

**University of Calgary**  
**Department of Communication, Media and Film**

**COMMUNICATION STUDIES (COMS 473, L01)**  
**POPULAR CULTURE**

**Winter 2015**

**January 14 – April 15 (excluding February 18)**  
**Wednesdays 18:30 – 21:15**

**Instructor:** Angie Chiang  
**Office** Social Science Building  
**Location:** Room 240  
**E-Mail:** [achiang@ucalgary.ca](mailto:achiang@ucalgary.ca)  
**Office Hours:** Wednesdays 5:00pm – 6:00pm  
or by appointment

### **Course Description**

This course will examine a variety of popular culture texts discussing theoretical perspectives as presented in the lectures and corresponding readings. These will include feminism, critical race theory, postmodernism, social constructivism and technological determinism.

Exploring texts in television, film, gaming, literature, comics, marketing & advertising, user generated internet content and social media, students will be introduced to critical tools of deconstruction and evaluation and understand the social and cultural significance of popular culture.

*\*Prerequisite COMS 371*

### **Course Objectives**

Through lectures, readings, class discussions, and course assignments, students will:

- Explore a range of theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of popular culture
- Develop critical and analytical skills through the examination of a myriad of cultural texts
- Examine how popular cultural texts function ideologically to construct identities and differences, as well as how such ideologies are either adopted, resisted or reconceived

## **Internet and electronic communication device information**

Students are welcome to use laptops and other electronic note-taking devices in this course. Please be considerate of others during lectures, screenings, and discussions and switch off all iPods, cellphones, etc. whenever you enter the classroom. Sending/receiving text messages or leaving the class to take calls is disruptive to the entire class and will not be tolerated unless absolutely necessary.

In some weeks, feature-length films or full television episodes will be screened and in the spirit of being as non-disruptive as possible, laptops and all other electronic devices (even with brightness dialed to its lowest setting) are expressly prohibited.

Failure to respect these rules may result in the revocation of your privileges to use devices in the classroom.

## **Textbooks and Readings:**

O'Brien, Susie & Szeman, Imre. *Popular Culture: A User's Guide*. Third Edition. Canada: Nelson, 2014. **(REQUIRED)** \*

*\*Earlier editions of this book may be purchased secondhand, but since the instructor will be teaching from the Third Edition, students are responsible for all of the information in the Third Edition. If you purchase an earlier edition, you must ensure that you obtain copies of any additional chapters that we may cover. You are also responsible for keeping abreast of any relevant pagination differences.*

Additional readings will be posted on D2L; please consult schedule of readings available January 15, 2015.

Students are expected to have all readings completed **prior** to scheduled class times (which includes quiz dates) in order to contribute effectively during class discussions and activities. A detailed schedule of readings will be distributed at the first lecture.

## **Assignments and Evaluation**

*All assignments must be completed or a grade of F may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor.*

Quizzes (3 x 10%) **30%**  
Reading Response **10%**  
Participation **10%**  
Group Presentation **15%**  
Essay Proposal **5%**  
Final Essay **30%**

\*Please note detailed assignment guidelines and marking rubrics will be presented at the first lecture.

**Quizzes (3 x 10%) – 30%**

Three (3) quizzes will be administered throughout the course (**February 11 and March 4 and April 8**). The format will be short answer questions. Students will be tested on their knowledge of the readings and/or content presented in lectures. Should a student be unable to take the test due to illness or extenuating circumstances, accommodation will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis provided that official documentation is provided.

**Reading Response 10%**

Students are required to produce a short response to one of the course readings (1200-1500 words). Responses should function as reflexive tools that present a supported opinion/argument. Do NOT summarize the reading. Students may choose which reading they reflect on but all responses must be submitted **IN CLASS** on or before **April 1, 2015**

**Participation 10%**

Students are expected to make relevant contributions to class discussion. Be mindful that the grade does not depend simply on the volume of contribution, but the quality of it.

At some point in the class students are asked to write a short in-class response which will be handed in. These responses will not be marked on content, but will help to stimulate discussion or allow for students who aren't as vocal to earn full participation marks based on the quality of their responses. No makeup opportunities for these assignments will be given, but students will be able to compensate through discussion.

Attendance is a key component to your participation grade, concessions may be given under extenuating circumstances but require advance notice.

**Group Presentation – 15%**

Working in groups, students will be expected to give a ten-minute presentation applying a particular theory to a recent (2013 or 2014) cultural artifact such as a film, television episode, song, current event etc. (If you choose to show a clip limit the length of the clip to 2-3 minutes). A five-ten minute class activity must accompany the presentation. Groups will be marked on their ability to present ideas clearly, think critically, and demonstrate their understanding of a theory/position. A schedule of presentation times will be determined in the first day of class.

**Essay Proposal 5%**

Students must submit a proposal (minimum three pages, double-spaced) regarding their final essay. Proposals will be returned the following week. Once approved, the proposal will serve as the basis for your final project/essay.

Due Date: **February 25**. Proposals can be handed in at any time prior to this date.

### ***Final Research Essay 30%***

The research paper for this course will provide students with the opportunity to combine out-of-class research with the topics explored in lectures and discussions. Choosing from the theories discussed in class, students will write a 2000-2500 words (8-10 pages) research paper using scholarly sources to support their argument. More information on the term paper will be provided in class. Term paper topics must be different than those presented in group presentations.

Due Date: **April 15**. Papers can be handed in at any time prior to this date.

### **Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No**

**Submission of Assignments:** Please hand in your essays directly to your tutor or instructor if possible. If it is not possible to do so, a daytime drop box is available in SS320; a date stamp is provided for your use. A night drop box is also available for after-hours submission. Assignments will be removed the following morning, stamped with the previous day's date, and placed in the instructor's mailbox.

Please include your name and ID number on all assignments, and be prepared to provide picture ID to pick up assignments or look at final exams in SS 320 after classes have ended. Personal information is collected in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act*. For more information, see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy>

**Note:** It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment. For courses in which assignments are submitted electronically, it is the student's responsibility to ensure that the correct copy of the assignment is submitted. (Including the version date or version number in your file name may help you avoid submitting the wrong version of your written assignments.)

### **Policy for Late Assignments**

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late.

### **Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act**

This course is conducted in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP). As one consequence, **students should identify themselves on all written work by placing their name on the front page and their ID number. Also you will be required to provide a piece of picture identification in order to pick up an assignment or look at a final exam from SS320 after classes have ended.**

For more information see also <http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy>.

## Writing Skills Statement

Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, although to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. For details see <http://comcul.ucalgary.ca/needtoknow>. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc) but also general clarity and organization. Research papers must be properly documented.

If you need help with your writing, you may use the Writing Centre. Visit the website for more details: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

## Grading System & Department of Communication, Media and Film Grade Scale

Work in this course will be graded using percentage grades. The following grade scale percentage equivalents are used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film:

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Department grade scale equivalents	Letter grade % equivalent for calculations
4.00	Outstanding	A+	96 - 100%	98.0%
4.00	Excellent—superior performance, showing comprehensive understanding of subject matter.	A	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
3.70		A -	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
3.30		B+	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
3.00	Good--clearly above average performance with knowledge of subject matter generally complete.	B	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
2.70		B-	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
2.30		C+	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
2.00	Satisfactory—basic understanding of the subject matter.	C	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
1.70		C-	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
1.30	Minimal pass—marginal performance; generally insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D+	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
1.00		D	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
0.00	Fail – unsatisfactory performance or failure to meet course requirements.	F	00 - 49.99%	0%

## Plagiarism

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university.

You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. In-text citations must be provided, and readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin. Wording taken directly from a source must be enclosed within quotation marks (or, for long quotations, presented in the format prescribed by the documentation style you are using). Paraphrased information must not follow the original wording and sentence structure with only slight word substitutions here and there. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

For information on citation and documentation styles (including APA, Chicago, IEEE, MLA, and others), visit the links provided at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/node/208> . If you have questions about how to document sources, please consult your instructor or the Writing Centre (3<sup>rd</sup> Floor TFDL, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>).

## Academic Misconduct

For information on academic misconduct and its consequences, please see the University of Calgary Calendar at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

## Research Ethics

Whenever you perform research with human participants (i.e. surveys, interviews, observation) as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve of your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, see <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/research/research-ethics>

## Important information, services, and contacts for students

For information about . . .	Visit or contact . . .
<b>ARTS PROGRAM ADVISING (PIC)</b>	SS 102 403-220-3580 <a href="mailto:picarts@ucalgary.ca">picarts@ucalgary.ca</a>
<b>CAMPUS SECURITY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Calgary Police Service</b></li><li>• <b>Emergency Text Messaging</b></li><li>• <b>Emergency Evacuation &amp; Assembly</b></li><li>• <b>Safewalk Program</b></li></ul>	<a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/">http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/</a> <b>403-220-5333</b> <b>403-266-1234</b> <b>Emergency: call 911</b> <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage">http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage</a> <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints">http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints</a>  If you feel uncomfortable walking alone at any time, call Campus Security for an escort ( <b>220-5333</b> ). For more information, see <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/">http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/</a>

<p><b>DESIRE2LEARN (D2L) Support</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IT help line</li> </ul>	<p><a href="http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/student">http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/student</a>  <a href="#">S</a>  403-220-5555 or <a href="mailto:itsupport@ucalgary.ca">itsupport@ucalgary.ca</a></p>
<p><b>STUDENT SUCCESS CENTRE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing Support Services</li> <li>• Student Services Mobile App</li> </ul>	<p><a href="http://ucalgary.ca/ssc">http://ucalgary.ca/ssc</a>  <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support">http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support</a>  <a href="http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents">http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents</a></p>
<p><b>STUDENTS' UNION CONTACTS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty of Arts Reps</li> <li>• Student Ombudsman</li> </ul>	<p><a href="http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/governance/elections/home.html">http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/governance/elections/home.html</a>  <a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds">http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds</a></p>
<p><b>SU WELLNESS CENTRE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Counselling Services</li> <li>• Health Services</li> <li>• Distress centre 24/7 CRISIS LINE</li> <li>• Online resources and tips</li> </ul>	<p><b>403-210-9355</b> (MSC 370), M-F, 9:00–4:30 pm  <a href="http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling">http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling</a>  <a href="http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health">http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health</a>  <b>403-266-HELP (4357)</b>  <a href="http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus">http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus</a>  If you're concerned about a friend or your own well-being, it is important to seek help early. Call or visit the SU Wellness Centre or the 24-hour crisis line.</p>

### Schedule of Lectures and Readings

To be handed out in lecture January 15.