assignments within 7 business days in 15-week courses and 4 business days in 8-week courses, and will grade final summative work within 5 business days after the end of the term.
POLICIES

You are responsible for being familiar with all the policies that are related to your activity in this course. Complete information on Excelsior College policies can be found in the Course Information area or by visiting [www.excelsior.edu/policies](http://www.excelsior.edu/policies).

All student work in this course may be submitted to plagiarism detection software.