PACS 602: FALL 2008

RE/PRESENTING OCEANIA

Day/Time: Monday, 2.30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Place: Moore Hall, #205
Office Hours: Monday, 1:00 – 2.15 p.m.
or by appointment.

Instructor: Vilsoni Hereniko
Office: Moore #212
Telephone: 956-2658
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SEMINAR DESCRIPTION: PACS 602, Re/Presenting Oceania, is one of the three core and required seminars for students enrolled in the MA program in Pacific Islands studies at UH Manoa's Center for Pacific Islands Studies. PACS 602 is also intended for those graduate students whose programs of study include a significant Pacific studies component. Taught in tandem with PACS 601 (Learning Oceania), this seminar undertakes a critical analysis of how the Pacific Islands have been represented in scholarly and popular media, and with particular attention to the ways in which these dominant representations are being challenged or contested through a variety of media and by Islander scholars, artists, writers, performers, poets, and film makers as well as practitioners of more critical disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches.

We will range broadly across the landscapes and seascapes of the region to interrogate the politics of representation. We will analyze the ways in which space, time, and place in the region have been configured, and the ways in which they might be understood differently. We will deal with the complexities and controversies around such analytical concepts as culture, race, ethnicity, and indigeneity. We will engage colonialist assumptions about modernity and progress, and examine how those assumptions are not only represented but concretized through policies and initiatives affecting governance, economy, and, more generally, development. We will consider too the historical genealogy and contemporary imaging of the Pacific as paradise, and companionate through varied and changing renderings of gender and sexuality in the region. In all of these critical investigations, we will concern ourselves with how Oceania is being re-imagined and re-presented, and in ways that are more relevant, meaningful, and reflective of peoples' beliefs and experiences.

BOOKS: Both texts below may be purchased at the Center for Pacific Islands Studies (see instructor during first day of class).


The Contemporary Pacific, 20:1, 2008

SEMINAR STRUCTURE, EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS: As participants in this graduate seminar, we will meet once a week for two and one-half hours over the course of the semester. Class meetings will consist primarily of discussions based on the assigned readings and viewings for a given week. On average, students will be asked to read five articles per week or the equivalent thereof. With the exception of the books or edited collections designated for purchase, students will receive copies of the assigned readings at the beginning of the semester. Audio-visual materials will be used where and when appropriate, and there will
be a class trip or ethnographic expedition to the Bishop Museum. In budgeting for this course, you should also include $10.00 (approx.) which is the price of a single kama'āina admission to the museum. There is also the possibility of visits from accomplished and well-known Oceanic historians, writers, and artists during the course of the semester, and other spontaneous happenings too!

For purposes of evaluation, students will be asked to write four three-page summary/reaction papers based on a given week’s readings or other required activity. All students will be asked to write for weeks 4 and 11; the choice of which other two weekly topics to write on rests with you, the student. With the exception of the required written summary/reaction of your visit to the Bishop Museum that will be due the following week, these summary/reaction papers are due at the start of the seminar session for which the readings have been assigned. Altogether, they will account for 50% of your grade. I will provide you with examples of these written summaries at the start of the semester. Please note that these writings must be handed in on time. Note: Students are required to write on the reading assignments for any sessions they miss; these writing assignments are in addition to the 4 required weekly summaries cited above, and must be handed in at the beginning of class the following week. Failure to do this will cost 10% (for each one missed) of the grade allocation for this category. Your summary is your evidence that you have done the readings.

To enhance our discussions of the readings, two students will act as facilitators for each week’s readings, beginning with Week 4. Students should find someone they would like to work with at the beginning of the course and sign up for their preferred week as soon as possible. Each pair will need to have at least two meetings outside of class to discuss and organize their presentation. When they have a plan (based on their discussions of the readings), they should see the instructor at least one week before their presentation (preferably during office hours) to get his input and reactions. Meeting with the instructor is important since it will ensure that you’re on the right track; it will increase the likelihood of a productive and meaningful presentation. Failure to do this will cost you 5% of the grade allocation for this category. Note – (i) think of activities that will illustrate or illuminate the important issues raised in the readings (ii) both students should be involved equally in the presentation that should last 1 hour and 15 minutes. (**The instructor will take over the rest of the class after the student presentations. During this time, artists or scholars may be invited to attend.)

In addition to the above, students will also write a ten-page essay on some representational aspect or practice (such as literature, music, dance, theater, film) in Oceania. This essay must be research-based, and must include at least five sources in the references. This research essay is worth 30% of the final grade, and is due on Friday, December 7th, no later than 4.30 p.m. Again, no late submissions will be accepted. To facilitate the planning, structuring and completion of this assignment, I ask that students provide me with a short précis or description of their choice of topic and approach at the end of class on October 13th. Note – once your topic has been decided upon between you and the instructor, it cannot be changed without the instructor’s permission.

Students may also choose a performative or creative option (instead of the ten-page essay) to be determined and negotiated with the instructor. In all likelihood, there will need to be a short written or textual companion piece to any performative or creative project. There will be individual presentations of these performative or creative projects during the last meeting of our seminar on December 8th. The quality of the in-class presentations will be a part of the overall grade for those who choose this option.

Commitment and responsibility are needed to make this a successful semester. Students
enrolled in this seminar are expected to be on time, in attendance and actively engaged for all sessions. Think of the seminar as very much like a potluck in which each student brings a dish he/she has prepared to share with the rest of the class. If you spend the whole seminar just listening, then you’ve brought nothing to the potluck. If you dominate the discussion, then you’ve brought too much. Remember, if there are 10 students in the class, then you should contribute about 10% to the discussion. **Note:** Students must always respect the views of their peers, particularly if there are differences of opinion. During the semester, sensitive issues will arise, and every effort must be made to encourage dialogue and open communication. Disrespect will NOT be tolerated.

To sum up the course requirements, there are

- 4 written summaries/reaction papers on assigned weekly readings/viewings (10 points each) = 40%
- 2 class presentation = 20%
- 1 ten-page research essay or performative equivalent = 30%
- Attendance and participation = 10%

**FINAL NOTE:** I also urge you to be diligent note-takers and to always bring to class your Reader, which is yours to keep. You should feel free to mark up your Reader with comments or notes.

**GRADING SCALE:**

Grades will be assigned as follows:

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**Seminar Schedule**

**PACS 602 Re/Presenting Oceania**

**Fall 2008**

**Week I -- August 25: Introduction/Orientation to the Seminar**

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**Week 2 – September 1: Labor Day: Holiday**

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**Week 3 – September 8: Identity, Culture, and Other Issues in Re/Presenting Oceania**

We will begin by addressing a number of key themes in the representing and re/presenting of Oceania. The stakes are incredibly high, and around such contested concepts as race, culture, ethnicity, and indigeneity. Robert Nicole identifies the orientalist features in French literary writings on Oceania. Nicole's study is but one example. To be fair, the French are by no means alone in this practice. Orientalist tones are to be found in many earlier literary,
ethnographic and historical works on the Pacific. In his survey piece, Vilsoni Hereniko examines the effects of such representations on understandings of culture and identity in the region, while Margaret Jolly and Teresia Teaiwa direct our attention to the subversive vitality and critical importance of re/presentings from within Oceania. Both Teaiwa and Houston Wood assess the problems and possibilities presented by the use of theory in Pacific studies, and David Gegeo addresses matters of place and indigeneity. All in all, we have a great deal to critically examine in this first formal session of the seminar.


Week 4 -- September 15: Re-Imagining and Re/Presenting a New Oceania

Epeli Hau'ofa's essay, "Our Sea of Islands," is arguably the most influential piece of writing on the Pacific over the last decade or so. It is assigned reading in numerous classes, cited regularly in scholarly and more popular works, and has been reproduced in a variety of publications. Hau'ofa challenges colonialis representations of the Pacific by calling for a re-imagining of Oceania. The work of this Tongan scholar and writer challenges dominant conceptions of time, space, and place in the Pacific; it encourages the peoples of the region to define themselves through a variety of creative expressions, and in ways that are locally appropriate and meaningful. Let us revisit this powerful and empowering essay in light of the events of the last decade or so.


Albert Wendt has also contributed to and written about the incredible vitality of Pacific arts over the last three decades. He writes; "This artistic renaissance is enriching our cultures further, reinforcing our identities/self-respect/ and pride, and taking us through a genuine decolonisation; it is also acting as a unifying force in our region. In their individual journeys into the Void, these artists, through their work, are explaining us to ourselves and creating a new Oceania" (Sharrad, p. 19). In a recent documentary on Albert Wendt, producer and director Shirley Horrocks "traces Wendt’s life and career, with vivid dramatizations of his work." The documentary also highlights the creative work of Pacific writers, painters, dancers, and rappers who are re-presenting the Pacific.

Albert Wendt, "Towards a New Oceania," in Paul Sharrad, ed., Readings in Pacific
Literature, pp. 9-19.

Video: *The New Oceania: Albert Wendt, Writer* – this video will be screened in class.

Note: This is one of two weeks for which everyone is required to write.

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Week 5 - September 22: Local Epistemologies in the Contemporary Pacific

We need to note the presumptions on which Western scholarship about the Pacific rests. Capitalism, Christianity, and colonialism are part of a larger and imposed modernist agenda that offers one, albeit intimidating way of knowing, being, and acting in this world. The works of David Gegeo, Karen Watson-Gegeo, Manu Meyer, Subramani, and Stephen Winduo argue for an awareness of alternative knowledges and epistemologies critical to a very different understanding of Oceania and its varied peoples.


Subramani, "Emerging Epistemologies," *Pacific Writing Forum Network, Department of Literature, USP* (December 2003), pp. 1-3.


*Breaking Bows and Arrows* (video) – Sinclair Library

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Week 6 -- September 19: Re/Presenting Gender and Sexuality

Western representations of gender and sexuality in the Pacific have tended to move between competing interpretive paradigms; one that posits a natural universal or biological sameness and another that works from a premise of cultural difference. Whatever the interpretive mode adopted, the history of sexuality in the West has informed and been informed by encounters with the sexual values and practices of "others." Western notions of eros and desire constructed and, at the same time, were constructed by encounters and understandings of otherness defined in terms of race or culture. Things are changing. Interdisciplinary feminist and gender studies are a growing component of Pacific studies as many Pacific women take up issues of gender, feminism, and sexuality in their scholarly, literary and creative works. Brendan Hokowhitu is one of several Pacific scholars turning a critical eye to historical and contemporary representations of masculinity in the region. The readings for this week provide an introduction into these welcome, much needed developments.


Brendan Hokowhitu, ”The Death of Koro Paka: “Traditional” Maori Patriarchy” in

*Velvet Dreams* (video) – Sinclair Library

*Paradise Bent* (video) – Sinclair Library

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**Week 7 – October 6: Humor in the Pacific as Both Local and Counter-Hegemonic Critique**

This week, we will be taking a somewhat different approach to the changing landscapes and seascapes of Pacific studies. Humor (and the various forms that it can take) is often more than a light and simple form of entertainment. It can offer a disguised or subtle critique of power relationships and consequent inequities between colonizer and colonized or within a given society. Caroline Sinavaiana-Gabbard writes; "As Samoa navigates the fragile bridge 'betwixt and between' cultural epochs of ancient Polynesia and the modern West, we will continue to rely on our comedians to keep us amused and to alert us to the serpentine currents below" (p. 201). We will be reading/viewing works for this session that should cause us to smile or laugh but also to think critically about humor in contemporary Oceania.

Eteuati Ete & Ole Maiava, *The Best of Laughing with Samoans* (video) or *A Small Samoan Wedding* – Sinclair Library.


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**Week 8 -- October 13: On Issues and Images in Islander-Authorved Literature**

Pacific Literature in English started in the 1960s. Over the last four decades, this literature has slowly made its way from the margins to the center, so that in 2007, it has become an important course in a number of universities in the Pacific as well as the United States and Europe. The quality of the writing has improved significantly and there are more writers now than ever before. Another important development has been the emergence of critical writings on this literature, as well as disagreements among writers and critics about what Pacific literature is or should be. How should the Pacific and Pacific Islanders be re-presented in literature (poetry, fiction, and plays particularly)? As a student of Pacific literature, you’re invited to join this debate.

Week 9 -- October 20: Histories and History's Place in Re/Presenting Oceania

Questions abound as to the very nature and meaning of history in contemporary Oceania. Much conventional scholarship in the Euro-American world continues to focus on the search for a single, knowable, verifiable past. Multiple, varied, contentious, and reemerging indigenous expressions of local pasts suggest that what has come to be understood as history in the West may not be history to, for or even about the peoples of Oceania. Vernacular as well as appropriated forms of history in the region need to be appreciated. The decentering of the practice of history in Oceania, then, requires a recognition that writing is but one form of historical expression. This is the political and intellectual position from which I have selected this week's readings, and with particular attention to the histories of ancient and present-day voyaging, and to the practice of tattooing as history. **Don't forget; your one-page project précis is also due this week.**

Week 10 -- October 27: The Possibilities of More Critical and Indigenous Ethnographies

Renato Rosaldo writes that anthropology, that often most colonial of academic disciplines, has undergone a sea change since the late 1960s. He charts a new ethnography or social analysis that is attentive to the complexities of cultural citizenship and to the need for educational democracy. This new, more critical ethnography, informed by interdisciplinary approaches, attempts to uncover subordinated forms of knowledge. The blurring of ethnography's traditional boundaries creates space for historically subordinated perspectives otherwise excluded or marginalized from official discourse. "Culture and power," he writes, "have become intertwined in a world and in institutional settings where diverse groups, themselves internally diverse, interact and seek full enfranchisement and social justice under conditions of inequality" (C&T, p. xix). With these words as preface, we will examine the potential for critical ethnographic practices in Oceania, not the least of which are indigenous anthropologies.


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Week 11 -- November 3: A More Critical Ethnography Applied: A Site Visit to the Bishop Museum

We step outside of the classroom this week to visit the Bishop Museum; more particularly the display of Hawaiian history and culture in Hawaiian Hall, and three other exhibit or display rooms featuring Hawaiian natural history, Polynesian culture and history, and the Kahili. Following from the readings and discussions of Weeks VII and VIII, our goal is to apply a more critical and ethnographic perspective to the Bishop Museum's exhibited representations of Hawaiian and Pacific history and culture. In preparation for our trip, I encourage you to visit the Bishop Museum's website to get a sense of its physical layout, administrative organization, various programs, and expressed sense of mission. The website address is <http://www.bishopmuseum.org>. This is the second of two weeks for which everyone is required to write. The written summaries/reflections on your visit to the Bishop Museum are due at the start of class next week.

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Week 12 – November 10: Readings and Viewings – The Pacific in Film and Video

The artistic renaissance documented by Albert Wendt in his "Toward a New Oceania"
has shown itself more recently in a variety of different media, including films and videos produced, directed or otherwise inspired by Pacific Islanders. These cultural productions, particularly feature films, have enormous impact internationally and have made the Pacific accessible to new audiences. For those living in far-away places such as Norway, Alaska, or Russia, the images they see in these films may be the only knowledge they have of the Pacific. And because there are so few feature films made by Pacific Islanders, and fewer still that have found international distribution, there is enormous pressure on indigenous filmmakers (from their own people) to produce works that are accurate and “authentic.” These expectations are often at odds with the demands of the international marketplace, which includes producers and distributors who see filmmaking as a commercial enterprise. The readings and the films assigned for this week speak to this issue, as well as others.

As you think about the readings and the films assigned for this week, try to identify the key issues raised in the readings and then examine the feature films to see how they deal with these issues. What do you think of Tamaira’s review of these two films?

Hereniko, Vilsoni, “Pacific Islanders in Film and Video: An Overview,” ifilm connections <www.asiapacificfilms.org>


______, "Film and Photography: Picturing New Zealand as a Pacific Place," in Sean Mallon and Pandora Fulimalo Pereira, eds, Pacific Art Niu Sila: The Pacific Dimension of Contemporary New Zealand Arts, pp. 175-189,


Samoan Wedding (feature film) – Sinclair Library
No. 2 (feature film) – Sinclair Library
The Land Has Eyes (feature film) – Sinclair Library

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Week 13: November 17: Discussion of essay/performative projects.

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Week 14 - November 24: Pacific Music, Dance, and the Visual Arts

Creative expression in Oceania has always reflected movement, travel and exchange within and beyond the region. Sean Mallon and Pandora Fulimalo Pereira note in the introduction to Pacific Art Niu Sila that contemporary Pacific arts express both the particulars of the local and transnational connections with other places, peoples, and histories. Re/presenting Oceania artistically and indigenously does not occur in isolation as the movement of peoples, ideas, material goods, media, and technology through the area affects the local, the regional, and the global. This week, we will sample a variety of visual and performative arts in the Pacific for the connections, linkages, and shared histories these re/presentings reveal. Special attention will be given to the exceptional vibrancy of Pacific arts in New Zealand.


*Black Grace* (video) - Sinclair

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**Week 15 – December 1: Visit to the Polynesian Cultural Center**

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**Week 16 – December 8: December 5: Project Presentations and Course Evaluation**

We will use the final week for presentations of performative projects, if any. **Note: We will discuss specific guidelines and parameters for these individual project presentations well in advance of this session.**

Course Evaluation forms will be given out for you to fill. This will be followed by a potluck. This time, you are encouraged to bring a real dish (meaning food) that you can share with the rest of the class.

**Note:** Hand in your 10 page-essay no later than 4.30 p.m. on Wednesday, December 10th.

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