

CULTURE & EXPRESSION

(Fall 2012: HUHC 011 & HUHC 013)

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Hunger Games: Appetites and Contestation in Ancient and Medieval Cultures

Appetites shape our interaction with others, and have always done so, from primary appetites to satisfy basic needs and drives for food and shelter, power and protection, fame and glory, security and sex, to more refined, elaborate desiderata such as freedom of individual or communal expression, or intellectual, political or religious independence; freedom to eat, drink, to reside, cohabit or to travel as one wishes; to engage with and influence others; to achieve emotional and sexual satisfaction, etc. But not all needs and desires find immediate fulfillment and any can and will come into conflict with others and lead to competition on multiple levels, as embedded in the term *contestation*: **first**, at core is the notion of a *test*, whether of character, of will or of virtue, or of strength and physical endurance, that pits the individual, the hero, against self, nature or a monster, for example; the **second** level comprises the notion of a *contest* of two or more individuals in struggle or competition, as enemies or friends, to gain superiority in battle or in sport for the prize of strategic advantage and expanded power or riches, or for love or status - and this struggle or competition can be physical, military-strategic or rhetorical, as in a debate; the **third** level of *contestation* involves, more abstractly, a challenge to prevailing norms or established practices and conventions, again as a debate or dispute, in oral or written form, or as a physical or political challenge, as revolt or insurgency; **fourth**, on the most abstract level, *contestation* can comprise the figurative struggle or play between values, such as the spiritual and material aspects of life. The chosen texts will raise questions along these lines and reveal how different discourses represent these matters of contestation, or the contest of appetites, in different forms and in different contexts.

The Strategy

C&E consists of two related courses in both fall and spring semesters. *HUHC 011 and 012: Social Sciences* has its emphasis on understanding the structures and values of a culture or civilization through the disciplines of history, sociology, anthropology, psychology, philosophy, religion, economics and geography. *HUHC 013 and 014: Humanities* has its emphasis on artistic expressions of the cultures under examination through the disciplines of literary analysis (e.g. English, Classics, Romance and Comparative Literatures), linguistics, music, drama, dance, the visual arts, architecture and aesthetics. Faculty on both teams develop a reading list and lecture schedule that work in tandem to reinforce a student's understanding of the ancient world through to the Middle Ages and the modern world since the Renaissance. Twice weekly faculty lectures set the context for student-based discussion sections.