

Cognitive Dissonance in the Teaching of Human Sciences

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“Oppression is domesticating. The gravest obstacle to the achievement of liberation is that oppressive reality absorbs those within it and thereby acts to submerge human beings’ consciousness.” Paulo Freire.

I. Introduction

Educators that deal with humanistic subjects other than hard sciences have to confront not only the standard difficulty that any teacher faces when explaining a new topic, for instance developing new chemistry skills or helping to understand a process or equation. The critical thinking humanist professor, on top of all that, also has to deal with a petrified set of ideas/ emotions that are stopping the minds of the students from being able to relate to and make sense of an unexpected, and often unwelcomed, knowledge or *order of things*. The main reason for this is that the “new” information is dislocating core values and ideas that are the foundations of their socialized worldview and hence identity.

The challenge this time is to explain the shortcomings of nation state and nationalism in the context of nationalism. It is an ultimate challenge because it means reevaluating “historical data”, core cultural values like the *role of nature* for instance, legitimacy in terms of natural or positive law, etc. Since all these elements and many others like *tastes*, and social institutions, have been programmed in *our culture* organically since our most tender infancy, by repetition from people of respect or at least people and means that produced fear or admiration on us creates a loyalty hard to see in perspective, in psychology this phenomenon is called imprinting or early programmed behavior.

All the preoccupations are key and they are incorporated by default into the student minds, through social rituals, family beliefs, social class (race, gender, sexual orientation, etc.), school system, peer pressure, advertising, and propaganda, etc. All these elements will eventually affect the reception and perception process of the student, depending on how far or how closely the content of the lesson relates with their conscious mind, but mainly to their unconscious *set of beliefs* in relation to the world. The reason for this phenomenon is that (at least ideally) humanities and social sciences—in their critical approach—do not want to be a mere memorization and regurgitation of data, but rather to affect core structural values, worldviews, and, ultimately, the most basic personal identity based in a cultural perception of the world.

When we teach hard science, we assume that the main characteristic of the subject matter is objectivity. If we drop a coin it will fall, if we take all the blood out of a body it will die, if we walk below 32 F or 0 C we eventually freeze and so on, and when we repeat the same process again, the result will be the same. Humanities and social sciences are not like that; first because there is a problem of subjectivity, second because there is a problem of context and, as a result, there is a problem of measurement, since cultural values are always in operation within human behavior. Third, because (in general terms) a social or historical experiment is difficult or impossible to reproduce (at least without reductionism.) However, these facts do not mean, that human enquiry is necessarily arbitrary. It is not so because there are other means with which to evaluate their results: by comparison, by analogy, or by understanding social and historical trends and their inner and outer relationships to the social structures to which they belong or with which they are in conflict.

In the late nineteen-sixties, Paulo Freire, a Brazilian writer and educator developed a new concept for literacy training and basic education for the illiterate or semiliterate marginal workers and peasants of Brazil called *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Continuum, NY, 1984.) The central goal of Freire’s pedagogy is human liberation: In material terms, to achieve dignified survival, and in terms of consciousness, to understand reality and the world by themselves (teaching them to fish not giving them the fish).

One of the key concepts of his approach to education was the idea that knowledge was already in the minds of the people due to the socialization process and people's natural intelligence, even that of illiterate people. The role of the educator was to bring that knowledge forward, to activate it: "Liberating education consists in acts of cognition, not transfers of information" (67). According to Freire, this method correlates with Socrates's Maieutic: "Liberation is thus a childbirth, and a painful one" (33), using a dialogical procedure of inquiry and education that, in fact, literally equates to the act of delivering a baby.

The baby is already there, the educator/midwife facilitates the process without directly creating anything new: In one of our culture circles in Chile the group was discussing [...] the anthropological concept of culture. In the midst of the discussion, a peasant who by banking standards was completely ignorant said: "Now I see that without man there is no world." When the educator responded: "Let's say, for the sake of argument, that all the men on earth were to die, but the earth itself remained, together with trees, birds, animals, rivers, seas, the stars... wouldn't all this be a world?" "Oh no," the peasant replied emphatically. "There would be no one to say: 'This is a world'" (69).

Freire establishes the idea that pupils should be taught based on respect, dialogue, and creativity, elements that are the opposites of "Banking" or the mainstream approach to education. "Banking", as its name suggests, is the storage of conventional knowledge that preserves and perpetuates the oppressive Status Quo in any imaginable way that is convenient to the hierarchical nation state: Implicit in the banking concept is the assumption of a dichotomy between human beings and the world: a person is merely in the world, not with the world or with others; the individual is a spectator, not re-creator. In this view the person is not a conscious being; he or she is rather the possessor of a consciousness: an empty 'mind' passively open to the reception of deposits of reality from the world outside (62).

The *Problem-Posing* pedagogy, as its name suggests, brings concrete and real situations into the educational environment. The students have the opportunity to observe and analyze the circumstances from more informed and complex perspectives and their contribution is not merely formal, but ingrained in the process of learning and making sense of the world.

II. The Structure of Imaginary Influence

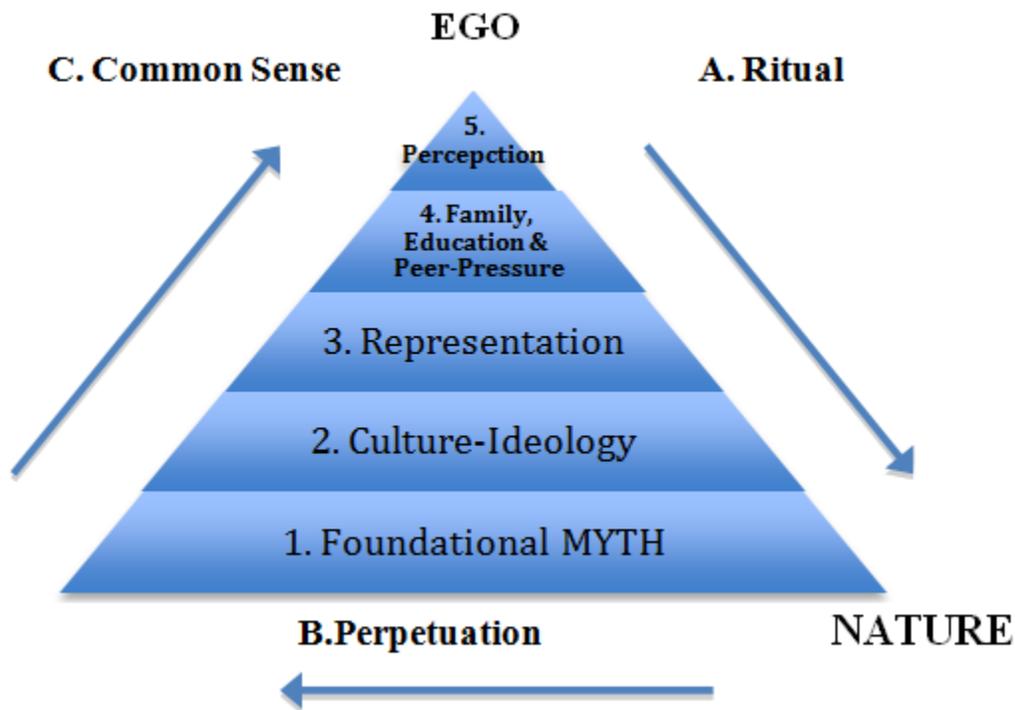
"Our memories blend events and feelings." J.L.

The main issues informing my pedagogy in Ohio, United States differ in a number of ways to Freire's assessment, notwithstanding in others are very much alike. A core difference is that in Southeastern Ohio I am not educating illiterate or semiliterate people of the *Third World*, but university, middle class (mainly white) students. The basic similarity is that both contexts of teaching are under the umbrella of the nation state's interests and its serious request for unreciprocated recognition (an anachronism given that by definition the secular state lacks any aura of sacredness: Nation State is not sacred, it is a human construction). Even JFK, one of the most evoked and respected presidents of the United States said it: "My fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country."¹ Nation States request serious emotional commitment towards their *structural self* such as *love*, patriotism, obedience, submission, and sacrifice, more so than caring for its own citizens under the light of truth, creativity, justice, consciousness, and let alone critical thinking, because this kind of mind attempts to erode the contradictory imaginary values of the Nation State system. In fact, on different levels, Brazilian peasants and middle class white Ohio students are, although in different ways and intensities, both oppressed by the State (although in different levels) by being prescribed and forced to worship it accepting their decisions willingly (is my country) and take it as a supreme model of affection, trust and truth. The peasants of Brazil belong to the last link of the chain of oppression and the US students I teach, belong to the hegemonic order of oppressors, but because of their nation state ideology, they see themselves only as a member of a country, not as a member of an Empire, like the one Cecil Rhodes promoted to create by leaving his fortune to the University of Oxford for the creation of the influential Round Table in United Kingdom: "Just fancy those parts that are at present inhabited by the most despicable specimens of human beings what an alteration there would be if they were brought under Anglo-Saxon influence, look again at the extra employment a new country added to our dominions gives. I contend that every acre added to our territory means in the future birth to some more of the English race who otherwise would not be brought into existence. Added to this the absorption of the greater portion of the world under our rule simply means the end of all wars [...]."

¹John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address, January 20, 1961.

Why should we not form a secret society with but one object the furtherance of the British Empire and the bringing of the whole uncivilized world under British rule for the recovery of the United States for the making the Anglo-Saxon race but one Empire. What a dream, but yet it is probable, it is possible. I once heard it argued by a fellow in my own college, I am sorry to own it by an Englishman, that it was a good thing for us that we have lost the United States...” Confessions of Faith 1877; John E. Flint, Cecil Rhodes, pp. 248-52.

Accordingly, what my Ohio University students have to face over 15 weeks in some of my courses, for instance in SPAN 3349 Latin American Culture and Civilization, is a reevaluation and rethinking of what they have learned in primary, middle, high school, and in the rest of their national socialization process. The result of this approach creates what is known as *Cognitive Dissonance*. According to Merriam-Webster’s definition it means: “Psychological conflict resulting from incongruous beliefs and attitudes held simultaneously.” In fact, part of the challenge with my Ohio students is to reeducate them (in a way, to *acculturate* them), in order to create an atmosphere where they can feel unthreatened and realize that what they learned was in many cases inaccurate and, in others, just plain untrue. Consequently: How can I deal with such a challenge, where conscious and unconscious elements are at stake? When I have an accent in English, darker skin, and I look Middle Eastern? My answer is twofold: First, through my program’s content and sequence and second, by exercising real life, real time *honest* empathy with my students. That is to say, analytical and emotional intelligence are both involved in the process. In a nutshell and in graphic form I present a representation of the structure of our cognitive process in our civilized and patriarchal paradigm:



At the base of the triangle the great foundational narrative or *Foundational Myths* supporting the whole paradigm or social structure, which can be any hegemonic religion or, in modern times, the Nation State.² With the Nation State, after the aura of sacredness was unveiled from the dominion of the Church, politics and sovereignty became secular, like in the old dream of Socrates. The meaning of this level is the creation of the most basic set of beliefs (ontological, axiological, epistemological, ethnic, social, etc.) The following level, Culture/Ideology, will start the process of cultural naturalization.

Following the foundational level of Myth is the level of *Culture and Ideology*. I use the words culture and ideology on the same level, but with different meanings, to address the difference between non-patriarchal and patriarchal orders. Culture can be traced to the non-patriarchal pre-settlement experience before the Fertile Crescent settlement around 12,000 years ago at what we call today Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, Iraq, etc. I use the

²After Machiavelli *The Prince* (1532); Descartes, *Discourse on the Method* (1637); Hobbes, *Leviathan* (1651); The French Encyclopedists (Diderot, Montesquieu, Voltaire, etc.) (In the XVII Century), etc.

term ‘culture’ to represent a simple social order where people collaborate instead of compete against each other. I use the term ‘ideology’ when that culture creates social stratification and differentiation between production and consumption. According to our best knowledge this happened in Sumer around 7,500 and 6,000 years ago in a land surrounded by water: between the rivers Tigris and Euphrates and the Red Sea. At this level there is identification between Myth and “the way of our ancestors”.

The third level is **Representation**. Within the level of representation I take into consideration the ideas of Ferdinand de Saussure: Denotation/Connotation and Signifier/signified. Both pairs of ideas point out that discourse and perceived reality are two separate and distinctive concepts, one is the real thing, the other is the representation mediated by a great number of variables such as sensory organs, memory, knowledge, values, etc. We can talk here also in terms of *Deconstruction*. At this level the Russian Formalists, in particular Roman Jakobson helped this analysis with his six factors of verbal communication. Each one corresponds to a communication function. We have the **addresser** sending a message to the **addressee** through a mean (**code**). Jakobson names the Addresser as *in charge* of the **Emotive** function:

Context= *Referential Function*

Message = *The Poetic Function, message on its own sake.*

ADDRESSER _____ **ADDRESSEE**
 (The Emotive) (Conative Function)

Contact/Channel = (*Phatic Function: Hello?*)

Code= (*Metalinguistic, to describe language itself*)

What we can see here is that the process of communication cannot be taken at face value, but is very abstract and multifunctional, and hence relative and not absolute. There are plenty of elements and, therefore, room to affect the communication by affecting any of the functions describes by Roman Jakobson. So manipulation in discourse is a plain fact and it uses the well-known rhetorical methods. Representation according to Saussurean analysis (reality vs. codification of reality) implies a series of elements that we accept at face value, particularly in terms of context. For Stanley Tambiah, to create the possibility of communication the existence of a *common ground* between the addresser and the addressee is crucial: This common ground is created by the “understanding” of the Myth ingrained within the Culture/Ideology at stake (that informs both addresser and addressee) and it does not come out of the blue, ex-nihilo or by spontaneous emergence, but by experiencing it and living it in a particular society or “world.” Since context creates the raw material for communication and meaning, as Jack Derrida puts it, “There is nothing outside of context” (quoted in Smith 44). It therefore acts as the greatest referent and creator of meaning for the formation of our *Weltanschauung*. We accept *context* as the basis of normality and this reinforces our perception that our *mother culture* is better than any other possible culture. The reason is that this assumption has been deeply familiarized in us, since our most tender childhood by reward and punishment, creating the basis of cultural violence and mental illness (Julia Kristeva calls it the Symbolic), the source of most Cluster B DSM 5 personality disorders in my opinion. The fourth element that continues the process of meaning and normalization started by the original Myth are *Family, Education, and Peer Pressure*. As it is well documented and studied in historiographical research, family is the first (and most important) social influence in our lives, even Margaret Thatcher alleged it once: “There is no such thing as society, only individuals and their families” (quoted in Grant 91). So for the *conservatives*, neoliberals and builders of the *New World Order*, society seems, at least at the level of people’s discourse, irrelevant. Nevertheless, it also means that their attention should be focused at least at some level of their speech. All these elements of meaning (*Family, Education and Peer Pressure*) are connected with an operation of social reinforcement at the personal and most direct level of socialization: where *family* is number one, *schooling* (including TV, Digital games, etc.) is number two, and *peer pressure* (by socialized friends and antagonists) is number three. Here the problem of identity becomes a major issue. You want to be accepted, you want to be liked by them, and finally you want to be one of them. As Freire puts it in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* “The oppressed, having internalized the image of the oppressor and adopted his guidelines, are fearful of freedom” (31).

The fifth and last element of this triangle is **Perception**. Perception is one of the key concepts of contemporary psychology and, according to *Phenomenology*; its not the same as sensation. Perception is an elaborate mental process that incorporates memory and socialization.

Not only that, it also connects the ideas of the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real that Jack Lacan considers vital to explaining the process of socialization, repression, and the formation of ideology. The child goes through the non-verbal mother's arms (The Imaginary- Kristeva) to the verbal patriarchal masculine world of domination and oppression (The Symbolic- Kristeva) that will set the course of his/her socialized life. Many things happen here. The child is hooked up to the whole weight of the triangle to become a standardized citizen: a normalized subject. As Freire puts it: "...to alienate human beings from their own decision-making is to change them into objects" (73).

Finally, there are four more elements to consider before I finish describing this triangle: The lines that surround the figure are three: the vertical one going upwards is **C) Common Sense**, the line pointing downwards is **A) Ritual** and the horizontal one pointing to the left is **B) Perpetuation**. These three elements move clockwise: **C) Common Sense** naturalizes the paradigm; **A) Ritual** updates and refreshes the paradigm; and **Perpetuation**, in its horizontal fashion, reflects the paradigm's stability until the new periodical ritual is coming. The last and wholly surrounding element is **NATURE**. Nature is outside and inside of us, not as culture but as physical reality. When Culture interprets and defines reality, imposes hegemony, defines and maintains the Status Quo I called it Ideology. What is described above with the help of the triangle creates the basis for my analytical and rationalistic approach: logical, objective, sequential, deterministic, secular, etc. It determines the core of my face-value critique of history and culture; but is not enough to engage the students' hearts and minds to embrace the meaning of my teaching just with these considerations.

III. Emotional or Social Intelligence

"All learning has an emotional base." Plato

Since our analytical rationality is limited to rational thinking (left hemisphere of the brain) and since our expanded knowledge of intelligence points out the way that we feel and deal with emotions, the battle to endure is against the limitations and biases created by the idea of totalitarian IQ. Very briefly, it is important to point out here that IQ was Francis Galton-Darwin's conception, who made the first attempt to create a standardized test for rating a person's intelligence. Please remember that Francis Galton was the nephew of Charles Darwin and the creator of the concept of Eugenics, opening the Galton Institute in 1907 in London.³ Galton also coined the term *nature vs. nurture* and he believed that inheritance was mainly responsible for human intelligence and also behavior (and I will add, human value). Henceforth, here we are today also affected by another Myth created by positivism and the pseudo-science of Eugenics, a generative Anglo Saxon aristocratic enterprise. This delusional and criminal ideathat helped to create the Shoah aka Holocaust in Eastern Europe (and was tested in the NAZI concentration camps) proposed that some people by natural design (and evolution) were superior to others. The goal of Eugenics is to take "evolution into human Anglohands" to create super-humans or in today's terminology, *transhumanism*. Social Darwinism and Eugenics based their claims on biological fate and determinism, and the oppositedoctrine, Marxism, basedits worldview on social/individual historical consciousness, for human and social liberation as a dynamic and dialectic, never-ending transformation. Moreover we should remember that analytical intelligence has been defined as rational and masculine and emotions (as opposite to rationality) have been considered feminine and tagged as inferior by the dominant modern and civilized patriarchal society⁴. Consequently, since the beginning of the twentieth-century mainstream *First World* view of society, human life and reproduction were stained by Positivism, Social Darwinism, Eugenics and, later, Nazism. These preconceptions were an excellent arena for Scholastic and Banking education, that is to say, for considering the students to be passive receptacles of information, not for transformation.

³Galton Darwin began with the idea of positive Eugenics in England and ended up with negative Eugenics in the USA with the Buck v. Bell case when the state of Virginia started sterilizing individuals under the Virginia Sterilization Act of 1924 and in Germany with human experimentation from Euthanasia to gas chambers. In any case, the experiments with twins (The History of Twins, 1875) were started by Francis Galton to prove that even in different environments twins behaved similarly, concluding that inheritance was the key variable for intelligence and behavior, not environment, experience, growth, and so forth. Josef Mengele continued these kinds of investigations in NAZI concentration camps such as Auschwitz.

⁴This is antiscientific since our mammal brains evolved thanks to the neocortex, the frontal lobe, the amygdala, and the lymphatic system. All these parts of the mammal brain (in contrast with our basic reptilian brain) are evolved because this brain has emotion, which is a new sensitivity to relate to life. Emotions are related with free will!

They only need to memorize and regurgitate the information to achieve success since the world was already perfectly defined, understood, and colonized (had been made the best of any possible world) and *in the hands of the fittest, rightful winners*. John O'Sullivan kindly extended this thinking as Manifest Destiny in 1845 where slaves and "Indians" were magically cut off from the deal of citizenship. Most of us will agree that this kind of education does not promote creativity, freedom, and the confrontation of truth for all, but the convenient elongation of the Status Quo for the comfortable, but indifferent, ruling elites. Henceforth, to achieve my teaching goals of deconstruction and reconstruction my education method needs to exercise empathy and creativity to reach the minds and hearts of the students if some gnoseological change is expected to be achieved within them.

In his book *Emotional Intelligence* (1995), Daniel Coleman popularized the idea of John Mayer and Peter Salovey from their 1990 paper "Emotional Intelligence." In the journal *Intelligence* they wrote with David R. Caruso in the year 2000 what they considered to be the final version of their former 1990 article, now entitled "Emotional Intelligence Meets Traditional Standards of Intelligence." This article begins with:

Emotions are internal events that coordinate many psychological subsystems including psychological responses, cognitions and conscious awareness. Emotions typically arise in response to a person's changing relationships. When person's relationship to a memory, to his family, or to all humanity changes, that person's emotions will change as well. For example, a person who recalls a happy childhood memory might find that the world appears brighter and more joyous [...] Emotional intelligence refers to an ability to recognize the meanings of emotions and their relationships and to reason and problem-solve on the basis of them (267-298).

In other words, behind analytical or "rational intelligence" there is an emotional condition created by our closest reality (emotional surroundings) that will affect or even determine the way we take it and understand non-emotional content such as solving chemistry problems, keeping a marriage happy, or choosing a professional career (*ceteris paribus*). In other words, emotional intelligence acts more like a context or background for the *ego-self* relationship, hence for the operation of traditional IQ. Although in many cases vital, I will wait until the next paper to explain the effect of trauma on the creation of emotions and the perception of reality, which shape attitudes toward enjoying or rejecting particular subjects or knowledge. For now I need to deal with what we consider *normal* students.

IV. Perspective to Overcome Cognitive Dissonance.

"Injustice anywhere is a threat of Justice everywhere."

Martin Luther King

A. Pervasive Early Memories in Action.

Cognitive Dissonance arises when students have to incorporate contradictory data into that information they have already *learned* and stored in their memory (and it the basis for imagination). People in general and in particular students get confused and sometimes angry, when they are challenged in their beliefssystem, and one of the first defense mechanisms they use to face the situation is *denial*. Other students try to *compartmentalize* the new information in relation to the old one, which unconsciously has become their source of overarching meaning (context or background). But in the long run this is not feasible to sustain because the examples keep coming as the course advances. Some students try to *repress* (not revise) their former knowledge in order to function normally in the class without much success either. Some students even try to *act out* in funny ways, for instance wearing particular clothes with patriotic or unsettling logos on them, making them look out of place in class. Some students feel guilty, angry, anxious, cynical, etc. But I do not give up; I keep myself open, consistent and committed. Since all these symptoms will vanish around week sixth of the course. Every second week or so I make them aware that I know what they are feeling and I explain that is OK and to be expected, that I am just the messenger and since I have taught this course several times before, I can foretell what is going to happen in the future. Since the beginning of the course and before the first exam for example, I keep telling them they will start feeling much better with this new knowledge once is internalized, and since it actually happens, I get more credit and trust from them, making my teaching and presence more interesting and reliable and themselves less troubled and more relaxed. Since I am aware of the source of these behaviors and the cognitive and emotional stress my students are going through, to make them and my class successful I utilize, as I mention above, two different ways to tackle the problem: a. I appeal to their logic and b. I appeal to their emotions. 1. Appealing to their logic implies the use of a carefully chosen course content and a precise order for that content. 2. To appeal to their emotional intelligence I use a great deal of flexibility (when I notice they are overwhelmed or when someone directly asks me for some kind extension or change in the due dates, I never refuse it without first seriously considering it).

I keep my ears and eyes open and I am always ready to understand and be collaborative with them. Every single student is the most important student in my class. I also bring many stories and personal experiences to the class, I make them collaborate instead of compete among themselves and I celebrate their mistakes as necessary and valuable, instead of punishing them. Mistakes, I keep reiterating, are the basis for personal and social growth when we are able to learn from them. If you remember *Full Metal Jacket*(1987), from Stanley Kubrick, you remember the abusive treatment and the goal oriented, flag oriented, depersonalized training of the young Marines. Well, my classes try to be exactly the opposite. All students have a place no matter what are their political or sexual orientation, ethnic background, *race*, and gender or supposed IQ. I do not promote blind heroes, but awaken human beings.

My classes are for all and each of my students to honor history, humanity, and particularly life on this small Earth of ours. I always make them remember that *history should be our friend, is our social memory, and we better get it right or we are just pretending to be real and we will never be able to learn from our mistakes otherwise*. This means we will eventually pay the toll for our glamorous prejudices (like the Church paid it after Galileo's discovery). In order to do that, my syllabus speaks for itself in terms of contents and in terms of its logical sequence. (See Annex number 1.)

The content and order of my syllabus attempts to diminish the effect of cognitive dissonance by the steady incorporation of meta-discourses. These meta-discourses have two sources: the articles within the order of the syllabus content and the recurrent meta-observations that I made by connecting and comparing the topics at stake. The second part of this method is similar to the *Distancing Effect* created by Bertolt Brecht⁵ in his *Epic Theater* in Germany before World War II, which is to say I stop the flow of the story to see behind the overwhelming persuasive narrative and its psychological effects. In my SPAN 3349 syllabus I incorporate several kinds of texts: Primary texts such as *Luis Santangel letter*, *The Bull of Pope Alexander VI*, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* by Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, etc. Theory texts such as Michael De Certeau's *The Writing of History*, Hayden White's *The Historical Text as a Literary Artifact*, Antonio Cornejo Polar's *Writing in the Air*, Stanley Tambiah's *Translation* etc. Secondary texts include Howard Zinn's *Peoples History of the United States*, as well as María Cristina Camacho's *Feast of Our Mrs. of Guadalupe*. I also incorporate documentaries such as Dee Dee Halleck's *Gringo en Mañana Land* or interviews such as *The Corporatocracy* featuring John Perkins (*Confessions of an Economic Hit Man*) and fragments of feature movies such as *The Mission* (Roland Joffé, 1986). I also incorporate works of art such as poetry from Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz and Ernesto Cardenal, also essays from Simón Bolívar and José Martí, etc. Besides written texts and movies my students learn as well from paintings, music, sculpture, architecture, YouTube, etc.

If you observe my sample syllabus in Annex 1 you will see a chronological sequence where you can perceive what I am referring to. It is important to remember that the syllabus's structure is dynamic and not written in stone. It will be a function of the topic and the level of cognitive dissonance that you are expecting to provoke with it.

B. Grading Structure.

Another meaningful tool of teaching is the structure of my student grading:

1. Class Participation		15%
2. Reaction Papers	(5)	20%
3. Presentations		10%
4. Written Exam (2)	30%	15% x 2
5. Final Exam (Comprehensive)		25%
Total		100%

By trial and error during the teaching of several courses, I realized that this structure creates clear expectations and realistic responsibilities with the assignments and therefore helps to promote a good collaboration from students and a good class environment:

⁵This effect of making the familiar strange serves a didactic function insofar as it teaches the viewer not to take the style and content for granted, since the medium itself is highly constructed and contingent upon many cultural and economic conditions.

1. Class participation is 15% and is self-evaluated with the understanding that I am not only evaluating participation but also student's integrity. I advise them that I will take seriously in consideration their assessment but the final grade will be still my assessment (See Annex 2).
2. I make them to do four or five Reaction Papers, each one with a 4% to 5% overall value starting in week three, and they continue every second week, in order to use that feedback as a mean of processing the information and to get a gnoseological map of their achievements and personal perspective growth. These papers are creative and I encourage them to be candid and informed when they write them.
3. Presentations are meant to be in groups of three or four, depending on the number of students under my supervision. The main academic purpose of these presentations isto cover alternative materials that will be even more emotionally charged, since in generalthey are part of the US historiography.

Accordingly, their presentations are conceived and given in addition to the content generated in class by lecturing, group assignments, and questionnaires. These presentations are created to connect US history within the history of the rest of the continent with the purpose of contrasting and familiarizing the students with situations in context and setting responsibilities for development and standard of living. For example, to observe another side of the US slavery system and the value of words, they present Fredrick Douglas' speech: "What to the Slave is the 4th of July" (1841); to see an American that influenced the world and help to expel the British from India and achieved equal status for the "African American" population in the US in the sixties, they present H. David Thoreau's "On Civil Disobedience" (1849). *War is a Racket* (1935) by Smedley D. Butler is also very illuminating because they learn that in the USA a NAZI *Coup d'État* was about to take place in 1935 (sponsored by big corporations such as Du Pont). All these texts give them a fresh and realistic perspective of the part of history that we try to understand. Presentations are also peer evaluated (See Annex 3.) But as in *Class Participation* I have the last word (which is normally very close to their own self evaluation) when I gave them their final grades.

4. There are two take home Written Exams. I encourage them to work in groups and to state on each individual exam the names of the other students that worked with them. This measure is connected with the next instruction, which is to work together but answer individually, in their own words and examples. They have a whole weekend to complete this assignment since normally I teach Tuesdays and Thursdays for two hours. I make them complex questions with most of them connecting different articles, readings, and ideas. The average grade for these take home exams is between B+ and A-.
5. Lastly, the Final Exam is the only exam they undertake without having any documents or papers to support their answers, the only text they are authorized to bring is a bilingual dictionary. This exam has a similar structure as the Take Home exams but takes into consideration the time constraint of two hours to complete it. The only help I give them with this exam is a document around two to three weeks before the end of the semester that helps them summarize each and every article we study during the course. To take advantage of this document is not compulsory but everybody who does it gets 5% of the final exam grade. For example if a student gets 80 points, she/ he will have 85 points (after completing it) as a final grade.

Consequently, and in a nutshell, my pedagogical analytic method teaches history and culture in context by looking simultaneously at Latin America, Europe, the US and also the pre-Columbian history in the Americas. However, this is not a good enough education to awake our students, since this strategy only tackles the analytical part of their brains. In order to be successful in the teaching of a kind of content that will create *Cognitive Dissonance*, it is paramount to be empathetic and care sincerely for the students and the world we are in (they do feel it and respond accordingly). Both elements are crucial, so the kind of education I am proposing is not a bureaucratic or formal education, but an education where the teacher and the students become deeply involved in the process of discovering new histories and ways of seeing the world in order to understand better the world we live in and change it for the sake of our natural connection with it, keeping our physical and mental health intact.

The method works because it is a truthful inquiry to find the past and to understand the dynamics, interests, and cover ups created by certain power groups to keep historiography as history and history as a fateful place where naturally (according Aristotle) some people were born to rule and others to serve the rulers.

V. Conclusions.

In order to teach history and ethnic studies (particularly *Third World* history) to a population naturalized into a selected and prescribed hegemonic First Worldview historical construction I take in consideration several elements:

Nationalism, it is necessary to de-familiarize the students with their previous information in order to allow them to approach the problems from this perspective as a *simulated experience*. In order to do that it is essential to consider two different territories of knowledge: the analytical (data) and the emotional (relationship teacher/student and student / students). The critical thinking teacher needs to work carefully with both of them and he/she will be able to creatively use the proper conceptual material and the right way to deliver the information in it.

If we utilize our former paradigm ranking Myth, Culture and Ideology, Representation, Family - Education - Peer Pressure, and Perception in a vertical fashion, we notice that they are feeding each other in the creation of meaning. This meaning is the center of our biggest social referent in modernity: Nation-State and, in some cases (almost an aporia), part of it is shared with Religion. In order to neutralize them I start with an old poem I wrote in the eighties:

Pluck people from their reassurances/ detach them from fashion /rip-out religion from their eyelids/drive them away from their customs/their social “victories” and personal “defeats” /take them out of their fitting lies/from their benchmarks /and leave them adrift as it is/ into the abyss. (Lascar. *Traspuerta*, 1984).

In this way, the first question (is everything done with great respect and authenticity?) is about Myth (Religion, Nation State, etc.) Let's imagine we are here without answers (Myths) and we need to understand the world for ourselves. We do not have a culture, or any ideology to indicate to us what we are supposed to know about the world. We do not have a socialization environment such as family, education system, or peer pressure. Our perception is candid, empty of meaning (but we are amazed to be here anyway) and the words to understand the world are out of context or without context. Therefore, unpretentiously we need to start our journey with the artifacts we have in hand (natural and cultural), but it is paramount to put them in some kind of order (narrative) to make sense of the factual information we have gathered on top of our historiographical working table. The results are less prejudice in the understanding of our world, a wider and more accurate view of the world, and most importantly, it is a booster for them: the human world is more logical than they ever imagined or ever believed to be (no ancient philosophy disregards cause and effect). Finally, the ultimate personal reward for the educator as much as a professional than as a human being, takes the form of great appreciation and sincere evaluations from most of the students. All these results are rendered for the students in a healthier way of looking at the world as a whole, not fragmented, with less apprehension and more human understanding of it and our role in it.

Annex 1: SPAN 3349 (Simplified Version)

FALL 20XX-20XX

Ohio University

Department of Modern Languages

Latin American Civilization and Culture.

Professor: Amado J. Lascar	Room: Gordy Hall 203
Office Phone: XXXX	Class Number XXXX
E-mail: (lascar@Ohio.edu)	Credit Hours: 3
Office: Gordy 229	Office Hours: TH: 11-12
Time: T, TH 3:05 - 4:25 PM	Prerequisite: SPAN 3120, SPAN 3215

Course Description: SPAN 3349 analyzes Latin American culture through the cultural texts (visual arts, film, music, and literature) that arise from pivotal moments in Latin American history from the Indigenous period to the present. Through a thematic and holistic approach anchored in examining the construction of institutions' cultural mythologies, this course will provide the tools for the deconstruction of the chronology of “progress” present in the traditional conceptualization of Latin American culture as pre-Columbian, Conquest, Colonial, Independence (*National Republics* period), and civil revolution to the present.

Course Goals: The course aims to 1) Provide a solid background in Latin American cultural currents and cultural theory; 2) Deconstruct institutionalized concepts of Latin American history and culture by questioning the instruments of cultural consolidation over time; and 3) Create a scholarly community atmosphere for the practice and development of critical thinking.

Bibliography

-Texts: *Course pack*. FILE provided in class.

Additional Bibliography

A Large Spanish-Spanish dictionary (VOX, LAROUSSE, ETC.)
 Spanish Grammar by Christopher Kendris (Barron's)
 A good Spanish Thesaurus.

Evaluation

Class Participation	15%		
Reaction Papers(5)	20%		
Presentations	10%		
Written Exam (2)		30%	15% x 2
Final Exam (Comprehensive)	25%		
Total	100%		

Methodology

The course will follow a simple and well-structured methodology in order to avoid misunderstandings and improve performance. This methodology will divide the workload into four areas:

1. Homework reading and writing. (Personal level)
2. Discussing the readings in groups, making questions, negotiation of meaning (group level).
3. Informal expositions, formal presentations (class level).
4. Personal and group activities and research for oral presentations.

I. HISTORY, PERCEPTION & REPRESENTATION

Introduction: Perception of Latin America, Order, Myth, Worldview.

1. 2. Michael De Certeau: *The Writing of History* (Preface)
2. 4. Cristóbal Colón: *Columbus Journal* (Fragments)
3. 40. *The Bull of Pope Alexander VI* (Partitioning America)
4. 41. *The Requirement*

II. NARRATIVE OF THE CONQUEST, TRANSLATION AND BEGINNINGS OF THE COLONY XVI and XVI.

5. 3. Hayden White: *The Historical Text as a Literary Artifact*
6. 1. Miguel de Cuneo: *Letter 1495*
7. 5. Bernal Díaz del Castillo: *The true story of the conquest of New Spain.*
8. 6. Bartolomé de las Casas: *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies.*
9. Dee Halleck: *Gringo inMañana Land* (Documentary in class)
10. 7. Howard Zinn: *Peoples History of the United States* (Chapter I)
11. 39 Jack Forbes: *Columbus and Other Cannibals*
12. 10. Antonio Cornejo Polar: *Writing in the Air*

III. BAROQUE AND NEOCLASSICISM

13. 12. Stanley Tambiah: *Translation*
14. 11. Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz: *Carols, Philosophical Satire, SorFilotea Response*
15. 13. Maria Cristina Camacho: *Feast of Our Mrs. of Guadalupe*

IV. INDEPENDENCE AND CREATION OF NATIONAL STATES

16. 42. Treaty of Madrid
17. 43. Treaty of San Idelfonso

The Mission (Fragment)

18. National Independences (Class)
19. 15. Simón Bolívar: *The letter from Jamaica.*

V. XX CENTURY

20. 18. *Monroe Doctrine, Manifest Destiny, Platt Amendment & Roosevelt Corollary,*
Presentation # 1: F. Douglas: "What to the Slave is the 4th of July"

21. 19. José Martí: *My race, Our America.*

22. 35. Rubén Darío: *A Roosevelt*

Presentation # 2: H. David Thoreau: "On Civil Disobedience"

23. Mexican Revolution: PorfirioDíaz, Madero, Zapata, Villa

24. 26. Tomas Rivera. *...and the Earth did not eat him...*

VI.COLD WAR, NEOLIBERALISM AND POSTMODERNITY

25. 25. Ernesto Cardenal: *Prayer for Marilyn Monroe*

26. The Coup *d'état* in Chile 11/09/1973

Panama Deception (91 minutes)

Presentation # 3: "War is a Racket" Smeedley D. Buttler

The Corpororotocracy (68 minutes)

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aqIHKWd9rSc>)

27. 24. Ana Lydia Vega: *Pollito Chicken.*

28. 21. Subcomandante Marcos

Presentation # 4: "José Mujica: President of Uruguay

Annex 2: Self Evaluation and Participation:

NAME: _____

	Grade #s	Letter	Meaning
Attendance			
A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C. C-			A = 93-100
(Been on Time, going to class)			A- = 90-92
Active Group Participation			B+ = 87-89
(Give ideas, good discussions.)			B = 83-86
A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C. C-			B- = 80-82
Active Class participation			C+ = 77-79
(Asking questions, giving ideas, etc.)			C = 73-76
A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C. C-			C- = 70-72
Final Mean			

Annex 3: Group Presentation Evaluation:

Group

Topic: _____

Name: _____

	Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4	Group Grade	Total/5
1. Clear	10-100	10-100	10-100	10-100	10-100	10-100
2. Coordinated	10-100	10-100	10-100	10-100	10-100	10-100
3. Critical	10-100	10-100	10-100	10-100	10-100	10-100
4. Documented	10-100	10-100	10-100	10-100	10-100	10-100
5. Exemplified	10-100	10-100	10-100	10-100	10-100	10-100
6. Entertained	10-100	10-100	10-100	10-100	10-100	10-100
7. Illustrated	10-100	10-100	10-100	10-100	10-100	10-100
8. Informative	10-100	10-100	10-100	10-100	10-100	10-100
9. Motivator	10-100	10-100	10-100	10-100	10-100	10-100
10. Relaxed	10-100	10-100	10-100	10-100	10-100	10-100
Total Student /10	10-100	10-100	10-100	10-100	10-100	10-100
TOTAL group	XXXXXX X	XXXXXX X	XXXXX XX	XXXXXX X	XXXXXXXX	10-100

Final Grade: _____

Annex 4: Final Exam.

**SPAN 3349 COMPREHENSIVE EXAM
DECEMBER 201X WEEK 15
TOTAL 26% FINAL GRADE**

GRADE: _____

NAME: _____

I. Fifteen minutes. 60 Points

In the movie “Bananas” de Woody Allen [20 points each one. Total 60 points]

1. How would you describe the journalist speech in this assassination?

2. Which ones and how are the most important institutions criticized by Woody Allen in Bananas?

3. What is the *plotment* used by Allen in regard to the Latin American referent within the mind of the American public?

II. Topics 200 POINTS (80 minutes)

Answer each letter for each question (A.,B.,C.)

Each question 40 Points worth

Answer 5 out of 7 questions

1. Make a relationship or connection between A. Unequal Exchange (*Intercambio Desigual*) (Colón-Cortés), B. The institution of African or indigenous slavery in the Americas, and C. the Panama Canal, represented in *Panama Deception*.

2. How it is related Cornejo Polar’s idea: "**Writing came to America as a power tool not as a communication device**" concerning the representation of the media (TV, newspapers, etc.) in the invasion of Panama in 1989 or/and the coup in Chile on September 11, 1973

3. A. What do you think that José Mariátegui (the Peruvian Marxist) would had said to Jacobo Arbenz in relation of giving the land to farmers in small individual plots rather than hand it over in large areas. B. What is the

difference between one and the other political and economic view of the land property and land production? C. The justification of Arbenz's overthrow by the media was that Arbenz was a Communist. Explain.

4. In Tomas Rivera's short story... *And it was not swallowed by the Earth* ... the young protagonist is in a dilemma: on the one hand he has the influence of the Catholic tradition of his family willingly accepting their life of poverty as natural, and on the other hand he has his own experiencing his family disappearing by sickness obviously created by poor working conditions.

The boy dares to challenge God (and also core values of his family): he kicks the ground in sign of insubordination with God and finally, in spite of this unspeakable action, his father and his brother improved. **Question:** How much José Martí's metaphor: "Trenches of ideas are more powerful than trenches of stones..." is valid in this story?

5. Make a logical connection between the problems or situations expressed in *Prayer for Marilyn Monroe* by Ernesto Cardenal and the protagonist in *Pollito Chicken*, Suzie Bermudez, in Ana Lydia Vega's story.

6. Briefly discuss the role of the Virgin of Guadalupe regard: A. *Her genealogy* (1531), B. *In the Baroque period* (1600-1700), C. *Independence* (1810-1830), D. *In the Mexican Revolution* (1910- 1920).

7. Make a connection about **three common elements** between Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz's writings and Norma Alarcón's *Traductora Traditora*.

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