

University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film

Communication and Media Studies COMS 473, L01
Popular Culture

Winter 2018

Thu., Jan. 11 – Thu., April 12 (excluding Feb. 22)

R 12:30-15:15

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Web Page: D2L available through MyUofC portal
Office Hours: 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 discussions and activities will be organized around case studies that illustrate and build upon theoretical perspectives covered in the assigned readings.

Additional Information

This course will employ a team-based learning strategy in which students work together in groups of 5 or 6 in order to unpack, discuss, and make sense of the assigned readings. Groups will be determined in the first class and will remain intact for the semester. Therefore, it is essential that students not only complete the readings prior to class but also attend class regularly and fully participate during in-class exercises and assignments. Students will be held personally accountable for their level of preparedness and contributions to group discussion and exercises by way of a peer evaluation form to be completed at the end of the term. Group assignment scores will be adjusted according to these peer evaluations (see Assignments and Evaluation section below).

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
- Interpersonal communication and collaboration skills

Textbooks and Readings

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

Internet and electronic communication device information

No restrictions on use of laptops in class if they are used to take notes or perform sanctioned research during an in-class activity and if there is no disturbance of other students by visiting inappropriate web sites. Cell phones must be POWERED OFF and put away during class time.

Assignments and Evaluation

1. Reading Quizzes (Individual) 20% (best 6/7 scores) See schedule below

At the beginning of each module (refer to schedule below) students will complete a brief readiness assessment test based on that day's assigned readings. The format will include some mix of multiple choice, true/false, and quotation identification. The goal with these quizzes is to ensure that students have completed the assigned readings and are coming prepared to participate in whatever group activities and class discussion are planned for that day. The quizzes will take place in the first 20 minutes. They cannot be written at another time nor made up for any reason. so please ensure that you attend class regularly and arrive on time. Arriving more than 5 minutes late for the beginning of class will result in a penalty on that day's quiz. Students arriving 20 minutes late or more will not be permitted to write that day's quiz. There are 7 quizzes scheduled, but your lowest score will be dropped and only your 6 best scores will be counted.

2. Reading Quizzes (Group) 15% (best 6/7 scores) See schedule below

As soon as students submit their individual reading quizzes, they will receive another copy of the same quiz to be completed collaboratively by their group. The intention here is that students will learn from hearing each other support their arguments as to which is the correct answer, and thereby enrich their understanding of the material covered that class. These group quizzes will be collected, scored, and immediately returned along with the individual quizzes. The instructor will then address by way of mini-lecture or discussion areas that need clarification or elaboration before moving to scheduled activities. As with the individual quizzes, your lowest group quiz score will be dropped.

3. Midterm Exam (Individual) 20% February 15

The midterm exam will be 2 hours and have two parts. Part A (worth) 25% will consist of objective identifications of 10 quotations (selected from readings assigned to date) to the correct author. Part B (worth 75%) will be an essay chosen from two topics given on the day of the exam. The exam will be closed book and no outside materials will be allowed.

4. Presentation (Group)

15%

March 29, April 5

The bulk of class time will be spent in groups working to apply theoretical concepts in hands-on scenarios by answering questions or responding to prompts posed by the instructor. Near the end of the semester student teams will distill and briefly present (roughly 15 minutes) to the class what they feel is the most important thing that they have learned in the preceding classes based on their team discussions. Particular attention should be paid on where individual differences of opinion existed, the extent to which consensus could be reached, and where and why differences persisted following the discussion.

5. Research Paper

30%

Due on D2L by noon April 13*

Students will write a fully referenced (using APA style) 6-page single-spaced paper wherein they apply one or more theories from the course text to the analysis of a popular cultural text/artifact/event/phenomenon of their choosing. The ideas must be rooted in at least one reading drawn from the Storey anthology (even if we didn't cover it) and students will be expected to expand upon those anchor sources with further scholarly research.

* Research paper is due the day following the last day of class.

NB: At the end of the semester all students will fill out a peer evaluation form in which they distribute 100 points among everybody in their group except themselves. Each student's scores for the team assignments will then be adjusted based on those tallied scores. For instance, suppose a team earns a total of 26/30 on the team assignments (gRATs + presentation = 30% of final grade). Those 26 points would then be adjusted for all team members based on their peer evaluation scores. A student who receives 100 points from the team would receive the full 26/30, but a student whose evaluations add up to only 85 points would receive 22.1/30. A student who receives 110 points from the team would score 28.6/30, and a student who receives 105 points from the team would score 27.3/30. Hence, a student's final grade may be affected for better or worse (or not at all).

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

All assignments and exams (excluding quizzes) must be completed or a course grade of F may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor.

Submission of Assignments: Please submit all written work through the D2L Dropbox utility.

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/legalservices/foip/foip-hia>

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 a 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 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>

Grading & Department of Communication, Media and Film Grade Scale

Final grades are reported as letter grades. In this course raw point scores will be used.

The following chart outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film.

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%

* 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.

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 support services in the Student Success Centre (3rd floor, Taylor Family Digital Library). Visit the website for more details: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

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>. Research and citation resources are also available on the website of the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) at <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/>. If you have questions about how to document sources, please consult your instructor or visit the writing support services in the Student Success Centre (3rd floor, Taylor Family Digital Library, at <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

January 11

Course Introduction; Team Formation

No Assigned Readings

January 18

Module 1: From Culture and Civilization to Cultural Studies

Assigned Readings:

- Arnold, "Culture and Anarchy"
- Leavis, "Mass Civilization and Minority Culture"
- Hoggart, "The Full Rich Life & The Newer Art: Sex in Shiny Packets"
- Williams, "The Analysis of Culture"
- Thompson, "Preface from *The Making of the English Working Class*"
- Hall and Whannel, "The Young Audience"

January 25

Module 2: Evolution of Critical Theory

Assigned Readings:

- Marx and Engels, "Ruling Class and Ruling Ideas"
- Marx, "Base and Superstructure"
- Engels, "Letter to Joseph Bloch"
- Adorno, "On Popular Music"
- Gramsci, "Hegemony, Intellectuals, and the State"
- Bennett, "Popular Culture and the 'turn to Gramsci'"
- Storey, "Rockin' Hegemony: West Coast Rock and Amerika's War in Vietnam"

February 1

Module 3: Consciousness, Ideology, Discourse

Assigned Readings:

- Freud, "The Dream-Work"
- Lacan, "The Mirror Stage"
- Barthes, "Myth Today"
- Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses"
- Foucault, "Method"

February 8

Module 4: Gender and Media

Assigned Readings:

- Ang, "*Dallas* and the Ideology of Mass Culture"
- Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination"
- Gledhill, "Pleasurable Negotiations"

February 15

Midterm Exam

No Assigned Readings

March 1

Module 5: Common Sense and Its Discontents

Assigned Readings:

- Hall, "The Rediscovery of 'Ideology': Return of the Repressed in Media Studies"
- Gilroy, "'Get up, get into it, and get involved': Soul, Civil Rights and Black Power"
- Hall, "What is This Black in 'Black' Popular Culture?"

March 8

Module 6: (It's Still Bigger Than) Hip-Hop: "Race", Racism, and Representation

Assigned Readings:

- [Rose, "'Fear of a Black Planet': Rap Music and Black Cultural Politics in the 1990s" \(DB\)](#)
- West, "Black Postmodernist Practices"
- hooks, "Postmodern Blackness"

March 15

Module 7: "Acid Perspectivism" and The Dawn of a Postmodern Consciousness

Assigned Readings:

- Baudrillard, "The Precession of Simulacra"
- Hebdige, "Postmodernism and 'The Other Side'"
- Wilson, "Fashion and Postmodernism"

March 22

Term Paper Workshop and Presentation Preparation

No Assigned Readings

March 29

Presentations

No Assigned Readings

April 5

Presentations

No Assigned Readings

April 12

Goodbye, Farewell, and Amen: Course Conclusion

No Assigned Readings