University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film

Communication and Media Studies COMS 473 L01
POPULAR CULTURE
Winter 2019
Tues., Jan. 15, 2019 – Tues., April 09, 2019 (excluding Feb. 17-23)

Lecture: T 12:30-15:15

Instructor:	Dr. S. Thrift
Office:	SS 210
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Web Page:	D2L available through MyUofC portal
Office Hours:	Th 10-11:30am (or by app't.)

Course Description
Introduces critical tools for deconstructing and evaluating the social significance of popular cultural texts, including music, television, film, advertising, memes and viral content. Particular focus on audience reception as a key method for understanding fan practices and subcultures.

Additional Information
This course takes a communication studies approach to examining popular culture and for thinking critically about how popular culture informs our personal politics, consumption practices, and common-sense ideas about the world. Beginning with the question "what is popular culture?", we will trace historical categories of high and low culture and their evolution, in order to better understand contemporary definitions and forms of "the popular." Students will explore the theoretical frameworks contributing to popular culture studies, with particular focus on the concept of "power" and how it is connected to patterns and practices in representation, production, consumption, identity, community, counterculture, and cultural values. Prerequisite: COMS 371.

Objectives of the Course
- To develop a solid understanding of the key concepts, issues and ideas related to popular culture studies.
- To apply communication theory to the explanation of popular culture examples, events, and occurrences.
- To examine how popular culture texts function ideologically to construct identities and differences, and how such ideologies are received (i.e., adopted, resisted, or re-conceived)
- To understand how to become a pop culture producer in an ethical and mindful way through participation in a Wiki-Edit-A-Thon on the topic of Canadian popular culture.

Textbooks and Readings
The required textbook is available at the campus bookstore. Additional readings will be posted to the COMS 473 website on D2L.

O'Brien, Susie & Szeman, Imre. (2014). *Popular Culture: A User's Guide, fourth edition*. Toronto: Nelson Education.

Please note that the instructor will be teaching from the FOURTH EDITION of this book. Students are advised to use the fourth edition as well, as pagination may not match between editions. If students are using previous editions of the text, it is the student's responsibility to check for missed content.

Internet and electronic communication device information
The in-class use of computers for activities other than note-taking purposes will not be tolerated. Therefore, cell phones and other electronic communication devices must be set to mute upon entering the classroom and should not be used in the classroom or during class time. If students engage in non-course related online activity during class, the professor will request that they power down their device for the remainder of class time. No audio or video recording of any kind is allowed in class without the explicit permission of the instructor.

Email
When corresponding with the instructor via email, students should include the course name (ex. Pop Culture or COMS 473) in the subject line. If you do not include the course name in your email's subject line, your message may get overlooked in the instructor's inbox and go unread! Please maintain a respectful tone in your correspondence with the instructor.

Email is most useful for short, specific inquiries. If you have detailed questions on the course material, assignments, or grades, visit the instructor during office hours.

The instructor will respond to emails during the week, usually on a first-come, first-served basis. Emails sent in the evening or on weekends will not be read (or replied to) until the next working day.

NOTE: Email submissions of work will NOT be accepted unless otherwise specified.

Assignments and Evaluation
All assignments and exams weighted 15% or more must be completed in order to receive a passing grade in the course.

Weight	Course components	Due
10%	Quiz 1	Feb. 5
5%	Wikipedia Short List	Feb. 12 (4pm)
15%	Wikipedia Entry & Training	Feb. 26 (12pm)
15%	Quiz 2	March 12
25%	Wikipedia Final Submission	March 18 (8pm)
30%	Internet Meme Analysis	April 9

In-Class Quizzes (25%)   Due: Feb. 5 (10%) and Mar. 12 (15%)
Student engagement with the course materials is key to success in COMS 473. As such, there are two in-class quizzes this semester, which will test students' comprehension of the assigned readings, lecture content, and issues raised during class discussion. Quiz 1 will cover course content up to February 12th, while Quiz 2 will include content covered from February 12th to March 12th. Quizzes are closed-book and will be comprised of multiple choice questions.

In the case of illness or bereavement, the grade for a missed quiz will be added to the grade for the other quiz.

Wiki-Edit-A-Thon
Students will assume the role of pop culture producers with the Wiki-Edit-A-Thon assignment. A Wiki-Edit-A-Thon is a Wikipedia editing marathon that trains people how to edit on Wikipedia so that entries can be fact checked, relevant content can be uploaded, and/or new entries can be created. Wiki-Edit-A-Thons have been carried out by online communities and organizations, educational institutions, and/or community groups. For example, the Art + Feminism collective, which has run Wiki-Edit-A-Thons since 2013, uses these events as a way to narrow the Wikipedia gender gap and improve coverage of marginalized topics and communities (artandfeminism.org). This assignment will culminate in a multi-course Wiki-Edit-A-Thon being held March 18th (more details to come).

Part I: Short List (5%)   Due: February 12 (4pm)
Students will work in groups to research Canadian pop culture on Wikipedia. The goal is to identify topics, subjects, and individuals or groups that would benefit from Wikipedia editing or requires the creation of a new Wikipedia entry. At the end of that class, each group will submit a short list of potential Wikipedia topics to the COMS 473 D2L Dropbox on February 12th (4pm).

Part II: Wikipedia Entry & Training (15%)   Due: February 26 (12pm)
Each group will select one entry from their short list to research for the Wiki-Edit-A-Thon. Each group will submit a 500-word rationale for their choice plus a summary of the "editing kit" training videos that are used to support their Wikipedia entry creation (these resources are hosted on the Art + Feminism website: http://www.artandfeminism.org/editing-kit/). This submission is due to the COMS 473 D2L Dropbox on February 26th (12pm).

Part III: Wikipedia Final Submission (25%)   Due: March 18 (8pm)
Each group's final Wikipedia entry (including any images and all citations) will be submitted to Wikipedia editors on March 18th, during a multi-course Wiki-Edit-A-Thon. Students who attend the March 18th Wiki-Edit-A-Thon in person will receive a bonus percentage on their final grade. More details to come.

Students must also upload their submission to the COMS 473 D2L Dropbox by 8pm, March 18th.

Internet Meme Analysis (30%)   due: April 9
Students will write an analysis (1200-1500 words, double-spaced, 1" margins) of an Internet meme, in which they will be asked to critically examine its popularity or "success." Following discussion and reading about memes and viral content, students will be encouraged to

choose their own internet meme to analyze OR they may use an example from the list supplied by the instructor (on D2L). A theoretical article by Limor Shifman is provided for students to read as a starting point for the assignment (which must be used and cited in the paper), and students are encouraged to do additional online research about their own chosen internet meme. More information about the assignment to follow in class.

When submitting the paper, students must include their name, ID number, course number & name, the professor's name and date of submission on a cover page or the first page of the document (aligned top left corner). In addition to these formatting requirements, students must also include a properly formatted works cited page (APA or MLA style).

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

Submission of Assignments:
Where indicated, COMS 473 assignments will be submitted via D2L dropbox using the following file name format: 473–LastNameFirstName–Title of Assignment.docx.

For assignments due in hard copy, 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.

Please include your name and ID number on all assignments, and be prepared to provide photo ID to pick up assignments or look at marked final exams in SS 320. 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/legalservices/foip/foip-hia

Note: It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to ensure that the proper version is submitted (particularly in courses requiring electronic submission). Including a version date in your file name may be useful.

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. Assignments submitted seven days or more late without documentation will not be accepted for grading.

Student Accommodations and Deferrals:
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.pdf.

Students seeking accommodation for transient illnesses (e.g., the flu) or for another legitimate reason should contact their instructors. Whenever possible, students should provide supporting documentation to support their request; however, instructors may not

require that a medical note be presented. For the policy on supporting documentation the use of a statutory declaration, please see the following:

- Section N.1 of the *University Calendar*: https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/n-1.html

- FAQs for Students at https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/appeals/student-faq

Note that 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 that of another assignment or test.

For information on deferrals, see the following sections in the *University Calendar:*

- Section G.7 Deferral of Term Work at http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html

- Section G.6 Deferral of Final Exam at http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html

Grading & Department of Communication, Media and Film Grade Scale
Final grades are reported as letter grades. In this course, percentage grades will be used for written assignments, while raw scores will be used for quizzes and the Short List assignment.

The following chart outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film. In calculating final grades in this course, letter grades will be converted to the midpoint of the percentage range, as shown in the final column of the table below.

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Dept of CMF grade scale equivalents*	Letter grade % equivalent for calculations* *
4.00	Outstanding performance	A+	96 - 100%	98.0%
4.00	Excellent performance	A	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
3.70	Approaching excellent performance	A -	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
3.30	Exceeding good performance	B+	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
3.00	Good performance	B	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
2.70	Approaching good performance	B-	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
2.30	Exceeding satisfactory performance	C+	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
2.00	Satisfactory performance	C	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
1.70	Approaching satisfactory performance	C-	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
1.30	Marginal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D+	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
1.00	Minimal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
0.00	Failure. Did not meet course requirements.	F	0 - 49.99%	0%

* If percentages are used to calculate final grades, then grades falling within these ranges will be translated to the corresponding letter grades.

** These percentage equivalents will be used for calculating final grades unless an alternative method of final grade calculation is outlined above.

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. 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 support services in the Student Success Centre (3rd floor, Taylor Family Digital Library). Visit the website for more details: http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support

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 at https://ucalgary.ca/ssc/resources/writing-support/436. Research and citation resources are also available on the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) website at https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/ If you have questions about citing sources, please consult your instructor or visit the writing support services in the Student Success Centre (3rd floor, Taylor Family Digital Library, at 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, including surveys, interviews, or observations, as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve 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 https://arts.ucalgary.ca/advising

CAMPUS SECURITY **& Safewalk Program** • **Calgary Police Service** • **Emergency Text Messaging** • **Emergency Evacuation & Assembly**	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
DESIRE2LEARN (D2L) Support • **IT help line**	http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students 403-220-5555 or itsupport@ucalgary.ca
STUDENT SUCCESS CENTRE • **Writing Support Services** • **Events & Info for Students**	http://ucalgary.ca/ssc http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents
STUDENTS' UNION CONTACTS • **Faculty of Arts Reps** • **Student Ombuds**	https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/ http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds
SU WELLNESS CENTRE • **Health Services** • **Mental Health Services** • **Distress entre 24/7 CRISIS LINE** • **Online resources and tips**	**403-210-9355** (MSC 370), M-F, 9:00–4:30 pm http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling **403-266-HELP (4357)** 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 Lecture Topics and Readings

Lecture Date	Topic & Reading	Deadlines
Jan 15	**Course Introduction**	
Jan 22	**History of Pop Culture** Textbook Ch. 2	
Representation & Pop Culture		

Jan 29	**Representation(s) in Pop Culture** Textbook Ch. 3	
Feb 5	**Identity & Pop Culture** Textbook Ch. 6	Reading Quiz 1 (10%)
Feb 12	**Community & Pop Culture** Textbook Ch. 7	Wikipedia Short List (5%)
Feb 19	Reading Break (No Class)	
Producing Popular Culture		
Feb 26	**Production & Pop Culture** Textbook Ch. 4	Wikipedia Entry & Training (15%)
Mar 5	**Subcultures & Countercultures** Textbook Ch. 8	
Mar 12	**Participatory Culture(s)** Reading on D2L.	Reading Quiz 2 (15%)
Consuming Popular Culture		
Mar 19	**Consumer Culture** Textbook Ch. 5	**March 18:** Wikipedia Entry & Submission (25%)
Mar 26	**Celebrity** Reading on D2L.	
Apr 2	**Fandom** Reading on D2L.	Reading Quiz 2 (10%)
Apr 9	**Wild Card**	Internet Meme Analysis (30%)