

**Communications Studies COMS 473 L02**  
**Popular Culture**  
**Fall 2012**  
**Saturday 1:00 – 4:30 p.m.**

**Instructor:** Dr. Linda Vennard  
**Office Location:** SS307 (Shared Office)  
**Office Phone:** TBA  
**E-Mail:** vennard@ucalgary.ca  
**Office Hours:** Mon/Wed 11:00-12:00 noon

**Additional Information**

Instructor is also available by appointment.

**Course Description**

This course takes a Communications Studies approach to the study of popular culture and includes a selection of the following: music, sport, television, film, comics, literature, gaming, theatre and public performance, the Internet and social networking, fashion, and advertising. The course introduces Students to critical tools for the deconstruction and evaluation of the social and cultural significance of popular cultural texts.

Popular culture is not only entertainment, but also a powerful force in society and provides representations, messages, images and ideas about people and their places and positions in the world. In this course we select a number of specific focuses from popular cultural forms (e.g. the Internet, advertising, social networking, popular music) for critical analysis. Through lectures, class discussions, written assignments, group presentations, and class activities we will work to critique the messages conveyed by and about works of popular culture.

**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 develop an appreciation for popular culture as an agent of social meaning, cultural change, and individual identity construction.
- To examine the ways popular culture simultaneously establishes, reinforces and challenges our perceptions of ourselves and the world.

**Internet and electronic communication device information**

Students are encouraged to bring their laptops, the use of which will be during designated times in class and only for purposes of the class, and otherwise not permitted.  
No texting or cell phone use permitted in class.

### **Textbooks and Readings:**

**Required:** Storey, John. *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction*. 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Pearson, 2012, ISBN 978-1-4082-8527-5.

Students will also be expected to do substantial reading of popular culture texts in addition to assigned readings from the textbook.

### **Assignments and Evaluation:**

- Exams (2 x 15%): (September 29 and October 20, 2012): 30%
- Annotated Bibliography and Proposal Outline (October 6): 5%
- Research Paper (December 1): 25%
- Discussion Paper/Essay (10%) and Presentation (10%) (October 27): 20%
- Small Group Assignment (November 17): 10%
- Participation (ongoing): 10%

**Exam #1 (15%):** On September 29, 2012 will contain multiple choice and/or short answer and short essay questions. It will cover the material in assigned readings of the required text, lecture material and all other material covered to that point in the course.

**Exam #2 (15%):** On October 20, 2012 is noncumulative and will contain multiple choice and/or short answer and short essay questions. It will cover the material in assigned readings of the required text, lecture material and all other material covered in class to that point the course (after Exam #1).

**Annotated Bibliography and Proposal Outline: (5%):** Due October 6, 2012 - Students will prepare an Annotated Bibliography (5-6 academic sources) and a 1-2 page Proposal Outline for their research paper (see below).

**Research Paper (25%):** Due December 1, 2012

Students will prepare a researched essay of 10-12 (double spaced) pages, requiring research into secondary sources on cultural studies theories discussed in class and application of those theories to a work of popular culture. In their research Students are expected to go beyond the readings contained in the textbook in order to develop a fuller understanding of a particular cultural studies theory. All sources must be properly cited, and the research paper must be well organized and edited.

**Discussion Paper/Essay (10%) and Presentation (10%):** October 27, 2012

Students will write an individual Discussion Paper/Essay of 5 pages on a topic selected from a list provided by the Instructor. The Discussion Paper/Essay will be personal in nature, provide the Student's perspective and position on the topic, and situate these within the course readings.

The Discussion Paper/Essay is due October 27, 2012, and the same day Students will present it to the class in a brief presentation (length estimated to be 5-10 minutes but will depend on the number of Students enrolled). The Instructor invites Students to suggest topics the first two weeks of classes, and will provide a list of topics to choose from on September 29, 2012.

**Small Group Assignment (10%):** November 17, 2012

Students will work in ad hoc groups of four formed by the Instructor, discuss a topic and as a group prepare a short (2-3 page) paper, and present it to the class in a brief (5 minute) presentation. The Instructor will announce the topic that day, and the entire Assignment will be completed in class.

**Participation (10%):** ongoing

Participation (10%) through regular attendance and participation in class discussion and activities is an essential component of the course. Students are expected to attend classes and participate; "participation" is not only attendance per se but contributing to each others' learning and participating in the creation of a positive atmosphere and learning environment.

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.

**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: <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 (3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Taylor Family Digital 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**

A daily schedule of lectures and readings, as well as detailed assignment descriptions, will be handed out on the first day of class.