

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

**Communication Studies (COMS) 473 L01
Popular Culture**

Winter 2016

January 11 – April 13 (excluding February 17)

Wednesday (W) 18:30 – 21:15

Instructor: Ray op'tLand
Office: SS 240
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Office Hours: Wednesdays 5 pm, or by appointment

Course Description

Popular culture has been described as the most fertile ground for examining the desires of humanity. This course will examine a variety of popular culture texts discussing theoretical perspectives as presented in the lectures and corresponding readings in order to question and examine those desires. Key themes and theories will include innovation, postmodernism, social constructivism, technological determinism, myth, cultural evolution, and critical theories of race and gender.

Throughout the course, students will examine the change in popular culture during the shift from analog to digital modes of creation, distribution and consumption, through the various texts that comprise popular culture, including music, sport, television, film, comics, literature, gaming, theatre, performance, fashion the Internet, social networks, and advertising. Students will be introduced to critical tools for the deconstruction and evaluation of the social and cultural significance of popular cultural texts.

Prerequisite: Communications Studies (COMS) 371.

Objectives of the Course

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

Textbooks and Readings

Readings will be posted to the D2L website, or available online through the University of Calgary Library website. Please consult the schedule of readings prior to January 11th for the full list of readings.

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.

Phone use, including sending/receiving text messages, taking calls in class or leaving the class to take calls is disruptive to the entire class and will not be tolerated unless absolutely necessary.

During 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.

Assignments and Evaluation

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

Quizzes (2x15%)	30%
Critical Review (2x10%)	20%
Participation (ongoing)	10%
Essay/Project Proposal	10%
Final Essay/Project	30%

Detailed assignment guides and marking rubrics will be presented during the course of the term.

Quizzes – (2x15%) = 30%

Two (2) quizzes will be administered during the course (February 3rd and March 16th).

Quizzes will test knowledge on content presented in lectures and course readings.

Readings can include those assigned up to and including the day of the quiz. Quizzes must be taken in class; 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.

Critical Review – (2x10%) = 20%

During the course of the term, students are expected to deliver two (2) critical reviews about a particular media text. Each of these can be on any one of the forms of media discussed in the class, including a television show, film, board or video game, song, album, video clip, concert, PPV event, etc. The review should provide details about both the content and context of the material, situating it in the larger popular cultural discourse. Each review will be from 750 -1000 words, equivalent to three (3) to four (4)

pages double-spaced. Additional information on the reviews will be provided in class. Reviews must be submitted in class February 10th and March 9th.

Participation - 10%

Students are expected to make relevant contributions to class discussion on an ongoing basis. This will include individual comments, round-table discussions, and group work activities. The grade is dependent on quality of the discussion, not simply quantity or volume.

Essay/Project Proposal – 10%

Students must submit a proposal (minimum three pages, double-spaced) regarding their final essay or project (see below) no later than February 24th (they can also be submitted at any time prior to this). Proposals will be returned the following week. Upon approval, the proposal will serve as the basis for your final project/essay.

Final Essay/Project – 30%

The final essay or project will provide the opportunity for the students to engage in depth with an aspect of popular culture that was discussed in class, or build on their knowledge of material from outside the class discussion. This can expand on material previously discussed in the critical reviews, or be based on something new. Students will write a research paper of 2500-3000 words (10-12 pages), using scholarly sources to support their argument. Additional information on the paper or projects will be provided in class. Final projects will be due in class April 13th.

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

Submission of Assignments: Please hand in your essays directly to your 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. For assignments where a hardcopy is not appropriate, the file or link must be posted to D2L directly.

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.

Student Accommodations:

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services; SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For additional information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/.

Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor. The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy_0.pdf.

Please note:

1. Students seeking accommodations for transient illnesses (e.g., the flu) should contact their instructors directly. Whenever possible, students should advise their instructors in advance if they will be missing quizzes, presentations, in-class assignments, or group meetings.
2. When accommodations are granted, they may take forms other than make-up tests or assignments. For example, the weight of a missed grade may be added to another assignment or test.
3. For information on Deferrals of Final Exams and Term Work, see sections G.6 and G.7 of the *University Calendar* at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html> and <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>

Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability who may require academic accommodation, it is your responsibility to register with the Student Accessibility Services (220-8237, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/>) and discuss your needs with your instructor no later than 14 days after the start of the course.

Writing Skills Statement

Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, 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. Sources used in 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 & Grade Scale of the Department of Communication, Media and Film

Final grades are reported as letter grades. However, assignments, exams, and other work in this course will be graded using raw scores (e.g., a score out of 15 for an assignment worth 15 /100 of the final grade).

The following grade scale percentage equivalents are used in the Department. If letter grades are used for an assignment or other course component, the percentage equivalent in the final column will be used for calculating the final grade:

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 <https://ucalgary.ca/ssc/resources/writing-support/436> . If you have questions about how to document sources, please consult your instructor or the Writing Centre (3rd 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/resources/ethics>

Important information, services, and contacts for students

For information about . . .	Visit or contact . . .
ARTS PROGRAM ADVISING (ASC)	SS 102 403-220-3580 artsads@ucalgary.ca
CAMPUS SECURITY <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Calgary Police Service• Emergency Text Messaging• Emergency Evacuation & Assembly• Safewalk Program	http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/ 403-220-5333 403-266-1234 Emergency: call 911 http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints If you feel uncomfortable walking alone at any time, call Campus Security for an escort (220-5333). For more information, see http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/
DESIRE2LEARN (D2L) Support <ul style="list-style-type: none">• IT help line	http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students 403-220-5555 or itsupport@ucalgary.ca
STUDENT SUCCESS CENTRE <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Writing Support Services• Student Services Mobile App	http://ucalgary.ca/ssc http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents
STUDENTS' UNION CONTACTS <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Faculty of Arts Reps• Student Ombudsman	https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/ http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds
SU WELLNESS CENTRE <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Counselling Services• Health Services• Distress centre 24/7 CRISIS LINE	403-210-9355 (MSC 370), M-F, 9:00–4:30 pm http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health 403-266-HELP (4357)

- **Online resources and tips**

<http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus>

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.

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

The schedule of lectures and readings will be available on D2L.