

**KEYWORDS FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY: A VOCABULARY OF CULTURE AND SOCIETY  
THEORY AND CRITICISM 9228B  
Winter 2019**

**LOCATION:** CSTC Seminar Room – StvH 3165

**TIME & PLACE:** Monday, 2:30-5:30

**INSTRUCTOR:** Regna Darnell  
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Adjunct Research Professor of Anthropology

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**OFFICE HOURS:** Before or after class or by appointment

This seminar will revisit and update the modern progenitor of encyclopaedic overviews of the conceptual foundations of the social sciences and humanities. Since the advent of science studies, science itself also falls under the conceptual domain of knowledge creation and dissemination.

Raymond Williams, professor of drama and public intellectual par excellence, produced *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* in 1976 and revised it in 1983, the year of his retirement from Cambridge. Although he lived seven more years, Williams did not again revisit his selection of the open-ended and emergent conceptual resources available to think with across disciplines. Unlike most of the encyclopaedic guides that followed, Williams did not attempt an "objective" review of consensus in meaning and utility of the 131 entries in the 1983 version. Rather, he produced a connected series of essays (1-5 pages) that outlined the potential scope and form of his broad (Marxist) paradigm for the *sciences humaines*. The context of his thinking was a post-war expansion of knowledge domains (cybernetics), disciplinary boundaries (emerging area studies programs) and geopolitical borders (world systems theory) that had not yet coalesced into an overarching new paradigm. There have been a spate of comparable works of restricted scope over the last few years but none of them have attempted to cross the social sciences, humanities and sciences. Rather, terminologies have been reinvented, often idiosyncratically, in ways that impede intersectional discourses.

We stand at the crossroads of another realignment of knowledge - an explosion of information alongside blatant failures of neoliberal capitalism and globalization in their present forms. Theory and Criticism is well situated to cross the boundaries and synthesize new theoretical tools (redefining the old terms and adding new ones - conventional vs. creative metaphors for thought, drawing on work from French, German, Indigenous and other knowledge traditions, from the academy and from everyday knowledge). We still want to talk about conventional concepts (e.g., hegemony, civilization, culture, ecology, imperialism, myth, realism, tradition) but their meanings have evolved considerably over the last four decades. We also want to add concepts like simulacrum, bricoleur, chaos, complexity, fractals, hierarchy, scale, schizoanalysis, standpoint, oral tradition, epistemic murk, epigenetics. Both lists are exemplary only – the sky is the limit, What concepts are we using and where does the absence of a shared vocabulary stifle investigation? Anthropology, for example, adds a cross-cultural perspective to the Eurocentric theoretical vocabulary inherited from the Enlightenment. The range of backgrounds in the seminar will allow us to calibrate superficially incompatible conceptual tools to enhance mutual communication for diverse disciplinary audiences and between the academy and relevant publics.

The seminar will negotiate the list of terms to be included, with each student exploring three terms of their choice in depth (etymology, appearance in theoretical discourse, potential for elaborating an evolving paradigm adapted to contemporary world condition). We will discuss possibilities of blog, Wikipedia, etc. to disseminate our results.

Students are expected to attend class. All written work depends on class discussion.

## **CLASS SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS:**

<b>January 7</b>	<b>Introduction: Why Keywords? Why now?</b>
<b>January 14</b>	<b>Raymond Williams as Starting Point</b> Preliminary triage on the list of conceptual terms and the theorists who developed them.
<b>January 21</b>	<b>Choosing a Focus</b> Choice of terms or cluster of terms as used in disciplines or interdisciplines. Sign up for presentation topic and discussion date. <b>In Writing (10%)</b> How will this relate to your particular research trajectory?
<b>January 28</b>	<b>Keywords in Language and Culture (Duranti, Darnell, Haraway, Ortner)</b> <b>Indigenous Keywords. Exemplar.</b> (short pierces on-line or copies available)
<b>February 4</b>	<b>Student Presentations</b> <b>Each will present their analysis of 3 terms in class. (10% EACH)</b> All together or for 3 different sessions subject to seminar decision.
<b>February 11</b>	<b>Student Presentations</b>
<b>February 18</b>	<b>READING WEEK</b>
<b>February 25</b>	<b>Student Presentations</b>
<b>March 4</b>	<b>Student Presentations</b>
<b>March 11</b>	<b>Student Presentations</b>
<b>March 18</b>	<b>Student Presentations</b>
<b>March 25</b>	<b>Student Presentations</b>
<b>April 1</b>	<b>Synthesis Toward a New Paradigm</b> Each student will circulate their synthesis <b>one week in advance</b> based on their own work, texts read together and class presentations. <b>Revised synthesis due one week after the last class (30%).</b>
<b>April 8</b>	<b>Continued Sharing of Syntheses</b>

## **READINGS:**

Some possible readings though others will be added. Setting out a frame for crossing boundaries; transportability of concepts; changes in their meaning over time; the evolution of standpoint based disciplines (e.g. feminist standpoint epistemology, Indigenous Studies, Traditional Ecological Knowledge); emergence of interdisciplines. These will be recommended to correspond to topics of the student presentations.

Sherrie Ortner, Key Symbols - in Darnell ed. American Anthropology 1971-1995, 2002

Sherrie Ortner, Theory in Anthropology since the Sixties - in Dirks, Eley and Ortner eds., 1993

Donna Haraway, Simians, Cyborgs and Women - selections - 1991

Gregory Bateson, Steps Toward an Ecology of Mind: collected essays in anthropology, psychiatry, evolution and epistemology, 1972

Neal McLeod, Cree Narrative Memory, 2007

Alessandro Duranti, ed., Key Terms in Language and Culture, 2001

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, Metaphors We Live By, 1980

Bruno Latour, We have Never Been Modern, 1991

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following website:

[https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_grad.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf)