

MSP 2421
Media Popular Culture
Fall 2018

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Course Info: Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 11:00am – 11:50am, Tuttleman 406 (3 credit hours)

Office Hours: Mondays 1pm – 3pm, Wednesdays 12pm – 1pm, and by appointment (Annenberg 1B)

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course critically examines the relationship of media to a cultural form that has been both dismissed as trivial and condemned as debasing: popular culture. Of particular interest is the media's role in the production and consumption of this cultural form. This course introduces students to some of the most important critiques of popular culture since the 1930s that can help us understand popular culture and its impact on society. After introducing the foundational concepts and texts used to discuss popular culture, the class will investigate how ideas about the world are communicated through different popular culture texts, including movies, television shows, magazines, music, web pages, online videos, and social media. We will first examine the social and political implications of popular media's representations of gender, sexuality, race, and class. Next, we will look at subcultures, audiences, and the influence of the digital revolution on popular culture. Finally, we will take a global approach to studying popular culture, examining non-Western media formations.

COURSE GOALS

This course is meant to help you:

1. Understand and use key terms and concepts of popular culture theory
2. Become a sophisticated, critical consumer (and producer) of popular media culture
3. Think critically about:
 - a. the role of popular media in the construction of social identity (race, gender, sexuality, class, etc.)
 - b. the impact of digital media on culture and, by extension, our everyday lives
 - c. the role of media in the production and consumption of popular culture globally.

COURSE STRUCTURE

This course is structured as a seminar; because there will be little traditional “lecturing,” you are expected to participate in class discussions. Your active engagement with the topics discussed in class is essential to your success and enjoyment of the class.

COURSE MATERIALS

Readings will be posted on Canvas.

Though there are no required readings for this course, we will be drawing heavily from John Storey (2018) *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction*. All selected readings from the book will be posted on Canvas, but if you wish to get a copy of the book for a deeper read, it is available online and in print (various editions) from Temple Libraries, as well as available for sale from online retailers, such as Amazon. The companion website to the book is available here:

<http://routledgegettextbooks.com/textbooks/9780415786638/default.php>

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND EXAMS

Class participation and attendance (10%)

You are expected to actively participate in class discussions and small group work. **If you miss more than three classes without a valid excuse, you will get zero points for this portion of your grade.**

Reaction papers (15%) – due Sep 17, Oct 29, Nov 16

You will submit a 2-page (double-spaced, typed, 12pt font) reaction paper to the class readings, three times during the semester. Your statements will be based on specific questions about the readings that will be provided ahead of time. These papers are worth 5% each.

Video analysis (10%) -due Oct 22

You will view the documentary *Miss Representation*, answer questions about the film, and then conduct a brief analysis of a film or TV show of your choice, using ideas from the documentary and other class readings. This analysis will be 3-6 pages (double-spaced, typed, 12pt font).

Media project (15%) – due Dec 7

You will create an original media product (video, photo slideshow, podcast, blog post, newspaper or magazine article, interactive webpage, etc.) that explains or illustrates a concept or theory from class. For instance, you could do a film review discussing how race and gender are portrayed in a newly-released film using the concept of intersectionality to guide your analysis. The format of the piece (writing, video, photography, audio, etc.) and how you approach the topic is up to you, as long as a concept or theory from class is clearly illustrated in your project. You will include with your submission a 1-page explanation/rationale of how your media product relates to the concept or theory. Video and audio products should not exceed 3 minutes.

Mid-term exam (20%) – Oct 8

There will be a mid-term exam consisting of 30 multiple choice, T/F, or fill-in-the-blank questions and 2 short answer questions.

Final exam (30%) – Dec 17

There will be a final exam consisting of 40 multiple choice, T/F, or fill-in-the-blank questions and 4 short answer questions.

GRADING

In-class participation and attendance	10%
Reaction papers x3 (5% each)	15%
Video analysis	10%
Mid-term exam	20%
Media project	15%
Final exam	30%
Total	100 %

Grading scale:

A	93-100%	B-	80-82%	D+	67-69%
A-	90-92%	C+	77-79%	D	63-66%
B+	87-89%	C	73-76%	D-	60-62%
B	83-86%	C-	70-72%	F	59% and below

Grading criteria:

An “A” represents outstanding or exceptional work that is good enough to be shown to other students as an example. A “B” indicates competent, satisfactory work. A grade of “C” is assigned to work that merely fulfills the conditions of the assignment. A “D” will be given to work that does not fulfill the conditions of the assignment or is lacking in some important way. An “F” is a failing grade and would be given only if assignments were extremely poorly executed, or in the case of plagiarism or other failure to adhere to norms of academic honesty.

CLASS POLICIES

Attendance

Participation in class increases levels of comprehension and makes class more interesting. Therefore, your success in this class, and the success of the course as a whole, will depend on your being here. Your class participation grade is based on two factors: contributing meaningfully to class discussion and regular attendance. **If you miss more than three classes without a valid excuse, you will get zero points for the participation portion of your final grade (10%).** Two late arrivals (more than 10 minutes after class starts) or early departures will count as 1 absence. Missed classes also mean missed discussions and assignments, which cannot be made up. If a student misses a class, s/he is responsible for any information missed.

Late assignments

Unless you have a certifiable medical or family emergency, **late work will not receive credit.** All assignments must be uploaded to Canvas or emailed to me **AND handed in as a hard copy** in class. If you have a scheduling conflict or illness that may impede your ability to complete an assignment let me know as soon as possible. All assignment due dates are listed in the syllabus.

Writing

Your ability to communicate effectively in written form comprises a large portion of your success in the class. All written assignments should be professional and well organized, make a clear and compelling argument, contain a thesis statement, and use textual evidence and exposition. You are also required to properly cite the literature you use in your written assignments and include a bibliography at the end using **APA style** (<http://www.apastyle.org/>). You are encouraged to make use of the Temple University Writing Center: Tuttleman 201, [\(215\) 204-0702](tel:2152040702).

Email

Should you need to email me with any questions or concerns, I will reply to emails as quickly as possible; however, you should allow for a minimum of a 24-hour turnaround time. Please use your Temple email address, not your personal one. Please compose emails with a salutation, a signature, and spelling and capitalization reflective of Standard Written English. I will use email to communicate with you outside of class; check your Temple email and Canvas frequently.

Electronic devices

Students are not allowed to use any electronic devices in class unless allowed for the purpose of class activities. Students are expected to observe the Temple University student code of conduct and participate in the learning process in a professional, respectful, and courteous manner. In other words, sending or receiving text messages, using a mobile phone, or surfing the Web by checking personal email or engaging in discussion on social networking sites during a lecture is disrespectful and disruptive to the learning environment. Written consent from the instructor is required for electronic recording of lectures.

Disabilities and accommodations

It is Temple University's policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities under the American Disabilities Act (ADA). At the beginning of each semester, any student with a disability should inform me, in private, if instructional accommodations or academic adjustments will be needed. For more information about the ADA and academic accommodations or adjustments, contact the Office of Disability Resources and Services (<http://www.temple.edu/disability>; 100 Ritter Annex; 215-204-1280; hellodrs@temple.edu).

Academic rights and responsibilities.

The University requires that the following information be included in all syllabi. "Freedom to teach and freedom to learn are inseparable facets of academic freedom. The University has adopted a policy on Student and Faculty Academic Rights and Responsibilities (Policy #03.70.02) which can be accessed through the following link: http://policies.temple.edu/getdoc.asp?policy_no=03.70.02.

Academic honesty

The University Code of Conduct (which can be found at http://policies.temple.edu/list_docs.asp#S) states that:

Any student or student organization found to have committed or to have attempted to commit the following is subject to the disciplinary sanctions outlined in Article IV, D:

Academic dishonesty and impropriety, including, but not limited to, plagiarism and academic cheating. This includes helping, procuring or encouraging another person to engage in academic misconduct.

Plagiarism includes:

- turning in someone else's work as your own
- copying words or ideas from someone else without giving credit
- failing to put a quotation in quotation marks
- giving incorrect information about the source of a quotation
- changing words but copying the sentence structure of a source without giving credit
- copying so many words or ideas from a source that it makes up the majority of your work, whether you give credit or not

The consequences of cheating or plagiarizing on any assignment in this course could result in failure of the assignment or failure of the entire course.

Conduct code

As outlined in the Temple University's Code of Students' Rights and Responsibilities, individuals enrolled in this course are expected to conduct themselves in a civil and respectful manner, both toward their instructor and fellow students. In accordance with Temple's Student Conduct Code (Policy Number: 03.70.12), acts of misconduct for which students are subject to discipline include, but are not limited to, intentional interference with or disruption of class as well as behavior or conduct which poses a threat to the mental, emotional, or physical well-being of self or others. Non-compliance, interference or resistance to this code is considered actionable when a student fails to comply with a reasonable verbal or written instruction or direction given by a University employee (e.g. instructor, teaching assistant or staff member). In such cases of violation, it is the University employee's right and responsibly to seek out the appropriate sanctions (e.g. suspension, separation, probation, enrollment restrictions, or expulsion from the University) pursuant to the conduct code policy.

Course and teaching evaluations

Temple University is committed to high quality instruction in graduate, undergraduate and professional programs. Student feedback regarding instruction is an integral part of assuring quality in the University's educational programs. Student evaluations of faculty occur toward the end of semester. This is your opportunity to voice your opinion regarding my effectiveness and the course overall. Also, this process allows you to assist us as we strive to constantly improve upon efforts and make this a better experience for those students who follow you. For more information about student evaluations of courses and teaching, please refer to Policy #02.78.14 which can be found on the University's Policy & Procedures website at <http://policies.temple.edu>.

COURSE SCHEDULE

PART 1: INTRODUCTION TO CULTURAL THEORY AND POPULAR CULTURE

Week 1

Aug 27

Introduction

Read:

- Syllabus

Aug 29

What is Popular Culture?

Read:

- John Storey. Chapter 1 - "What is Popular Culture?"

Aug 31

What is Popular Culture?

Read:

- Mass Media and Popular Culture
<http://open.lib.umn.edu/mediaandculture/chapter/1-7-mass-media-and-popular-culture/>

Week 2

Sep 3

LABOR DAY – No Class

Sep 5

Who's Worried About Popular Culture and Why?

Read:

- Edward Rothstein. "[Damning \(Yet Desiring\) Mickey and the Big Mac](#)"
- Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer. "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception"

Sep 7

Who's Defending Popular Culture and Why?

Read:

- Raymond Williams. "The Analysis of Culture"
- John Storey. Chapter 3 – "The Analysis of Culture" (p. 38 (intro) and p. 45 – 50) and "The Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies" (p. 58)

Week 3

Sep 10

Continuing the Debate

Read:

- John Fiske. "Commodities and Culture"

PART 2: CULTURAL THEORY IN DEPTH

Sep 12

Marxism

Read:

- John Storey. Chapter 4 – “Marxisms” (p. 61-83)

Sep 14

Hegemony and Post-Marxism

In-Class Screening: *Sex and the City* (S1 E10, “The Baby Shower”)

Read:

- John Storey. Chapter 4– “Marxisms” (p. 83-93)
- Tony Bennett. “Popular Culture and the ‘Turn to Gramsci’”

Week 4

Sep 17

Semiotics and Structuralism

DUE: Reaction Paper 1

Read:

- John Storey. Chapter 6 – “Structuralism and Post-Structuralism” (p. 116-131)
- Roland Barthes. “Myth Today”

Sep 19

Post-Structuralism

Read:

- John Storey. Chapter 6 – “Structuralism and Post-Structuralism” (p. 131-138)
- Chris Weedon. “Feminism and the Principles of Post-Structuralism”

Sep 21

Structuralism and Language

Read:

- Guy Deutscher. “Does Your Language Shape How You Think?”

Week 5

Sep 24

Postmodernism

Read:

- John Storey. Chapter 10 – “Postmodernism” (p. 204 – 220)

Sep 26

Postmodernism

Read:

- John Storey. Chapter 10 – “Postmodernism” (p. 220 – 234)

Sep 28

Postmodernism

In-Class Screening: *Twin Peaks* (S1 E1)

Read:

- Linnie Blake, “Trapped in the Hysterical Sublime: *Twin Peaks*, Postmodernism, and the Neoliberal Now”

PART 3: REPRESENTATION IN POPULAR CULTURE

Week 6

Oct 1 Representation and Intersectionality

Read:

- Stuart Hall. “The Spectacle of the ‘Other’”
- John Scalzi, “Straight White Male: The Lowest Difficulty Setting There Is”

Oct 3 Gender and Sexuality in Popular Culture

Read:

- John Storey. Chapter 8 – “Gender and Sexuality” (p. 152 – 175)

Oct 5 Gender and Sexuality: Post-Feminism and Media Culture

Read:

- John Storey. Chapter 8 – “Gender and Sexuality” (p. 175 – 185)
- Rosalind Gill. “Postfeminist Media Culture: Elements of a Sensibility”

Week 7

Oct 8 **MID TERM EXAM (class time, same room)**

Oct 10 Gender and Sexuality in Popular Culture

In-Class Screening: *Miss Representation*

Oct 12 Gender and Sexuality in Popular Culture

In-Class Screening: *Miss Representation*

Week 8

Oct 15 Race in Popular Culture

Read:

- John Storey. Chapter 9 “‘Race,’ Racism and Representation”
- Ben Child. “Hollywood Fails to Represent US Ethnic Diversity, Says Study”
<http://www.theguardian.com/film/2014/aug/05/hollywood-fails-to-represent-ethnic-diversity-study-us>

Oct 17 Race in Popular Culture

In-Class Screening: *Reel Injun*

Oct 19 Race in Popular Culture

In-Class Screening: *Reel Injun*

Week 9

Oct 22

Class in Popular Culture

DUE: *Miss Representation Analysis*

Read:

- John Storey. Chapter 7 - “Class and Class Struggle”
- Diana Kendall. “Introduction – “Framing Class: Media Representations of Wealth and Poverty in America”

Oct 24

Class in Popular Culture

In-Class Screening: *Queer Eye* (“A Decent Proposal”)

Read:

- Lisa O’Neill. “‘Queer Eye’ Will Talk About Race, Religion and Gender — But Not About Class”

Oct 26

Class in Popular Culture

In-Class Screening: *The Real Housewives of Atlanta* (S1, E1)

PART 4: SUBCULTURES, AUDIENCES, AND THE DIGITAL AGE

Week 10

Oct 29

Subcultures and Taste

DUE: *Reaction Paper 2*

Read:

- Pierre Bourdieu. “The Aristocracy of Culture”

Oct 31

Subcultures and Taste

In-Class Screening: *High Fidelity*

Read:

- Dan Ozzi, “Radiohead is for Boring Nerds”
- Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannel. “The Young Audience”

Nov 2

Subcultures and Taste

In-Class Screening: *High Fidelity*

Week 11

Nov 5

Audiences and Cultural Studies

Read:

- Stuart Hall. “Encoding/Decoding”
- Adrienne Shaw. “Encoding and Decoding Affordances: Stuart Hall and Interactive Media Technologies”

Nov 7

Materiality and Popular Culture

Read:

- John Storey. Chapter 11 - “The Materiality of Popular Culture”
- Marshall McLuhan. “The Medium is the Message” (SKIM)

Nov 9 **Web 2.0 and Cultural Production**

Read:

- S. Elizabeth Bird. “Are We All Producers Now?”

Week 12

Nov 12 **Pop Culture Idols**

Read:

- Leo Lowenthal. “The Triumph of Mass Idols” (SKIM)
- Crystal Abidin. “What is an Internet Celebrity Anyway?”

Nov 14 **Popular Culture and Platform Politics**

Read:

- Tarleton Gillespie. “The Logan Paul YouTube Controversy and What We Should Expect From Internet Platforms”

Nov 16 **The Dark Side of Online Popular Culture**

DUE: Reaction Paper 3

Read:

- Brooke Duffy. “The Trend of Fake Instagram Accounts Exposes the Troubling Way that Work is Taking Over Our Lives”
- Adrienne Shaw. “The Internet is Full of Jerks, Because the World is Full of Jerks: What Feminist Theory Teaches Us About the Internet”

Week 13

Nov 19

Nov 21

Nov 23

FALL BREAK – NO CLASS

PART 5: POPULAR CULTURE ACROSS BORDERS: GLOBAL APPROACHES AND MEDIA

Week 14

Nov 26 **Globalization and Cultural Imperialism**

Read:

- John Tomlinson “The Discourse of Cultural Imperialism”

Nov 28 **Globalization and Cultural Imperialism**

In-Class Screening: *Mickey Mouse Monopoly*

- Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart. “From Noble Savage to the Third World, in *How to Read Donald Duck: Imperialist Ideology in the Disney Comic*”

Nov 30 **Globalization and Hybridization**

In-Class Screening: *Slumdog Millionaire* or *Boy* or *Flight of the Conchords*

Read:

- Jan Nederveen Pieterse. “Globalization as Hybridization”

Week 15

Dec 3

Globalization and Hybridization

In-Class Screening: *Slumdog Millionaire* or *Boy* or *Flight of the Conchords*

Read:

- Georgette Wang and Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh. “Globalization and hybridization in cultural products: The cases of *Mulan* and *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*”

Dec 5

Global Pop Culture: A Translocal Approach

Read:

- Fabienne Darling-Wolf. “Introduction: A Translocal Approach to Imagining the Global”

Dec 7

Global Pop Culture: Hip Hop

DUE: Media Production Project

Read:

- Fabienne Darling-Wolf. “Disjuncture and Difference from the *Banlieue* to the *Ganba*: Embracing Hip-hop as a Global Genre”

Week 16

Dec 10

Global Pop Culture: Anime

Read:

- Fabienne Darling-Wolf. “What West Is It? Anime and Manga according to *Candy* and *Goldorak*”

Week 17

Dec 17

FINAL EXAM 10:30-12:30, Tuttleman 406