

University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film

COMS 473 (L01): Popular Culture

FALL 2020: September 8 to Dec. 9 (excluding Oct. 12th and Nov. 9-13th)

Asynchronous lecture upload on Mondays;
Synchronous Zoom sessions on Wednesdays 9:30am-10:45am

IMPORTANT NOTE ON COURSE DELIVERY FOR FALL 2020:

This Fall 2020 course will be offered entirely online as part of the University's plan to ensure everyone's safety during the Covid-19 pandemic. Please read the outline carefully to see which course components will be offered synchronously (where you are expected to participate at the usual scheduled course time) and which components will be offered asynchronously (to be completed on your own time). Synchronous course sessions will normally be hosted on Zoom, a video-conferencing program. To access scheduled Zoom course sessions, go to D2L, click on the COMMUNICATION tab, and select Zoom 5 or 10 minutes before class is scheduled to begin.

If you will not be able to participate in scheduled synchronous class sessions owing to time differences, then you should arrange to take this course when it is offered in person in the future.

Note that the time indicated on course outlines for all timed quizzes and exams in CMCL, COMS, and FILM courses includes 50% extra time to allow for technical difficulties.

Instructor:	Dr. S. Thrift (she/her pronouns)
Email:	samantha.thrift@ucalgary.ca
Web Page:	D2L (access via MyUofC portal)
Office Hours:	W 11:00-12:00, Th 11:00-12:00

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

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

This course has both asynchronous and synchronous components. We will meet synchronously via Zoom on Wednesdays, with the exception of Quiz days (Oct. 14 and Nov. 4). Please see the schedule of class activities below for details.

Office Hours will be held by appointment via Zoom. Contact the instructor for an appointment.

Students are responsible for reading and following all course and university policies discussed in this outline. Prerequisite: COMS 371.

Objectives of the Course

The course objectives are to...

- 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 clearly communicate your critical media literacy of popular culture texts through written essays and oral presentations.
- To collaborate with peers to create and lead a class presentation.

Textbooks and Readings

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 and content 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.
- Students may use either the print or electronic version of the textbook. Information for purchasing the e-book will be available on D2L.

Additional readings will be posted to the COMS 473 website on D2L.

Learning Technologies and Requirements & Policy on the Use of Electronic Communication Devices

This is an online course. In order to complete online (or blended) 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);
- A microphone and speaker (built-in or external), or headset with microphone.

Most current laptops will have a built-in webcam, speaker and microphone. 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 the university's IT department. For more information, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/student-campus-services-information-technologies-it.html>

Instructors may arrange to record synchronous zoom class sessions for lesson capture; however, students are not to share recordings with others. Please carefully review the section on Instructor Copyright at the end of this outline.

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, please make arrangements for a Zoom appointment with the instructor during their 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.

Assignments and Evaluation

Weight	Assessed components	Due
15%	Quiz 1	October 14
15%	Quiz 2	November 4
25%	Ignite Presentation (Group)	TBD
10%	Meme Analysis Peer Review	December 2
35%	Internet Meme Analysis	December 9

Quizzes (30%) Dates: Oct. 14 (15%) and Nov. 4 (15%)

There are two quizzes this semester, which assess student comprehension of the assigned readings, lecture content, and issues raised during class discussion. Quizzes will be run on D2L. Quizzes are multiple choice and open book. Students have 90 minutes to complete the quiz (this timing allows 30 minutes for any technical issues that might arise during test taking).

The quizzes will be available for a 24-hour period, beginning at 9:30am of the quiz date (and ending at 9:30am the following day). Students may take the quiz only once during the 24-hour period.

Quiz 1 will cover course content up to October 12.

Quiz 2 will include content covered from October 19 to November 2.

Ignite Presentation (25%) Dates: TBD

For this assignment, students will work in groups to create and deliver an Ignite presentation to the class during one of our synchronous Zoom sessions. The Ignite presentation format will consist of a 10 minute long presentation with 20 slides. The slides will advance every 30 seconds, forcing speakers to make their point quickly.

The presentation will explore an idea, theory or concept from the week's reading or lecture in relation to a pop culture example of the group's choosing. Groups are advised to consult with the instructor, if they have concerns about the appropriateness of their chosen example (ex. use of coarse language, representations of violence, racism, sexism, homophobia, etc.).

The presentation must also include two discussion questions for the class. Groups will be formed during the second week of class.

Internet Meme Analysis (30%) due: December 9

The major writing assignment in COMS 437 is an Internet Meme Analysis. Students are asked to write an analysis (1500-2000 words, double-spaced, 1" margins) of an Internet meme, in which they critically examine the meme's popularity or "success." Students are encouraged to select a meme of their choosing, although a list of options will be provided in the assignment guidelines.

Articles by meme scholars Limor Shifman and Kate Miltner are 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.

Essays will be submitted to Dropbox. Files may be submitted in Word or PDF formats; however, if feedback is requested, submit the essay as a Word doc.

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).

Meme Analysis Peer Review (10%) December 2

Synchronous Zoom class time will be allotted for sharing and discussing draft versions of your final paper in peer groups. For the peer review, students need to prepare a complete (intro, body, conclusion, bibliography) draft of their final essay and distribute the essay draft to their peers and Dr. Thrift in advance.

The draft will be evaluated by the instructor for its level of completeness (more details to be provided in class). Please note that feedback on drafts will not be provided by the instructor.

Attendance at the peer review is important, as a portion of your grade will be based on your preparedness and active participation.

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

Note: You must complete all assignments and exams or a course grade of F may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor.

If you miss a required course component, please contact your instructor as soon as possible.

Submission of Assignments

Please submit all assignments electronically by uploading them to the designated D2L dropbox (unless instructed otherwise in the assignment guidelines). Include your name and ID number on all assignments. It is your responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to ensure that you submit the proper version (particularly in courses requiring electronic submission).

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 recorded 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.

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. 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 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, see Section M.1 of the *University Calendar*: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/m-1.html>. Also see FAQs for Students: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/appeals/student-faq>

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, percentage grades will be used for the essay assignment, while point scores will be used for quizzes, peer review, and Ignite presentations.

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, please consult your instructor or visit the Student Success Centre, 3rd floor, Taylor Family Digital Library. To book an appointment, go to https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success?utm_source=ssc&utm_medium=redirect&utm_campaign=redirect

Instructor Intellectual Property & Copyright Legislation

Course materials created by the instructor (including 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.

All students are required to read the University of Calgary policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright (www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/acceptable-use-of-

material-protected-by-copyright.pdf) and requirements of the copyright act (<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html>) to ensure they are aware of the consequences of unauthorized sharing of course materials (including instructor notes, electronic versions of textbooks etc.). 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 deferrals of exams and course work, requests for reappraisals, and other matters, please see the relevant sections in the *University Calendar*: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/academic-regs.html>

Student Support Services and Resources

Please visit <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, visit <http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students>. IT support is available at itsupport@ucalgary.ca or by calling 403-220.5555.

Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings

In the following schedule, synchronous meeting dates are **bolded** and indicated with an **(S)**.

Date	Topic & Reading	Deadlines
Sept 9 (S)	Course Introduction	
Sept 14	History of Pop Culture: Textbook Ch. 2 lecture upload	
Sept 16 (S)	Tips & Tricks for Zoom Presentations	

Representation & Pop Culture		
Sept 21	Representation(s) in Pop Culture: Textbook Ch. 3 lecture upload	
Sept 23 (S)	Ignite Pres. & Discussion	Ignite Group 1
Sept 28	Identity & Pop Culture - Textbook Ch. 6 lecture upload <u>Screening: <i>Tough Guise 2</i></u>	
Sept 30 (S)	Ignite Pres. & Discussion	Ignite Group 2
Oct 5	Community & Pop Culture - Textbook Ch. 7 lecture upload	
Oct 7 (S)	Ignite Pres. & Discussion	Ignite Group 3
Oct 12	No Class (Holiday)	
Oct 14	Quiz 1	Quiz 1
Producing Popular Culture		
Oct 19	Producing Pop Culture - Textbook Ch. 4 lecture upload <u>Screening: <i>No Logo</i> (2003)</u>	
Oct 21 (S)	Ignite Pres. & Discussion	Ignite Group 4
Oct 26	Subcultures & Countercultures - Textbook Ch. 8 lecture upload	
Oct 28 (S)	Ignite Pres. & Discussion	Ignite Group 5
Nov 2	Participatory Culture(s) – D2L Reading – lecture upload	
Nov 4	Quiz 2	Quiz 2
Consuming Popular Culture		
Nov 9-11	READING BREAK	
Nov 16	Consumer Culture - Textbook Ch. 5 lecture upload	

Nov 18 (S)	Ignite Pres. & Discussion	Ignite Group 6
Nov 23	Celebrity - D2L Reading – lecture upload	
Nov 25 (S)	Ignite Pres. & Discussion	Ignite Group 7
Nov 30	Fandom - D2L reading – lecture upload	
Dec 2 (S)	Essay Peer Review	Essay Peer Review
Dec 7	Independent Essay Work/Additional Office Hours	
Dec 9 (S)	Course Conclusion	Meme essays due