

**Communications Studies (COMS) 473 – Lecture 01**  
**Popular Culture**  
**Fall 2013**  
**R 12:30 – 15:15**

**Instructor:** Shane Halasz  
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**Web Page:** <http://blackboard.ucalgary.ca>  
**Office Hours:** Tuesdays 13:00 – 15:00 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 will be organized around case studies that illustrate and build upon theoretical perspectives covered in the assigned readings.

**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

**Internet and Electronic Communication Device Information**

Laptop computers may be used for the sole purpose of taking notes.

Cell phones and all other forms of electronic communication must be turned off and put away during class.

## **Textbooks and Readings:**

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

Other readings will be made available on Blackboard. See detailed schedule of lectures and readings (to be made available on Blackboard prior to the first class) for more information.

## **Assignments and Evaluation**

### 1. Critical Reading Response (15%) Due beginning of class September 26, 2013

Students will write a brief (500 words) critical response to a question or prompt centered around the assigned readings from weeks 1 and 2. The question will be given in class on September 19, 2013.

### 2. Midterm Exam (20%) October 10, 2013

The midterm exam (2 hours) will cover content from readings and lecture. The format will be some combination of short answer and definition of key terms.

### 3. Term Paper (30%) Due November 28, 2013

Students will write a 12-page (double-spaced) paper wherein they apply one or more theories from the course text to the analysis of a popular cultural text/artifact/phenomenon of their choosing. The ideas must be rooted in one or more readings drawn from the Storey anthology, and students will be expected to expand upon those anchor sources with further scholarly research.

### 4. Final Exam (35%) TBA by Registrar

The final exam will cover lecture material and readings assigned since the midterm, and will consist of two short essays.

**NB: ALL ASSIGNMENTS MUST BE COMPLETED TO PASS THIS COURSE.**

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: YES**

Please note: If your class is held in the evening, the Registrar's Office will make every attempt to schedule the final exam during the evening; however, there is NO guarantee that the exam will NOT be scheduled during the day.

### **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. *No emailed assignments will be accepted unless otherwise specified.*

### **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://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 Faculty of Communication and Culture:

	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 Student Accessibility Services (220-8237, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/>) 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.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds>

## **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**

To be distributed in the first class.