

Communications Studies COMS 473 Lec.02
Popular Culture
Fall 2011
Saturday 13:00-16:30
(no class Nov. 12 Reading Days)

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Office Hours: Saturday 11-12 or by appointment

Course Description

This course takes 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. Popular culture is not only entertainment, but also a powerful force in society, providing representations, messages, images, and ideas about people and their places in the world. In this course, we will think critically and analytically about a variety of cultural forms, including film, video, popular music, television, advertising, and the internet. 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 strong critical thinking and analytical skills in order to assess popular culture.
- To gain a historical perspective on popular culture.
- To examine the ways popular culture simultaneously establishes, reinforces and challenges our perceptions of ourselves and the world.

Internet and electronic communication device information

In the classroom, students may use laptops to take notes, but not to do any other work (such as Facebook or checking email). In the lab, students may use laptops to work on class assignments but are responsible for making sure that the resulting assignment can be opened on the lab computers which use the same software as the instructor (see the instructions for Using Digital Dropbox on Blackboard). At no time may students use cell phones for any reason whatsoever.

Textbook and Readings

Storey, John. *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*. 4th ed. Longman, 2009. ISBN: 9781405874212.

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

Assignments and Evaluation

Personal Essay	Oct. 1	10%
Proposal for Research Paper	Oct. 15	5%
Midterm Exam	Oct. 29	15%
Small Group Presentations	Nov. 19-Dec. 3	15%
Research Paper	Dec. 9	25%
Final Take-Home Exam	Dec. 18	20%
Attendance & Participation	throughout	10%

Personal Essay: This assignment is an essay of ~1200 words, requiring no secondary research or use of other sources than the student's personal experience of popular culture. References to works of popular culture must be properly cited, and the essay must be well organized and well edited.

Proposal for Research Paper: This assignment consists of a few paragraphs explaining the chosen research paper topic along with a working thesis statement, and an annotated bibliography of 5-6 potential secondary sources.

Midterm Exam: The midterm will be written in-class in exam booklets. Students will be asked to choose from a list of terms and concepts covered by class discussion of the textbook, and to define and illustrate those terms in short paragraph responses.

Small Group Presentation: Students will be formed into small groups based on topics relating to works of popular culture as discussed in class, and will present their analysis of those works. Each group member should expect to speak for 5-7 minutes.

Research Paper: This assignment is a researched essay of 3000-4000 words, 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 will be 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 well edited.

Final Take-home Exam: Questions for the take-home exam will be based on class discussion following the small group presentations. Students will choose from a set of questions, and will write short essay responses illustrating their understanding of the questions with examples drawn from their experience of works of popular culture. While students will have access to their

textbooks, notes, and returned assignments, and will be able to make use of their own computer technology in completing the exam, they are not expected to write more than would be required in a typical sit-down final exam.

Attendance & Participation: Students will be expected to arrive on time and stay until class is finished, and to participate fully in class discussion and informal group work in all classes, including all presentations.

All written assignments will be submitted through Digital Dropbox on Blackboard. No assignments will be submitted in hardcopy, whether handed to the instructor, dropped at the main office, or slid under office doors, nor will assignments be accepted through email attachment. It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment, and to check email regularly for notices of missing assignments.

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: NO

Policy for Late Assignments

Assignments are due through Digital Dropbox on the stated due date. Assignments may only be submitted after the deadline with the emailed permission of the instructor, and may be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late.

Attendance and Participation

Because this class meets only once a week, it is essential that all students attend all classes; occasional absence for reasons of illness or emergency can be accommodated, but regular absence because of conflicts with work schedules or personal issues cannot. Students are expected to contribute to the class by completing all readings before the class, participating in class discussions both in the classroom and through Blackboard's Discussion Board, and serving as audience for group presentations.

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

Faculty 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 www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/info. 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

In this class, you will receive grades in the 4-point scale (2.7, 3.0, 3.3) *rather than* percentages. Sometimes you may receive grade points between letter grades. 3.5 is the mathematical mid-point between a B+ (3.3) and an A- (3.7) and 3.15 is the mid-point between a B (3.0) and a B+ (3.3), etc.

The following grading system is used in the Faculty of Communication and Culture: (Revised, effective September 2008)

Letter Grade	Grading Scale	Grade Point Value (see U of C Calendar: Academic Standing)
A+	96-100	4
A	90-95.99	4
A -	85-89.99	3.7
B+	80-84.99	3.3
B	75-79.99	3
B-	70-74.99	2.7
C+	65-69.99	2.3
C	60-64.99	2
C-	55-59.99	1.7
D+	53-54.99	1.3
D	50-52.99	1
F	0-49	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. 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 (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 Communication and Culture see www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/su

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/compliance/ethics/info/undergrad/>

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

Textbook readings and other announcements will be posted to Blackboard throughout the term. Please make checking Blackboard a regular part of your routine.