NYU Los Angeles

Fame  Spring 2018

Instructor Information

- Chumley, L. & Robles-Anderson, E.

Course Information

- Course Title: Fame
- Course Number:
- Time and Location: Spring 2018

Course Overview and Goals

Fame—celebrity, notoriety, renown—confers both recognition and immortality. It is the most enduring and desirable form of social power; a uniquely human ambition and a central force in social life. Culture, commerce, politics, and religion all proffer promises of fame, whether for fifteen minutes or fifteen centuries. Drawing on texts from history, anthropology, sociology, literature, philosophy, and contemporary media, this course will reflect on the ethics, erotics, pragmatics and pathologies of fame. We will compare fame to other forms of recognition (reputation, honor, charisma, infamy, etc.), and look at how fame operates in various social and historical circumstances, from small agricultural communities to enormous, hyper-mediated societies such as our own. How does the fame of the oral epic differ from the fame of the printed book or the fame of the photograph? We’ll consider the enduring question of fame as it transforms across space, time, social boundaries, and technological conditions.

Learning Objectives:

This class has three goals.

1. Students will learn to identify and contrast models of fame as forms of social power in terms of concepts such as charisma, embodiment, intersubjective space-time, semiotics of brand, person-construction, and varieties of mediation, both textual and technological.
2. Students will learn to analyze particular cases—leaders, champions, prophets, celebrities, and villains—in terms of these models.
3. Students will explore at least one research method commonly used in the humanities and social sciences (e.g. archival research, observation, interviews, discourse analysis, etc.) We will discuss methods as we work through readings from different disciplines over the semester. Students will then employ one or more methods in their final projects.
Course Requirements

(1) **Opening the text (20%)** Each class meeting will be focused on close reading and discussions of one or more texts. Each student will be responsible for “opening a text” (or part of a text) once during the semester. On that day, the discussion leader will produce a one-page handout (one side of one sheet) with an analysis of the key concepts in the text—bring paper copies for the entire class and the professors, and post a digital version to the NYU Classes site.

(2) **Engaged participation (20%).** Although this is a large class, it is not a lecture. In our discussions, we will be looking for knowledge-building contributions that demonstrate active thought and sustained focus, and which contribute to your peers’ understandings.

(3) **Midterm (20%).** Midway through the class you will be asked to synthesize the first half of the course readings thus far in the form of an in-class essay and quiz.

(4) **Final (20%)** At the end of the class you will be asked to synthesize the second half of the course readings in the form of an in-class essay and quiz.

(5) **Final presentation (20%)** The final leg of this course will require you to work through an original analysis of a contemporary or historical situation of fame. This is an opportunity to apply the critical skills and material covered in the class as well as to have some fun, to create and express and do it with academic rigor and gusto. Towards the end of the semester we will spend our class time discussing research methods and resources; students should be conducting intensive research during this time. In the last two weeks of the course students will form small groups based on their final project topics, and each group will present their findings to the class.

Expectations:

1. **Do the reading, for everyone’s sake.** Class meetings center on in-depth discussion of concepts from the texts. Weekly meetings are our opportunity to work through texts as a community and the prerequisite for high-quality discussion is that everyone reads the material ahead of time.

2. **Share the space.** Everyone should aim to speak once per class. If you have a tendency not to speak in class, raise your hand and your voice. If you have a tendency to talk a lot, be selective in your contributions. Pro tip: try and build on the contributions of others, whether through questions, extensions, or critiques.

3. **Be Here Now.** The opposite of absence is presence.

4. **Give credit where credit is due.** Cite your sources. As members of the Steinhardt community you are expected to uphold the standards of Academic Integrity. Failure to do so will result in an automatic failure on the assignment and harsher actions, if warranted.

5. **Seek the help you need to improve your work.** Come to office hours to ask us questions. Ask a classmate to give feedback on your work. Go to the writing center to polish your prose. Students with special needs should be in contact with us at the beginning of the semester so that we can insure accommodations. If appropriate, students should register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980, 240 Greene Street.

Grading of Assignments

The grade for this course will be determined according to the following formula:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignments/Activities</th>
<th>% of Final Grade</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opening the Text</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaged Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Presentation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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</tbody>
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**Course Schedule**

**Topics and Assignments**

**I- What is it to be known?**

**Week 1: Ephemeral Immortality**

1/22  Introductory lecture
1/24  William Butler Yeats, *Sailing to Byzantium*
      William Shakespeare, *Sonnet 18*
      Gay Talese, “The silent hero of a season”, in *Fame and Obscurity*.

**Week 2: Champions and Heroes**

1/29  *The Iliad*, Book 1, 9, 16, 17, 18, 19 (and Introduction)
1/31  *The Aeneid* Book I, IV, VIII (and Introduction)

**Week 3: Kings and Rebels**

2/7   *Egil’s Saga* (passages 31, 40, 44-45, 55-56, 80) (and Introduction)

**Week 4: Prophets and Mystics**

2/12  *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* - King James Version
      *The Gospel of Mary* (from the Nag-Hammadi Libraries)
2/14  Jonathan Spence, “Ch. 5 The Key” & “Ch. 6 Wandering”, in *God’s Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan*

**II- What kind of power is fame?**

**Week 5: The modes and moral status of exceptionalism**

2/19  President’s Day – NO CLASS
2/21 Max Weber, “The nature of charismatic authority and its routinization”
Max Weber, “The prophet”

Week 6: Coins in Different Realms
Guy Trebay, “After the bust, the boom-boom room” NYT 2009

Week 7: The space-time of personal expansion
3/5 Nancy Munn, Ch. 1 the Conceptual Framework, Ch. 5, Fame in The Fame of Gawa: A Symbolic Study of Value Transformation in a Massim Society
Video: Bodak Yellow

Week 8: SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS

Week 9: Midterm
3/19 Mid-term quiz
3/21 Mid-term essay

III- How is fame made?

Week 10: Agents and Assistants
3/26 Phineas Taylor Barnum, The Life of P.T. Barnum, Written By Himself (excerpts)
Dale Carnegie, “How to Win Friends and Influence People”
James Boswell, The Life of Samuel Johnson (excerpts)

Week 11: Media: Technologies and Techniques
4/2 Murray, Sue. “A marriage of spectacle and intimacy”, in Hitch Your Antenna to The Stars

Week 12: Infamy
4/11 Sophocles, Oedipus at Colonus

IV- Research

Week 13: Research Methods
4/16 Ethnographic Research Workshop
4/18 Archival Research Workshop

Week 14: Research Presentations
4/23
4/25
Week 15: Research Presentations
4/30
5/2

Week 16: Conclusions
5/7

FINAL EXAM — WED 5/9 12pm-1:50pm

Course Materials

Required Textbooks & Materials
There are five books that we are asking you to purchase for this course:

- *Dale Carnegie, How to Win Friends and Influence People* 1936 (any edition)

All are available at the campus bookstore or from your friendly local or online book purveyor. All other texts are available on the NYU Classes site for this course or in the public domain.

Resources

- **Access your course materials**: NYU Classes (nyu.edu/its/classes)
- **Databases, journal articles, and more**: Bobst Library (library.nyu.edu)
- **Assistance with strengthening your writing**: NYU Writing Center (nyu.mywconline.com)
- **Obtain 24/7 technology assistance**: IT Help Desk (nyu.edu/it/servicedesk)

Course Policies

Attendance Policy

Study abroad at Global Academic Centres is an academically intensive and immersive experience, in which students from a wide range of backgrounds exchange ideas in discussion-based seminars. Learning in such an environment depends on the active participation of all students. And since classes typically meet once or twice a week, even a single absence can cause a student to miss a significant portion of a course. To ensure the integrity of this academic experience, class attendance at the centres is mandatory, and unexcused absences will affect students’ semester grades. The class roster will be marked at the beginning of class and anyone who arrives after this time will be considered absent.
Students are responsible for making up any work missed due to absence.

For courses that meet once a week, one unexcused absence will be penalised by a two percent deduction from the student’s final course grade. For courses that meet two or more times a week, the same penalty will apply to two unexcused absences. Repeated absences in a course may result in failure.

**Plagiarism Policy**

The academic standards of New York University apply to all coursework at NYU LA. NYU LA policies are in accordance with New York University’s plagiarism policy. The presentation of another person’s words, ideas, judgment, images or data as though they were your own, whether intentionally or unintentionally, constitutes an act of plagiarism.

It is a serious academic offense to use the work of others (written, printed or in any other form) without acknowledgement. Cases of plagiarism are not dealt with by your instructor. They are referred to the Director, who will determine the appropriate penalty (up to and including failure in the course as a whole) taking into account the codes of conduct and academic standards for NYU’s various schools and colleges.

**Religious Observance**

Students observing a religious holiday during regularly scheduled class time are entitled to miss class without any penalty to their grade. This is for the holiday only and does not include the days of travel that may come before and/or after the holiday. Students must notify their professor and the Academic Programs Coordinator in writing via email one week in advance before being absent for this purpose.

**Inclusion, Diversity, Belonging and Equity**

NYU is committed to building a culture that respects and embraces diversity, inclusion, and equity, believing that these values – in all their facets – are, as President Andrew Hamilton has said, “…not only important to cherish for their own sake, but because they are also vital for advancing knowledge, sparking innovation, and creating sustainable communities.” At NYU LA, we are committed to creating a learning environment that:

- fosters intellectual inquiry, research, and artistic practices that respectfully and rigorously take account of a wide range of opinions, perspectives, and experiences; and

- promotes an inclusive community in which diversity is valued and every member feels they have a rightful place, is welcome and respected, and is supported in their endeavours.

**Provisions to Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodations in a class are
encouraged to contact the Moses Centre for Students with Disabilities at (212) 998-4980 or mosecsd@nyu.edu as soon as possible to better ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.

Course Bibliography


