

**University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film**

**Communications Studies COMS 473, L01
POPULAR CULTURE**

SPRING 2016

Tuesday May 10 – Thursday June 30
(excluding May 26, 31, June 1, 23)

Lectures, TR 09:00-11:45am

Instructor: Dr. Emily Truman
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Web Page: D2L available through MyUofC portal
Office Hours: Tuesdays 12:00 – 2:00pm, 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.

In particular, we will engage in in-depth discussions about popular texts through the key themes of representation, production, consumption, identity, community, counterculture, globalization, and cultural values. Students will be asked to use and further develop their analytical skills to think critically about the concept of “power” and how it is connected to patterns and practices in popular culture in relation to the themes above. Alongside classic examples from this area of study (such as photographs, Hollywood films, commodities, and television), we will also engage with a variety of examples that define our current pop culture moment, including podcasts, internet memes, Netflix, selfies, sporting events, clothing, smart phones and iconic representations. The course will culminate in group projects that explore and evaluate the meaning and significance of “popular icons” in the current pop culture landscape.

Objectives of the Course

Students in this course will:

- Develop a solid understanding of the key concepts, issues and ideas related to popular culture studies;
- understand how to apply communication theory to the explanation of popular culture examples, events, and occurrences;
- engage in-depth with the theme of representation, through a written assignment on “internet memes”;

- engage in-depth with the theme of collective cultural values, through a group presentation and group essay project on a “popular icon”;
- think critically to develop an “educated opinion” through learning, debate, and discussion;
- further develop the key skill of clear communication, both orally (in class and through group work) and in writing (through course assignments);
- practice cooperative group work skills, and develop the ability to work independently as required.

Textbooks and Readings

The required course textbook for this course is available at the campus bookstore:

O'Brien, Susie & Szeman, Imre. (2014). *Popular Culture: a user's guide, third edition.* Toronto: Nelson Education.

*Please note that the instructor will be teaching from the THIRD EDITION of this book for this course. Students in this course are advised to use the third edition only, as pagination may not match between editions. If students are using previous editions of this text, it is the student's responsibility to check for missed content.

NOTE: a small number of other required readings will be provided through our course D2L page. The instructor will clearly identify the location of these readings for students at the beginning of the course.

It is the student's responsibility to do all assigned readings for each week before coming to class. Readings in this course are designed to act as introductory material to prepare students for the issues/topics to be discussed in the lecture and class discussion. It will be difficult to fully participate and enjoy the class if students have not completed the readings before hand. Please consider that those who complete the readings every week and actively participate in class each week are more likely to achieve higher levels of success in the course.

Internet and electronic communication device information

The use of laptops in class is acceptable for note taking purposes. However, please refrain from using them to surf the internet, facebook, twitter, etc. as this is extremely distracting to your neighbours who want to learn and actively engage in the class.

The use of other electronic devices such as smart phones and tablets during class time is ***strongly discouraged*** in order to allow all students to engage fully with course materials and participate in group discussion and activities. Please silence these devices and leave them in your bags and/or pockets during class time.

PLEASE NOTE: if any student engages in repeated distracting use of electronic devices (including laptops) while class is in session, their participation mark may be negatively affected.

Assignments and Evaluation

Weight	Course components	Due
10%	Participation	Ongoing
20%	Internet Meme Analysis (short paper), 3-4 pages	May 24
30%	In-class Quizzes (x2 @ 15% each)	1) May 19 2) June 16
15%	"Popular Icon" Group Presentation (5 min.)	June 30
25%	"Popular Icon" Group Paper, 12-15 pages	July 4

All assignments and exams weighted more than 10% must be completed in order to receive a passing grade in the course.

1. Participation (10%)

As this is a fourth year course, students are expected not only to read their assigned chapter/articles before each class, but also to come to class ready, willing and able to discuss the key ideas, debates, themes, and examples from the readings. Your participation mark will be dependent on your regular attendance in class and your participation in class discussions and group activities.

2. Internet Meme Analysis – Short Paper (20%)

Students will be asked to complete a short written analysis (3-4 pages, double-spaced, 12 pt. font, 1 inch margins) of an internet meme in which they will be asked to critically examine its popularity or "success". Following a general discussion in class about internet memes, students will be encouraged to choose their own internet meme to analyze OR they may use an example from a list supplied by the instructor which will be available via our D2L course page. A theoretical article will be 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, including a marking rubric outlining clear expectations for the content of the paper.

When submitting the paper, in addition to meeting the formatting guidelines above, please also include a works cited list, and a title page including the following information: your name, the course code, your instructor's name, the date, and a creative title for your assignment.

This assignment is DUE in hard copy, in class (to be submitted in person directly to your instructor) on May 24 at 9:00am. Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of one grade point (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late, up to 10 days, at which point the student will receive a grade of zero "0".

If an emergency situation arises that prevents you from submitting your assignment by the deadline, please contact your instructor within 5 days of the due date) to consult about alternative arrangements. You may be asked to provide the instructor with documentation regarding your absence.

3. In-class Quizzes (2 x 15% each = 30%)

Students will be complete 2 in-class quizzes in this course, which are worth 15% each, for a total of 30% of the course mark. The quizzes will be administered in the last 30 minutes of the class on the following dates: May 19 and June 16. Each one will consist of 15 questions: 5 quick answer questions (identification, fill in the blank, etc.) worth one mark each, and 5 short answer questions (explain the meaning of, provide a definition for, etc.) worth two marks each. Sample questions will be provided in class before the first quiz takes place.

If you miss an in-class quiz due to an emergency, you must contact your instructor within 5 days of the original quiz date in order to arrange an alternative assignment. You may be asked to provide the instructor with documentation regarding your absence. On the sixth day following the original quiz date, any students having missed the quiz who have not made alternative arrangements with the instructor will receive an automatic grade of “0” on their quiz.

4. “Popular Icon” Group Presentation (15%)

In small groups of 3 or 4, students will be asked to choose a “popular icon” and engage in a analysis of its significance through a brief, but thoughtful and effective, group presentation of 5 minutes which directly addresses the question: what is the popular icon’s cultural, social, and/or political significance? Students will be asked to think creatively about how to present an image of their icon in their presentation (i.e. physical image, digital image, live image, costume, artistic creation, etc.), as well as how to effectively communicate the popular icon’s importance and meaning in terms of collective cultural values in a limited amount of time. Leading into this final assignment, we will read about and discuss the topic of popular icons in class in order to prepare for it. Further, in-class workshop time is provided near the end of the course to facilitate group work on the project.

The presentations will take place in class on June 30. All members of each group are expected to be present and to participate in the presentation. More details to follow in class, including a grading rubric outlining clear expectations for the content of the group presentation.

5. “Popular Icon” Group Paper (25%)

Group Paper: 20%

Individual Self-Evaluation: 5%

In the same small groups as the presentation assignment above, students will be asked to produce a group essay (12-15 pages, double-spaced, 12 pt. font, 1 inch margins) engaging in a detailed and in-depth critical analysis of the “popular icon” that is the topic of their group presentation. This analysis must include: the icon’s history, an image of it, a description of its original context(s), an exploration of popular spaces/places in which it circulates including 2-3 examples, its meaning to popular audiences, and its broader cultural significance. This paper is worth 20% of the final mark in the course.

In addition to the group paper, each student will be asked to submit (separately, via a dropbox in D2L) a self-evaluation outlining their role, duties, and outputs in relation to the group presentation and group paper projects. This 1-2 page detailed and thoughtful reflection is worth 5% of the final mark in the course.

The group paper AND self-evaluations are both DUE by July 4, 2016 at 4:00pm, to be submitted electronically through our course D2L page. More details about the assignment to follow in class, including a grading rubric outlining clear expectations for the content of the group paper.

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

Submission of Assignments: 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.

Please include your name and ID number on all assignments, and be prepared to provide picture ID to pick up assignments or look at marked final exams in SS 320. Personal information is collected in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act*. For more information, see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy>

Note: It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to ensure that the proper version is submitted (particularly in courses requiring electronic submission). Including a version date in your file name may be useful.

Policy for Late Assignments

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of one grade point (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late, up to 10 days, at which point the student will receive a grade of zero "0".

Policy on E-mail Correspondence:

Please be advised that I will do my best to answer all e-mail inquiries in a timely manner, but please allow 24-48 hours for a response to your questions.

Please treat your e-mail correspondence with your instructor (and your colleagues in the class) with *maturity and professionalism* (these are good skills to practice as you'll need them in the working world once you leave university).

In the interest of keeping course e-mail correspondence concise and coherent **please limit your e-mails to specific inquiries about administrative details (1 or 2 lines about assignment deadlines, course content/readings, etc.)**

If you have a specific concern or detailed inquiry related to the course please come see me during my office hours so that we can discuss your concerns together and find a suitable solution. I am more than happy to spend this time discussing questions related to the course, or even more generally your research interests or your communication degree. Come see me! I'm here to help you find success in the course.

Please note: e-mail is not an appropriate forum for discussing assignment marks and/or final grades in the course as it does not allow for an open dialogue between student and instructor. !

will not respond to these e-mails. Instead, please make an appointment to speak with me in person about your marks (either during my office hours, or by appointment).

Student Accommodations:

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services; SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For additional information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/.

Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework 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) should contact their instructors. Whenever possible, students should advise their instructors in advance if they will be missing quizzes, presentations, in-class assignments, or group meetings.
- When accommodations are granted, they may take forms other than make-up tests or assignments. For example, the weight of a missed grade may be added to another assignment or test.
- For information on Deferrals of Final Exams and Term Work, see sections G.6 and G.7 of the *University Calendar* at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html> and <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>

Writing Skills Statement

Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will 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. Sources used in 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 & Grade Scale of the Department of Communication, Media and Film

Final grades are reported as letter grades. In this course percentage grades will be used for all assignments (with the corresponding letter grade noted next to the percentage).

The following chart outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film. In calculating final grades in this course, percentage grades will be converted into letter grades based on the scale below (second column from the right).

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Dept of CMF grade scale equivalents*	Letter grade % equivalent for calculations* *
4.00	Outstanding	A+	96 - 100%	98.0%
4.00	Excellent—superior performance, showing comprehensive understanding of subject matter.	A	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
3.70		A -	85 - 89.99%	87.5%

3.30		B+	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
3.00	Good--clearly above average performance with knowledge of subject matter generally complete.	B	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
2.70		B-	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
2.30		C+	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
2.00	Satisfactory—basic understanding of the subject matter.	C	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
1.70		C-	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
1.30	Minimal pass—marginal performance; generally insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D+	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
1.00		D	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
0.00	Fail – unsatisfactory performance or failure to meet course requirements.	F	0- 49.99%	0%

* If percentages are used to calculate final grades, then grades falling within these ranges will be translated to the corresponding letter grades.

** 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.

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

For information on citation and documentation styles (including APA, Chicago, IEEE, MLA, and others), visit the links provided at <https://ucalgary.ca/ssc/resources/writing-support/436> . If you have questions about how to document sources, please consult your instructor or the Writing Centre (3rd Floor TFDL, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>).

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 (e.g., surveys, interviews, or observations) as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, see <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/resources/ethics>

Important information, services, and contacts for students

For information about . . .	Visit or contact . . .
ARTS PROGRAM ADVISING (ASC)	SS 102 403-220-3580 artsads@ucalgary.ca
CAMPUS SECURITY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calgary Police Service • Emergency Text Messaging • Emergency Evacuation & Assembly • Safewalk Program 	http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/ 403-220-5333 403-266-1234 Emergency: call 911 http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints If you feel uncomfortable walking alone at any time, call Campus Security for an escort (220-5333). For more information, see http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/
DESIRE2LEARN (D2L) Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT help line 	http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students 403-220-5555 or itsupport@ucalgary.ca
STUDENT SUCCESS CENTRE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing Support Services • Student Services Mobile App 	http://ucalgary.ca/ssc http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents
STUDENTS' UNION CONTACTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty of Arts Reps • Student Ombudsman 	https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/ http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds
SU WELLNESS CENTRE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselling Services • Health Services • Distress centre 24/7 CRISIS LINE • Online resources and tips 	403-210-9355 (MSC 370), M-F, 9:00–4:30 pm http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health 403-266-HELP (4357) http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus If you're concerned about a friend or your own well-being, it is important to seek help early. Call or visit the SU Wellness Centre or the 24-hour crisis line.

Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings:

WEEK	TOPIC	READINGS
1. May 10	Introduction to the course & first lecture	No readings
2. May 12	<i>History of Pop Culture</i>	Textbook Chap. 2
3. May 17	<i>Representation(s) in Pop Culture</i>	Textbook Chap. 3
4. May 19	<i>Producing Pop Culture</i> <i>*Quiz #1</i>	Textbook Chap. 4
5. May 24	<i>Consuming Pop Culture</i> <i>*Internet Meme Analysis DUE</i>	Textbook Chap. 5
May 26, May 31, June 1 - <u>No Classes due to Congress</u>		
6. June 7	<i>Identity and the Self</i>	Textbook Chap. 6
7. June 9	<i>Identity and Community</i>	Textbook Chap. 7
8. June 14	<i>Counterculture</i>	Textbook Chap. 8
9. June 16	<i>Globalization</i> <i>*Quiz #2</i>	Textbook Chap. 9
10. June 21	<i>Popular Icons</i> *in-class group work on final projects	Readings on D2L
June 23 – <u>No class - Instructor away for conference</u>	<i>Time allotted for working on final group projects.</i>	<i>No readings</i>
12. June 28	<i>The Icon: special topic</i> *in-class group work on final projects	Readings on D2L
13. June 30	<i>1) "Popular Icon" Group Presentations in class 2) "Popular Icon" Group Paper DUE by Monday July 4, 2016 at 4:00pm via the dropbox in D2L.</i>	