

Communications Studies (COMS) 401.13 – Lecture 20
Drugs in Popular Culture
Spring 2012
MW 15:00-17:50

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Web Page: Blackboard
Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description

Over the past century and a half authority figures have defined the social problem of drugs in a manner characterized by sickness, moral weakness, and criminality. Moreover, these constructions often rest upon assumptions about race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and social class. This course will explore how notions of drugs and addiction have been created, recreated, and contested in various media, including news reports, literature, music, and film.

By tracing the historical development of modern dialogues about drugs, drug use, and drug users, this inquiry-based class will ask students to unpack and critique the dominant discourses of drug issues, and explore creative alternatives to these seemingly “commonsense” constructions. In-class exercises and activities will augment our discussion of drug cultures and representations thereof, and seek to engage students via experiential learning and reflexive thought.

Objectives of the Course

By the end of this class students will:

- Be exposed to a variety of historical and contemporary debates about drugs
- Develop analytic tools that enable an informed, critical discussion of drug issues
- Be able to discuss the relationship between representations and cultural discourses
- Learn to refine critical thinking and research skills

Internet and electronic communication device information

Laptop computers may be used for the sole purpose of taking notes. Unacceptable use of laptops includes surfing the Internet, checking email, social

networking, playing games, watching video, etc. If the instructor or any student should notice improper use of this device you will be asked to leave the room, and such privileges will be revoked for the rest of the term.

Textbooks and Readings (any edition of these texts will do):

Baudelaire, C. (2002). *On wine and hashish*. Trans. A Brown. London: Hesperus.

Huxley, A. (1994). *The doors of perception and Heaven and Hell*. London: Flamingo.

Ginsberg, A. (1956). *Howl and other poems*. San Francisco: City Lights Publishers.

Wolfe, T. (1968). *The electric kool-aid acid test*. New York: Bantam.

Leary, T. (2007). *The psychedelic experience: A manual based on the Tibetan book of the dead*. New York: Citadel.

Castaneda, C. (1998). *Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge*. New York: Washington Square Press.

Additional readings will be made available on Blackboard (see schedule of lectures and readings).

Assignments and Evaluation

1. *Critical Reading/Personal Reflections (3 x 15% each) (750-800 words):*
Due May 23, June 6, June 20

These critical reading syntheses and personal reflections have been strategically scheduled to fall due on classes signaling the conclusion of a key phase in terms of course development and progression through thematically organized content. In the class before each essay is due, students will be given a specific question or problem around which they are to frame their reflective essays. Essays are due in hard copy at the beginning of class on date specified above.

2. *Presentation on an Assigned Reading (20%)* Done in groups of four, sign-up to occur in first class.

Students will present in groups of four on one of the primary texts assigned for the class (i.e., one of the texts listed in the Textbooks and Readings section above). Taking the presentation beyond mere summary, the team of student researchers will be responsible for unpacking and analyzing the work in terms of its assumptions and cultural significance.

Scholarly research is expected, creativity is encouraged, and a one-page single-spaced summary of ideas presented (fully referenced) is to be submitted on the day of the presentation.

3. *Final Exam (35%)* Registrar-scheduled, date TBA.

This cumulative final exam will test students' knowledge of all readings, lectures, and class activities completed throughout the term through a variety of fill-in-the-blank, short answer, and essay questions.

It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment. Note: 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.

NB: All assignments must be completed in order to receive a passing grade for this course.

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: YES

Please note: If your class is held in the evening, the Registrar's Office will make every attempt to schedule the final exam during the evening; however, there is NO guarantee that the exam will NOT be scheduled during the day.

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://www.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

The following grading system is used in the Department of Communication and Culture:

(Revised, effective September 2008)

	Grading Scale
A+	96-100
A	90-95.99
A -	85-89.99
B+	80-84.99
B	75-79.99
B-	70-74.99
C+	65-69.99
C	60-64.99
C-	55-59.99
D+	53-54.99
D	50-52.99
F	0-49

Where a grade on a particular assignment is expressed as a letter grade, it will normally be converted to a number using the midpoint of the scale. That is, A- would be converted to 87.5 for calculation purposes. F will be converted to zero.

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. Readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin. This includes assignments submitted in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media, and material taken from

such sources.

Please consult your instructor or the Writing Centre (3rd Floor Taylor Digital Family Library, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>) if you have any questions regarding how to document sources.

Academic Misconduct

For information on academic misconduct and the consequences thereof please see the current University of Calgary Calendar at the following link;
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.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 Disability Resource Centre (220-8237) and discuss your needs with your instructor no later than fourteen (14) days after the start of the course.

Students' Union

For details about the current Students' Union contacts for the Faculty of Arts see <http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/governance/elections/home.html>

Student Ombudsman

For details on the Student Ombudsman's Office see <http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/services/student-services/student-rights.html>

Emergency Evacuation and Assembly points

For information on the emergency evacuation procedures and the assembly points see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>

"SAFEWALK" Program -- 220-5333

Campus Security will escort individuals day or night -- call 220-5333 for assistance. Use any campus phone, emergency phone or the yellow phone located at most parking lot booths.

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

The Department of Communication and Culture Research Ethics site:

<http://www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/ethics>

or the University of Calgary Research Ethics site:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/research/cfreb>

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

To be distributed in the first class.