

Selected Topics in Popular Culture

CIED 1001A (0.5 credits) Winter 2017 Course syllabus

Instructor: Susan Burhoe

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Course office hour: TBA or by appointment susan.burhoe@carleton.ca

Class time: Wednesday 2:30-5:30 pm

Class Location: 240 Tory Building

Teaching assistant: Anne McKay (annemckay@cmail.carleton.ca)

Student mentors: Tracy Yusuf (tracyyusuf@cmail.carleton.ca) &

Jojo Abrokwhah (jojoabrokwhah@cmail.carleton.ca)

Academic coach: Kelly Doucette (KellyDoucette@cmail.carleton.ca)

Overview

This course will explore popular culture in late 20th and early 21st century America. Each week, we'll investigate case studies that highlight different aspects of modern culture. In this course, you will be introduced to some basic cultural theory and learn how scholars approach cultural "texts". How do we "read" the world around us? How do movies, TV shows or comics reflect our cultural anxieties? How can magazines, fashion and films embody power relationships? You will be encouraged to consider the relationship between ideology and culture as we explore how various mass cultural products and movements have shaped and reflected our ideas about gender, race, normality, and identity throughout the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

Course Objectives

The goal of this course is to provide you with the skills and knowledge to:

- Define key concepts related to semiotics and basic cultural theory.
- Discuss these concepts critically and apply them to cultural "texts" such as advertising, TV, comics, movies, fashion, music and social media.
- Analyze pop culture texts to assess how they reinforce or challenge norms of their social and historical moment, with particular attention to ideas about race, gender and class.
- Practice analysis in oral and written form through class discussions, group work, and written assignments.
- Identify a topic of interest for a personal research project about some aspect of popular culture that you feel strongly about.
- Use class and supplementary readings in the development of your research question or thesis.
- Communicate the results of your learning in written essays and on the final exam.

Textbook

Signs of Life in the U.S.A.: Readings on Popular Culture for Writers. 7th or 8th ed. Ed. Sonia Maasik and Jack Solomon. Boston: Bedford, 2015. Available at the Carleton University Bookstore.

Other readings will be made available on CuLearn.

Course website

CuLearn - CIED 1001A - Winter 2017

To access your courses on cuLearn go to <http://carleton.ca/culearn>. For help and support, go to <http://carleton.ca/culearn/students>. Any unresolved questions: contact Computing and Communication Services (CCS) by phone at 613-520-3700 or email at ccs_service_desk@carleton.ca or drop by their service desk (4th floor library).

Weekly Schedule

January 11: Intro to Modern Pop Culture

Introduction to the course. Why study this stuff anyway? We'll look at some of the debates high vs. low culture and explore the emergence of popular culture in the 20th century.

- No readings assigned for week one.

January 18: Pop Goes the Culture

Pop Quiz #1

Reading:

- Maasik, Sonia and Jack Solomon. "Introduction- Popular Signs: Or, Everything You Always Knew about American Culture (but Nobody Asked)." *Signs of Life in the U.S.A.* pgs. 1-22 (7th Edition) or pgs. 1-19 (8th Edition).

Movie (in-class): *Mickey Mouse Monopoly*. Dir. Sun, Chyng-Feng, Miguel Picker, and Monique Fordham. Media Education Foundation; Kineticvideo.com, 2002.

January 25: Diamonds are a Girl's Best Friend? Hollywood Glamour

Pop Quiz #2

Reading:

- Dyhouse, Carol. Chapter 2 "Hollywood Glamour" in *Glamour: Women, History, Feminism*. London; New York: Zed; Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. pgs. 29-47.

This week we'll discuss the expectations for Essay #1 due February 18.

February 1: Buying-in: Marketing & Identity

Readings:

- Gladwell, Malcolm. "The Science of Shopping". *Signs of Life in the U.S.A.*
- Norton, Anne. "The Signs of Shopping". *Signs of Life in the U.S.A.*

Movie (in-class): *Frontline: The Merchants of Cool*. PBS: 2001.

February 8: "Oh... the HORROR!" Comic Books and Moral Panic in the 50s

Pop Quiz #3

Readings:

- Medhurst, Andy. "Batman, Deviance and Camp". *Signs of Life in the U.S.A.* (7th edition: I'll make this available on cuLearn for those with the 8th edition).
- Wertham, Frederic. "What Parents Don't Know About Comic Books" in *Ladies' Home Journal*, November, 1953, pgs. 50-53 & 214-220. Available online: <http://www.seductionoftheinnocent.org/LadiesHomeJournalNovember1953Contents.htm>

February 15: Rapper's Delight: Hip hop, Race and Culture

Paper #1 due

Reading:

- Omi, M. "In Living Color: Race and American Culture". *Signs of Life in the U.S.A.*

Movie (in-class): *TBA*.

February 22: No class – Study break

March 1:

- Watching the Detectives: Crime Shows on TV

Reading: Chapter 3 Introduction, "Video Dreams: Television and Cultural Forms". *Signs of Life in the U.S.A.* pgs. 255-267 (8th ed) or pgs. 271-286 (7th ed).

March 8: I Cast "Detect Evil": Role Playing Games, Satanism and Moral Panic

Essay Proposal due

Reading:

- TBA.

March 15: Apocalypse Now: Zombies & Cultural Anxiety

Pop Quiz #4

Reading:

- Bishop, Kyle William. "Introduction", in *American Zombie Gothic: the rise and fall (and rise) of the walking dead in popular culture*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co., 2010. pgs. 9-36

March 22: Harry Potter and the Hero's Journey

Reading:

- Seger, Linda. "Creating the Myth", in *Signs of Life in the U.S.A.*: pgs. 386-395 (7th ed) or 334-342 (8th ed).

March 29: Epic Fail: TV, the Web & Irony in Modern Culture

Reading:

- Matheson, C. "The Simpsons, Hyper-Irony, and the Meaning of Life" in *Signs of Life in the U.S.A.*: pgs. 305-317.
- Plus: visit a site like epicfail.com and choose a video that either makes you laugh or cry or worry about the state of modern culture. We'll discuss!

April 5: Miley, Twerking, and the Politics of Race

Essay #2 due

Plus: Exam Review

Readings:

- Haley Freeman, "Miley Cyrus's twerking routine was cultural appropriation at its worst", [The Guardian](http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/aug/27/miley-cyrus-twerking-cultural-appropriation), Tuesday 27 August 2013.
www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/aug/27/miley-cyrus-twerking-cultural-appropriation.
- Anne Theriault, "What Miley Cyrus Did Was Disgusting -- But Not For the Reasons You Think", Huffington Post, Posted: 08/27/2013 2:37 pm.
http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/anne-theriault-/miley-cyrus-vma-performance_b_3819177.html

Course Evaluation

Component	Due date	Percent of grade assigned	Track your grade
Pop quizzes	January 18 & 25, February 8, March 15	15%	
Essay 1	February 15	15%	
Essay proposal	March 8	10%	
Essay 2	April 5	30%	
Final exam	Will be held during final exam period April 10-25, date TBA	30%	
Total		100%	

Essay #1: Consumer Culture or Decoding Disney

15%

Essay due: February 15

Choose one of the options below. Write a 3-4 page (750-1000 words) analysis, drawing on the relevant readings from *Signs of Life in America* and movies from class. More information about this assignment and which readings you must use in your essay will be provided in class and on cuLearn.

Consult pgs. 23-64 “Writing about Popular Culture” in *Signs of Life* for advice on how to write papers about popular culture as well as citation rules.

- **Option One - Shopping and Space:** Visit a popular retail store such as Urban Outfitters, Banana Republic, The Gap, Forever 21, Apple Store, Toys R Us. Discuss the ways in which the store uses spatial design in order to try to influence your behavior and buying habits. What messages are conveyed in the images, décor and displays throughout the store?
- **Option Two - Cool hunting:** Visit a Web site of a major retailer, such as www.bercrombieandfitch.com, www.ralphlauren.com, www.gap.com, www.diesel.com, www.h&m.com, www.silverjeans.com, www.nike.com, www.adidas.com, www.seanjohn.com, www.anthropologie.com, or another retailer aimed at the youth market. How does the online store attempt to associate their product with a *specific kind of identity* (and *what kind of identity*) in order to encourage youth consumption?
- **Option Three - Decoding Disney:** Choose one Disney animated film. Analyze the film by applying some of the critiques from the film *Mickey Mouse Monopoly*. How does the film represent norms about gender, race, and/or class roles?

Essay#2: Reading Pop Culture

Proposal due: March 8

10%

Essay due: April 5

30%

Analyze a cultural product (film, TV show, comic book, video game, youtube channel of your choosing). More details on the expectations for each component will be provided in class.

- **Essay Proposal:** Write a 1^{1/2} to 2^{1/2} page (300-625 words) proposal for your final paper. Be sure to include a bibliography.
- **Essay:** Write a 5-7 page (1,250-1,750 words) analysis of an aspect of popular culture. A list of possible topics will be provided in class.
- Be sure to consult pgs. 23-64 “Writing about Popular Culture” in *Signs of Life* for advice on how to write a paper about popular culture as well as citation rules.

Pop Quizzes

15%

Four Pop Quizzes based on the week's readings on the following dates: **January 18, January 25, February 8 & March 15**. Your highest three grades will be used (three x 5% each). These will be brief quizzes consisting of multiple choice and/or true or false questions.

Final exam

30%

The final exam will be held during the final exam period (date TBA) and will consist of some multiple-choice questions, short answer questions and an essay question. ***Each week, students will have the opportunity to write brief summary notes on a cue card at the end of the class.*** I will collect these cards in a folder that you will receive back at the exam. You can use them for reference ***during*** the exam.

Important Note

If you should miss a class it is your responsibility to complete work and readings that you have missed. All tests and assignments must be completed and handed in on due dates. If an assignment will be late due to illness, an official medical document must be submitted to me as soon as possible, and we can then make alternate arrangements.

Late Papers

Will be penalized 2% per day unless a documented reason is provided (a medical note, or other). Please contact me if you believe you will be late submitting your work.

Plagiarism

The University Senate defines plagiarism as "presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one's own."

This can include:

- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else's published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one's own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another's data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another's works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in "substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs."
- Plagiarism is a serious offence which cannot be resolved directly with the course's instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of "F" for the course.

Grades

Course Requirements & Methods of Evaluation

In accordance with the Carleton University Undergraduate Calendar (carleton.ca/cuuc), the letter grades assigned in this course will have the following percentage equivalents:

A+ = 90-100	B+ = 77-79	C+ = 67-69	D+ = 57-59	
A = 85-89	B = 73-76	C = 63-66	D = 53-56	
A - = 80-84	B- = 70-72	C - = 60-62	D- = 50- 52	F = Below 50

WDN = Withdrawn from the course (no grade assigned) ABS = Student absent from final exam DEF = Deferred exam
 FND = (Failed, no Deferred) = Student could not pass the course even with 100% on final exam.

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

Academic Accommodation

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term because of disability, pregnancy or religious obligations.

Please review the course outline promptly and write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist.

Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations in this course must register with the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) for a formal evaluation of disability-related needs. Documented disabilities could include but are not limited to mobility/physical impairments, specific Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/psychological disabilities, sensory disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and chronic medical conditions. Registered PMC students are required to contact the PMC, 613-520-6608, every term to ensure that your Instructor receives your Letter of Accommodation, no later than two weeks before the first assignment is due or the first in-class test/midterm requiring accommodations.

If you require accommodations for your exam in this course, please submit your request for accommodations to PMC not later than **March 10th**.

You can visit the Equity Services website to view the policies and to obtain more detailed information on academic accommodation at <http://carleton.ca/equity/accommodation>.

ESP/AESP Information

Your ESP/AESP support team: Academic Advantage Coaches, Student Advisors and Mentors.

Use our on-line scheduling service for booking appointments.

To book an appointment, visit: www.carleton.ca/esp/appointments.

- **Teaching Assistant** (grades papers, quizzes, holds weekly office hours): Anne McKay (annemckay@cmail.carleton.ca)
- **Academic Advantage Coach** (study support, time management, writing help): Kelly Doucette is the coach assigned to our course (though you can meet with any of the coaches).
- **Student Advisors** (program planning, degree requirements, registration, applying to a degree): Stephanie Wagar, Allan Blunt and Susan Burhoe, are the ESP/AESP Advisors: esp.advising@carleton.ca.
- **Student Mentors** (former students who offer peer support and transition advice): Tracy Yusuf (tracyyusuf@cmail.carleton.ca) & Jojo Abrokwah (JojoAbrokwah@cmail.carleton.ca).

AESP Coordinator

Rodney Nelson: rodney.nelson@carleton.ca

AESP Assistant Coordinators

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