

Communications Studies (COMS) 473 – Lecture 20
Popular Culture
Spring 2011
Sat 1-5.30pm. Class dates: May 7, 14, 21, 28; June 4, 11, 18.

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Course Description

A communications studies approach to the study of popular culture, including a selection of the following: 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

- To develop skills in critical analysis: to make connections between popular culture representations, the contexts of their production, and the contexts of our own readings.
- To use scholarly and social theories and debates as frameworks within which to conduct our analyses.
- To develop an appreciation for popular culture as an agent of social meaning, cultural change, and individual identity construction.
- To examine the problems posed by popular culture as subject of study: why should we study these everyday texts and practices? How can we produce work which uses multiple media and non-traditional texts without sacrificing academic rigor?

Internet and electronic communication device information

Laptops may be used in class to take notes. Cell phones must be turned off in class. In particular circumstances, where cleared with the instructor, students may leave their cell phone on but must keep it on silent. Further details will be explained on the first day of class.

Textbooks and Readings:

A reading package will be available for purchase at the bookstore. Additional readings will be made available on Blackboard before the first week of class. Please check Blackboard for information regarding reading assignments for the first week.

Assignments and Evaluation

Reading Response 10%

Students will complete a short written analysis (3 pages) of one course reading. Sign-up will take place on the first day of classes. Assignment is due May 21.

Social history 20%

Students will produce an analysis of the social history of a product as viewed through its advertising. This is a pair/small-group assignment and students will present their findings in-class. Further details of this assignment will be given on the first day of class. This assignment will be due June 11.

In-class Quiz (2 x 10%) 20%

There will be two short in-class quizzes based on the class readings and lecture material. Details and dates for these will be given on the first day of class.

Discussion papers (2 x 20%) 40%

Students will write two short essays (approx. 7 pages). The first will be based on an in-class activity in week 2 of the course. The second will be in response to a list of questions provided by the instructor. The questions for this will be distributed in class. For the second paper, students may write on a question of their own choosing (with the approval of the instructor). Paper 1 will be due May 28. The deadline for Paper 2 will be announced in the first class.

Class Participation 10%

Participation grades will be awarded on the basis of your active involvement in class discussions and activities. In order to receive participation grades, students are expected to be in attendance for classes, be attentive during lectures, and contribute to the discussions. Attendance will be taken in each class.

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: No

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.

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://www.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: www.efwr.ucalgary.ca

Grading System

The following grading system is used in the Department of Communication and Culture:

(Revised, effective September 2008)

	Grading Scale
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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 (MacEwan Student Centre 4th floor, 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 Arts see <http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/governance/elections/home.html>

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/cfreb>

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

This will be posted on Blackboard one week prior to the start of classes.