Hierarchy impresses upon people the need to know one's place, with the understanding that people who know their place are guaranteed a place. That place depends on features--gender, age, ethnicity, etc.--that distinguish any one individual from others. American conservatives insist that these differences still matter. But they cannot defend their position by invoking hierarchy, ruled out of bounds by virtue of the preeminence of egalitarian ideas. So conservatives, along with artists, sellers in the marketplace, and tour guides, among others, try to support their claims by invoking authenticity instead: the traditional, the intrinsically valuable, the real. We will read authors who first developed notions of authenticity, such as the late eighteenth-century German pastor, J. G. Herder, and then look at how the Romantic tradition sustained that rhetoric in ensuing centuries. We will also read about the American political and religious right, about American anomic and the therapeutic self, and about the discourse of authenticity in pop music and the blues. Finally, we will read studies of commercial sex and plastic surgery where any notion of authenticity goes by the boards, leading us finally to the endlessly self-inventing and self-authenticating Oprah.

Requirements:

Each student is expected to complete the assigned reading every week and to write a brief, one-paragraph or half-page comment or question on the reading. Those comments are to be submitted on Canvas by Tuesday evening. Class on Wednesday will be structured around a discussion of those submissions.

Students must submit two additional written assignments. The first, due mid-way through the semester, is a consideration of at least four of the readings we have discussed, with reference to each other. This can be a review of the most pertinent or interesting issues that arise, or that touch on projects you are working on. The second is either of the following: 1) a paper of ten to twenty pages on a topic of your choosing, but with evidence in the paper that the readings and discussion for this course have had some impact on your thinking; or 2) an annotated syllabus for a course in your field that draws on ideas we have discussed. Were you to teach a course on hierarchy at the upper-division undergraduate level, what topics would you address and what readings would you assign? You are expected to develop a syllabus that goes beyond the readings in this course, emphasizing whatever perspectives and areas most directly concern your own interests or work. The syllabus must be extensively annotated. For every reading assigned, you need to provide a brief synopsis of its contents and then an explanation of what purpose it serves in the course and why it comes at that point.

During the last sessions of the seminar, students will present their term projects as works in progress, to solicit reactions and suggestions from members of the seminar.

Regular attendance is required. All absences must be explained, and following any absence, a two-page discussion of the reading must be submitted at the next meeting of the seminar.

The readings will also be available on reserve at the PCL Reserve Room.
Schedule

Week 2


Week 3


Week 4


Week 5


Week 6


Week 7


Week 8


The midterm assignment is due by 5 p.m. on Wednesday, March 11. Please submit your assignment on Canvas.
Week 9

Week 10


Week 11


Week 12

Essays TBA by Tom Boellstorff, Jane Ferguson, and Peter Jackson on "authenticity" in Southeast Asia. Essays TBA by Rupert Stasch and Michel Picard on tourism

Week 13


Week 14


Week 15


Final assignments are due on Friday, May 15, at 5 o'clock.