

University of Calgary
Department of Communication and Culture

Communications Studies COMS 473, L01

Popular Culture

Fall 2014

Mon., Sept. 8 – Mon., Dec. 1 (excluding Oct. 13 & Nov. 10)
Lectures M 12:00 – 14:45

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Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 09:30 - 10:30 or by appointment

Course Description

A communications studies approach to the study of popular culture, including 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 and activities will be organized around case studies that illustrate and build upon theoretical perspectives covered in the assigned readings.

Additional Information

This course will employ a team-based learning strategy in which students work together in groups of 5 to 7 (groups to be determined in the first class and will remain intact for the semester) in order to unpack, discuss, and make sense of the assigned readings. Therefore, it is essential that students not only complete the readings prior to class but also attend class regularly and fully participate during in-class exercises and assignments. Students will be held personally accountable for their level of preparedness and contributions to group discussion and exercises by way of a peer evaluation form to be completed at the end of the term. Group assignment scores will be adjusted according to these peer evaluations (see Assignments and Evaluation section below).

Objectives of the Course

This course will help students develop:

- An ability to understand the varieties of practice in textual analysis of mass mediated cultural forms
- Familiarity with the concepts of genre, text and form in communication studies
- An appreciation for popular culture as an agent of social meaning and cultural change
- Interpersonal communication and collaboration skills

Textbooks and Readings

Storey, J. (Ed.). (2009). *Cultural theory and popular culture: A reader* (4th ed.). Harlow, England: Longman.

Internet and electronic communication device information

No restrictions on use of laptops in class if they are used to take notes or perform sanctioned research during an in-class activity and if there is no disturbance of other students by visiting inappropriate web sites. Cell phones must be POWERED OFF and put away during class time.

Assignments and Evaluation

1. Reading Quizzes (Individual) 20% (best 9/10 scores) Beginning of each class

At the beginning of each class (refer to schedule below) students will complete a brief readiness assessment test based on that day's assigned readings. The format will include some mix of multiple choice, true/false, and quotation identification. The goal with these quizzes is to ensure that students have completed the assigned readings and are coming prepared to participate in whatever group activities and class discussion are planned for that day. The quizzes will take place in the first 15 minutes. They cannot be written at another time nor made up for any reason, so please ensure that you attend class regularly and arrive on time. There are 10 quizzes scheduled and your 9 best scores will be counted.

2. Reading Quizzes (Group) 15% (best 9/10 scores) Beginning of each class

As soon as students submit their individual reading quizzes, they will receive another copy of the same quiz to be completed collaboratively by their group. The intention here is that students will learn from hearing each other support their arguments as to which is the correct answer, and thereby enrich their understanding of the material covered that class. These group quizzes will be collected, scored, and immediately returned along with the individual quizzes. The instructor will then address by way of mini-lecture or discussion areas that need clarification or elaboration before moving to scheduled activities.

3. 5-min Presentations (Group) 30% (2 @ 15% each) Oct. 6; Nov. 17

The bulk of class time will be spent in groups working to apply theoretical concepts in hands-on scenarios by answering questions or responding to prompts posed by the

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 System & Dept of Communication and Culture Grade Scale

Work in this course will be graded using percentage grades. The following grade scale percentage equivalents are used in Communication and Culture:

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 (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/research/research-ethics>

Important information, services, and contacts for students

For information about . . .	Visit or contact . . .
ARTS PROGRAM ADVISING (PIC)	SS 102 403-220-3580 picarts@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

<p>STUDENTS' UNION CONTACTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty of Arts Reps • Student Ombudsman 	<p>http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/governance/elections/home.html</p> <p>http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds</p>
<p>SU WELLNESS CENTRE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselling Services • Health Services • Distress centre 24/7 CRISIS LINE • Online resources and tips 	<p>403-210-9355 (MSC 370), M-F, 9:00–4:30 pm</p> <p>http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling</p> <p>http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health</p> <p>403-266-HELP (4357)</p> <p>http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus</p> <p>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

September 8, 2014

Course Introduction; Team Formation

No Assigned Readings

September 15, 2014

Module 1: From Culture and Civilization to Culturalism

Assigned Readings (40 pages total):

- Arnold, "Culture and Anarchy"
- Leavis, "Mass Civilization and Minority Culture"
- Hoggart, "The Full Rich Life & The Newer Art: Sex in Shiny Packets"
- Williams, "The Analysis of Culture"
- Thompson, "Preface from *The Making of the English Working Class*"
- Hall and Whannel, "The Young Audience"

September 22, 2014

Module 3: Evolution of Critical Theory, from Cultural Dupes to Agents of Change

Assigned Readings (40 pages total):

- Marx and Engels, "Ruling Class and Ruling Ideas"
- Marx, "Base and Superstructure"
- Engels, "Letter to Joseph Bloch"
- Adorno, "On Popular Music"
- Gramsci, "Hegemony, Intellectuals, and the State"
- Bennett, "Popular Culture and the 'turn to Gramsci'"

- Storey, “Rockin’ Hegemony: West Coast Rock and Amerika’s War in Vietnam”
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September 29, 2014

Module 4: Consciousness, Ideology, Discourse

Assigned Readings (42 pages total):

- Freud, “The Dream-Work”
 - Lacan, “The Mirror Stage”
 - Barthes, “Myth Today” (S)
 - Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses
 - Foucault, “Method”
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October 6, 2014

Module 5: Representation, Women’s Media, Performativity of Gender

Assigned Readings (33 pages total):

- Ang, “*Dallas* and the Ideology of Mass Culture”
 - Geraghty, “Soap Opera and Utopia”
 - Butler, “Imitation and Gender Insubordination”
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October 20, 2014

Module 6: Feminism and The Radical Notion that Women Are People

Assigned Readings (29 pages total):

- Gledhill, “Pleasurable Negotiations”
 - Rakow, “Feminist Approaches to Popular Culture: Giving Patriarchy its Due”
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October 27, 2014

Module 7: Understanding “Blackness” in Popular Culture

Assigned Readings (58 pages total):

- Hall, “The Rediscovery of ‘Ideology’: Return of the Repressed in Media Studies”
 - Gilroy, “‘Get up, get into it, and get involved’: Soul, Civil Rights and Black Power”
 - Bobo, “*The Color Purple*: Black Women as Cultural Readers”
 - Hall, “What is This Black in ‘Black’ Popular Culture?”
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November 3, 2014

Module 8: (It’s Still Bigger Than) Hip-Hop: “Race”, Racism, and Representation

Assigned Readings (34 pages total):

- [Rose, “‘Fear of a Black Planet’: Rap Music and Black Cultural Politics in the 1990s” \(DB\)](#)

- Saeed, “Musical Jihad”
 - West, “Black Postmodernist Practices”
 - hooks, “Postmodern Blackness”
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November 17, 2014

Module 9: “Acid Perspectivism” and The Dawn of a Postmodern Consciousness

Assigned Readings (29 pages total):

- Baudrillard, “The Precession of Simulacra”
 - Creed, “From Here to Modernity: Feminism and Postmodernism”
 - Hebdige, “Postmodernism and ‘The Other Side’”
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November 24, 2014

Module 10: Making Sense of Postmodern Texts

Assigned Readings (28 pages total):

- Wilson, “Fashion and Postmodernism”
 - Collins, “Genericity in the Nineties”
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December 1, 2014

Goodbye, Farewell, and Amen: Course Conclusion
