

University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film

COMS 473 (L01): Popular Culture

Winter 2022: January 10 to April 12 (excluding Feb. 20-26)

Lecture: MW 9:30 to 10:45

IMPORTANT NOTE FOR IN-PERSON COURSE DELIVERY

Note: This course will be delivered in-person. If you are unable to participate in-class owing to time differences or geographical location, please arrange to take this course in a future term

Instructor:	Maria Victoria Guglietti
Office:	SS 220
Email:	mvguglie@ucalgary.ca
Web Page:	D2L (access via MyUofC portal)
Office Hours:	SS 220 Friday 9:30-11:30 (Zoom or in person) or by appointment

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.

This class will revisit foundational texts in cultural theory to think about contemporary phenomena.

Additional Information

The weekly schedule of topics and readings can be found at the end of this outline or on D2L.

Students are responsible for reading and following all course and university policies discussed in this outline.

Objectives of the Course

By the end of this course, students should be able to

- Identify, interpret, and evaluate core theoretical notions in cultural theory.
- Apply cultural theory to analyze contemporary popular culture texts and phenomena,
- Formulate a critique of popular culture through creative means.

Textbooks and Readings

Szeman, I. & Kaposy, T. (2011). *Cultural theory: An anthology*. Maiden, MA.: Wiley-Blackwell.

Learning Technologies and Requirements

In order to complete courses, University of Calgary students are required to have reliable access to the following technology:

- A computer with a supported operating system, as well as the latest security and malware updates, with current antivirus software enabled;
- Broadband internet connection, and a current and updated web browser;
- A webcam (built-in or external), and a microphone and speaker (built-in or external) or headset with microphone (for online courses only).

If you need access to other software programs to complete assignments, your instructor will provide relevant information and links.

If you have technical difficulties, contact IT support services. See <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/student-campus-services-information-technologies-it.html>

Policy on the Use of Electronic Communication Devices

The use of smartphones or other electronic devices is strictly limited to activities connected with the class.

Please familiarize yourself with the University’s policy on the recording of lectures, which is outlined at <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/e-6.html>, and carefully review the section on Instructor Copyright at the end of this outline.

Assignments and Evaluation

Weight	Assessed Components	Due
24%	<p>Group Activities: in groups of max. 4 members, students will complete three problem solving activities that require the identification, analysis and critique of different popular culture texts in light of the theoretical notions studied in class. Each activity will consist of 4 to 6 questions. The activities will be handed-in via dropbox submission.</p> <p>Group activities are open book. The instructions will be available approximately two weeks before the deadline.</p>	January 26 th , March 9 AND April 6 th by 11:59PM (dropbox submission)
18%	<p>Active learning portfolio and reflection: individual- 1000-1500 words each submission</p> <p>Students will write three critical reflection entries addressing three active learning sessions of their choice. The first submission of this reflection portfolio will focus on active learning reflections occurred between week 1 and 6, while the second submissions will include three entries addressing active learning reflections occurring between week 8 and 13.</p> <p>Each entry will answer the following questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What did you expect to learn? 2. What did you learn? 3. How did you learn? 4. How do you evaluate your learning? 5. What are the effects of this learning? 	Two submissions: February 17 th ¹ AND April 11 th by 11:59PM (dropbox submission)

¹ Note that major deadlines are *often* scheduled a day after class.

	More detailed instructions will be posted on D2L at the beginning of the term.	
26%	<p>Midterm analysis: individual – written (approx. 1800 words) or alternative format (length dependent on format- possibilities audio, audiovisual or multimedia).</p> <p>Students will write an analysis of a popular culture text. A complete analysis requires the explicit application of at least three theoretical notions discussed in class between week 1 and 5.</p> <p>Note: Students may choose to complete this analysis as a visual or multimedia project, in which case they will discuss the format with the instructor.</p> <p>Further instructions will be posted on D2L.</p>	February 10 th by 11:59 PM (dropbox)
32%	<p>Final project- Plan for a critical popular culture artifact (individual- 2000 words and images)</p> <p>Students will design and develop a proposal for a popular culture artifact that responds to the critiques of popular culture discussed during the term. A complete proposal includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A complete description of the proposed artifact. This includes images or audiovisual recording of the artifact in question. 2. A rationale that identifies how the artifact is “critical” by referring to the theories and concepts discussed during the term. 3. A discussion of the potential effects on mainstream popular culture that an artifact of this nature could produce. This discussion is also informed by the theories discussed during the term. <p>Further instructions will be posted on D2L.</p>	April 12 th by 11:59PM (dropbox submission)

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

Note: You do not have to complete all the assignments and exams in order to receive a passing grade in this course.

Submission of Assignments

Please submit all assignments by uploading them to the designated D2L dropbox. Include your name and ID number on all assignments. Be sure to keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to submit the proper version.

Private information related to individual students is treated with the utmost regard by University of Calgary faculty. Student assignments will be accessible only by the authorized course faculty, and personal information is collected in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act*. Please note that instructors may use audio or video recording for lesson capture, assessment of student learning, and self-assessment of teaching practices.

Policy for Late Assignments

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of 5% or a partial letter grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late.

An assignment received two days after the deadline will receive an automatic 0.

***The Day of Grace:** One day of grace is available to all students to cover unforeseen problems that prevent them from meeting a deadline such as computer crashes, vehicle breakdowns, lack of printer ink or money, unexpected family obligations, etc. Students may use this day ONLY ONCE during the semester. **Students using this day of grace must upload the assignment by 4:30 pm the next calendar day** to avoid a late penalty and write “grace” on their subject line. It should be noted that assignments handed in this manner may be returned 1-2 classes later than those submitted on the due date.

Student Accommodations

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS); SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/. Students who require an accommodation based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor. For the full policy on Student Accommodations, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/university-policies-procedures/student-accommodation-policy>

Students seeking accommodation for transient illnesses (e.g., the flu) or another legitimate reason should contact their instructors. Whenever possible, students should provide supporting documentation to support their request; however, instructors may not require a medical note. For information on the use of a statutory declaration, see the *University Calendar*: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/m-1.html>

Expectations for Writing

Department policy directs that all written assignments and, to a lesser extent, written exam responses 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 and proper documentation of research sources. For further information, please refer to the *University of Calgary Calendar* section on writing across the curriculum: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/e-2.html>

Grading & Department of Communication, Media and Film Grade Scale

The following table outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film. Final grades are reported as letter grades. For components graded using percentages or numerical scores, those values will be used directly in calculating the final course grade, while for components graded using letter grades, the letter grades will be converted to the midpoint values listed in the final column of the table below in calculating the final course grade.

In this course, final grades are reported as letter grades. All assignments will receive a percentage grade.

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%

* Column 4: If percentages are used to calculate final grades, then grades falling within these ranges will be translated to the corresponding letter grades. Column 5: These percentage equivalents will be used for calculating final grades unless an alternative method of final grade calculation is outlined above.

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. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

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.

For information on citation and documentation styles (MLA, APA, Chicago, IEEE, etc.), visit the Student Success Centre resource links at <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/writing-support> or the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) Research and Citation Resources at https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/resources.html

If you need help with your writing or have questions about citing sources, consult your instructor or visit the Student Success Centre, Taylor Family Digital Library. To book an appointment, go to <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/writing-support>

Instructor Intellectual Property & Copyright Legislation

Course materials created by the instructor (including lectures, course outlines, presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments, and exams) remain the intellectual property of the instructor. These materials may NOT be reproduced, redistributed, or copied without the explicit consent of the instructor. The posting of course materials to third party websites such as note-sharing sites without permission is prohibited. Sharing of extracts of these course materials with other students enrolled in the same course section and term may be allowed under fair dealing. Check with the instructor if you have any questions about sharing materials with classmates.

To ensure they are aware of the consequences of unauthorized sharing of course materials (including instructor notes & electronic versions of textbooks), all students are required to read the *University of Calgary Policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright* at <https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/university-policies-procedures/acceptable-use-material-protected-copyright-policy> and the requirements of the *Copyright Act* (<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html>). Students who use material protected by copyright in violation of this policy may be disciplined under the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy.

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 obtaining research ethics approval and for following university research ethics guidelines. In some cases, your instructors may apply for course-based research ethics approval for certain assignments, and in those cases, they must review and approve your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, please see <https://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/arts-researchers/resources-researchers-and-instructors/ethics>

Deferrals of Course Work and Requests for Reappraisal

For university regulations and procedures related to deferral of term work, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>

For information about deferrals of final examinations, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html>

For information about requesting a reappraisal of course work or of a final grade, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/i.html>

Student Support Services and Resources

Please see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/course-outlines> for information about student support services and resources, including Wellness and Mental Health Resources, Student Success programs and services, the Student Ombuds Office, the Student Union, and Safewalk. For resources on D2L, Zoom, Yuja, etc., see <https://elearn.ucalgary.ca/resources-for-students/>. (Find the topic menu under the icon to the left of the ELEARN banner.)

Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings

	Mondays 9:30- 10:45 TI 140/148	Wednesdays 9:30- 10:45 TI 140/148
Week 1 Jan. 10 & 12	<p>Lecture: Using old ideas to interrogate the new: Introductory remarks.</p> <p>Introduction to the class, readings and assignments.</p> <p>Assignment: group sign-in</p>	<p>Lecture: Culture's dynamics</p> <p>Reading: Williams, R. (1958). Culture is ordinary (pp. 53-59) AND (1977) Dominant, residual, and emergent (pp. 353-356)</p>
Week 2 Jan. 17 & 19	<p>Lecture: Popular culture as mass deception</p> <p>Reading: Horkheimer, M. & Adorno, T. (1944). The culture industry: Enlightenment and mass deception (pp. 40-52)</p>	<p>Active learning reflection: What constitutes "popular culture" today?</p> <p>Assignment: group activity 1 posted.</p>
Week 3 Jan. 24 & 26	<p>Lecture: Reification and longing in popular culture.</p> <p>Reading: Jameson, F. (1979). Reification and utopia in mass culture (pp. 60-71).</p>	<p>Active learning reflection: What is the function of popular culture?</p> <p>Assignment: group activity 1 due by 11:59PM</p>
Week 4 Jan. 31 & Feb. 2	<p>Lecture: Cultural capital</p> <p>Reading: Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital (pp. 81-93).</p>	<p>Active learning reflection: Does popular culture provide access to cultural capital?</p>
Week 5 Feb. 7 & 9	<p>Lecture: Ideology and Interpellation</p> <p>Reading: Althusser, L. (1970). Ideology and ideological state apparatuses (pp. 204-222)</p>	<p>Active learning reflection: Is "ideology" enough to understand the dynamics of popular culture?</p> <p>Assignment: Midterm analysis due Feb. 10th by 11:59PM</p>
Week 6 Feb. 14 & 16	<p>Lecture: The Society of Control</p> <p>Reading: Deleuze, G. (1992). Postscript on the societies of control (pp. 139-142)</p>	<p>Active learning reflection: Does popular culture facilitate control?</p> <p>Assignment: Active learning portfolio due Feb. 17th by 11:59PM.</p>
Week 7 Feb. 21 & 23	NO CLASS- READING WEEK	
Week 8 Feb. 28 & Mar. 2	<p>Lecture: Biopower</p> <p>Reading: Hardt, M. & Negri, A. (2000). Biopolitical production (pp. 143-149).</p>	<p>Active learning reflection: How does popular culture produce subjectivities?</p> <p>Assignment: group activity 2 posted</p>

Week 9 Mar. 7 & 9	Lecture: Subcultures Reading: Hebdige, D. (1979). The function of subculture (pp. 255-263).	Active learning reflection: What are subcultures today? Assignment: group activity 2 due by 11:59PM
Week 10 Mar. 14 & 16	Lecture: Everyday tactics Reading: de Certeau, M. (1980). Walking in the city (pp. 264-273).	Active learning reflection: What are everyday tactics in the context of popular culture?
Week 11 Mar. 21 & 23	Lecture: Embodied production/consumption Reading: Harvey, D. (2000). The body as an accumulation strategy (pp. 307-317).	Active learning reflection: What is the embodied experience of popular culture?
Week 12 Mar. 28 & 30	Lecture: Objectification and popular culture Reading: Fanon, F. (1952). The lived experience of the Black man (pp. 422-431).	Active learning reflection: Can we escape objectification in popular culture? Assignment: group activity 3 posted
Week 13 Apr. 4 & 6	Lecture: Transcendence Reading: Lyotard, J. (1979). Answering the question: what is postmodernism? (pp. 357-363)	Active learning reflection: is there room for the sublime in popular culture? Assignment: group activity 3 due by 11:59PM
Week 14 Apr. 11	NO CLASS- The instructor will be available for office hours during regular class time. Assignment: active learning portfolio and reflection due by 11:59PM.	FINAL PROJECT DUE April 12 @ 11:59PM (dropbox)