

Selected Topics in Popular Culture

CIED 1001A (0.5 credits) Winter 2019 Course syllabus

Instructor: Susan Burhoe

Class time: Friday 11:30 am-2:30 pm

Class Location: 520 Southam Hall

Email: susan.burhoe@carleton.ca

Office: 1517 Dunton Tower

Course office hour:

Wednesday 12:00-1:00 pm or [by appointment](#)

Teaching assistant: [Carleigh Hobson](#)

Student mentors: [Rebecca McKinnon](#) & [Axel Shyaka](#)

Academic coach: TBA

Librarian: [Martha Attridge-Buften](#)

Overview

This course will explore popular culture in late 20th and early 21st century America. Each week, we'll investigate case studies as sites where societal values are embodied, contested, and defined. 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, sexuality, 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 and/or challenge the norms of their social and historical moment, with particular attention to ideas about race, sexuality, 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, 8th or 9th edition. Ed. Sonia Maasik and Jack Solomon. Boston: Bedford. Available at the Carleton University Bookstore.

Other readings will be made available on CuLearn.

Course website: CuLearn - CIED 1001A - Winter 2019

To access the course website visit carleton.ca/culearn. For help and support, go to carleton.ca/culearn/students. Any technical issues: contact Information Technology Services (ITS) by phone at 613-520-3700 or email at its.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 (textbook):

- 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.*

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 (cuLearn):

- 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

Pop Quiz #3

Readings (textbook):

- 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 #4

Readings (textbook & cuLearn):

- 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 or 9th 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 (textbook):

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

Movie (in-class): *Blacking Up: Hip-Hop's Remix Of Race and Identity*. California Newsreel (Firm). New York, N.Y.: Films Media Group, [2012], c2010.

February 22: No class – Study break

March 1: Watching the Detectives: Crime on TV

Reading (textbook):

- Chapter 3 Introduction, “Video Dreams: Television and Cultural Forms”. *Signs of Life in the U.S.A.* pgs. 229-239 (9th ed.), or pgs. 271-286 (8th ed.) or pgs. 255-267 (7th ed.).

March 8: I Cast “Detect Evil”: Role Playing Games, Satanism & Moral Panic

Essay Proposal due

Reading (cuLearn):

- Victor, Jeffrey S. “Chapter Eight: Searching for Satanism in Schools, Books, Music, and Games.” *Satanic Panic: The Creation of a Contemporary Legend*. Chicago: Open Court, 1993. pgs. 155-179.

March 15: Apocalypse Now: Zombies & Cultural Anxiety

Pop Quiz #5

Reading (cuLearn):

- 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

Pop Quiz #6

Reading (textbook):

- Seger, Linda. “Creating the Myth”, in *Signs of Life in the U.S.A.*: pgs. 386-395 (7th ed.) or pgs. 334-342 (8th ed.), or pgs. 326-334 (9th ed.).

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

Reading (textbook & cuLearn):

- Matheson, C. “The Simpsons, Hyper-Irony, and the Meaning of Life” in *Signs of Life in the U.S.A.* (For those with the 9th edition, I’ll upload the article to cuLearn)
- 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

Exam Review today

Readings (cuLearn):

- Haley Freeman, “Miley Cyrus's twerking routine was cultural appropriation at its worst”, *The Guardian*, Tuesday 27 August 2013. 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*, Tuesday 27 August 2013. huffingtonpost.ca/anne-theriault-/miley-cyrus-vma-performance_b_3819177.html

Course Evaluation

Component	Due date	Percent of grade assigned
Pop quizzes	January 18 & 25, February 1 & 8, March 15 & 22	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 12-27), date TBA	30%
Total		100%

Pop Quizzes

15%

Five Pop Quizzes based on the week's readings on the following dates: **January 18, January 25, February 1, February 8, March 15 and March 22**. Your *highest three grades* will be used (three x 5% each). These will be brief quizzes (10 questions) consisting of multiple choice and/or true or false questions.

Essay #1: Consumer Culture or Decoding Disney

15%

Essay due: February 15 *due in class at the beginning of class*

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 about the readings you must use in your essay will be provided in class and on cuLearn.

Consult chapter: "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 (*due in class at the beginning of class*)

10%

Essay due: April 5 (*due in class at the beginning of class*)

30%

Analyze a cultural product (film, TV show, comic book, video game, youtube channel of your choosing). More details on the expectations for the Proposal and Essay #2 will be provided in class and posted to cuLearn.

- **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. Details about this assignment and a template will be provided on cuLearn.
- **Essay #2:** Write a 5-7 page analysis of an aspect of popular culture. A list of possible topics will be provided in class and on cuLearn.
- Be sure to consult the textbook chapter entitled "Writing about Popular Culture" in *Signs of Life* for advice on how to write a paper about popular culture as well as MLA citation rules.

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.

The university's policy on plagiarism and academic integrity can be found here:

<https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity/>

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. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

Pregnancy obligation: Please 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. For more details see the [University Guide](#) on Academic Accommodation.

Religious obligation: Please 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. For more details see the [University Guide](#) on Academic Accommodation.

Accommodation for Student Activities: Please 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. For more details see <https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>

Survivors of sexual violence: As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and is survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: carleton.ca/sexual-violence-support/wp-content/uploads/Sexual-Violence-Policy-December-1-2016.pdf.

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure

accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the [PMC website](#) for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam.

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

ESP/IESP Information

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

Please use our on-line scheduling service for booking appointments.

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

- **Teaching Assistant** (grades papers, quizzes, holds weekly office hours): [Carleigh Hobson](#)
- **Academic Advantage Coach** (study support, time management, writing help): academic.coaching@carleton.ca. Make an appointment online at carleton.ca/esp/appointments
- **Student Advisors** (program planning, degree requirements, registration, applying to a degree): Stephanie Wagar, Allan Blunt, and Susan Burhoe, are the ESP/IESP Advisors: esp.advising@carleton.ca. Make an appointment online at carleton.ca/esp/appointments
- **Student Mentors** (former students who offer peer support and transition advice): [Rebecca McKinnon](#) & [Axel Shyaka](#).

IESP Coordinator

Rodney Nelson: rodney.nelson@carleton.ca (*on sabbatical*)

IESP Assistant Coordinator

Kirstei Abbott: IESP@carleton.ca