

Communications Studies (COMS) 473 - L02
Popular Culture
Fall 2010
Saturday 1-5pm

Class dates: September 18 & 25; October 2, 16, 23, 30; November 6, 20, 27

Instructor: Georgia Gaden
Office Location: SS 209
Office Phone: n/a
E-Mail: ggaden@ucalgary.ca
Web Page: Blackboard
Office Hours: TBA

Course Description

A communications studies approach to the study of popular culture, including a selection of the following: music, sport, television, film, comics, literature, gaming, theatre and public performance, the Internet and social networking, fashion, and advertising. Students will be introduced to critical tools for the deconstruction and evaluation of the social and cultural significance of popular cultural texts.

Our aim will be neither an exhaustive survey of all popular cultural forms, nor an in-depth analysis of a single medium or form. Rather, weekly lectures will be organized around case studies that illustrate and build upon theoretical perspectives covered in the assigned readings.

Objectives of the Course

- To develop skills in critical analysis: to make connections between popular culture representations, the contexts of their production, and the contexts of our own readings.
- To use scholarly and social theories and debates as frameworks within which to conduct our analyses.
- To become familiar with the concepts of genre, text and form in communication studies.
- To develop an appreciation for popular culture as an agent of social meaning and cultural change.

- To examine the problems posed by popular culture as subject of study: why should we study these everyday texts and practices? How can we produce work which uses multiple media and non-traditional texts without sacrificing academic rigor?

Internet and electronic communication device information

Rules and guidelines about the use of internet and laptops during class will be discussed in the first session. Cell phones must be turned off during class time. Any exceptions must be cleared with the instructor.

Textbooks and Readings:

A reading package will be available for purchase at the bookstore. Additional reading will be made available on Blackboard.

Assignments and Evaluation

Annotated Bibliography 10%

Following our discussion of research methods in the first class, students will be required to produce a detailed annotated bibliography for a proposed paper on a particular topic (they may use this for their research paper but are not obliged to do so).

Social history 10%

Students will produce a short analysis of the social history of a product as viewed through its advertising.

Mid-term Exam 20%

The mid-term exam will take place in class on Saturday October 23rd. It will consist of short answer and short essay questions drawn from readings and class content.

Popular Culture Journal 15%

Students will be asked to keep a personal response journal throughout the course. The journal will be submitted in the final class on November 27th. More details and guidelines for this assignment will be given on the first day of class.

Final written assignment 30%

For the final written assignments students will write an essay (12-14 pages) in response to one of a list of questions provided by the instructor. The questions for this will be distributed on the first day of class in order to allow students to focus their reading and begin work on the assignment. Students may compose their own essay question but must receive approval from the instructor.

In-class Presentation 5%

Students must complete a brief summary of one course reading to be delivered in class. Sign-up will take place on the first day of classes. Students may work in pairs for this assignment.

Class Participation 10%

Participation grades will be awarded on the basis of your active involvement in class discussions and activities. In order to receive participation grades, students are expected to be in attendance for classes, and contribute to the discussions. Attendance will be taken in each class.

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 at SS110.

Assignments will be removed the following morning, stamped with the previous day's date, and placed in the instructor's mailbox.

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

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: www.efwr.ucalgary.ca

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 (MacEwan Student Centre 4th floor, efwr.ucalgary.ca) 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 on the first day of class. Students will receive an email from the instructor approximately one week prior to the first class with information about how to prepare for this session. If you do not receive this email, please contact the instructor.