

ASC 264

Introduction to Popular Culture

Prof. L. Mizejewski, 286 University Hall, phone 292-1021

Office hours: Wed 1-3 and by appointment

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Description: This course introduces students to the major theories and objects of study in the interdisciplinary field of popular culture. The course introduces students to the theoretical, methodological and historical problems, tools and concerns facing popular culture studies, and it will consider the connections between popular culture studies and a range of other disciplines. In addition to looking at contemporary popular culture, we will be addressing historical popular cultures and popular cultures from outside U.S./majority culture. Finally the course will introduce a variety of interdisciplinary methods of research and analysis.

Goals: The purpose of the course is to give students historical scope, theoretical frameworks, and interpretive strategies for a variety of popular texts and artifacts. The course paper will give students an opportunity to demonstrate their ability to choose appropriate tools and theories in order to do their own interpretations of a text, event, or object of their own choosing.

Textbooks: Chandra Mukerji and Michael Schudson, eds., Rethinking Popular Culture
Henry Jenkins et al, eds., Hop on Pop: The Politics and Pleasures of Popular Culture
Grade A Notes Course Packet

Grading/requirements:

--**Reading quizzes.** These short quizzes will be given at the beginning of the class on the dates marked in the syllabus. No make-up quizzes will be given. Instead, I will drop the lowest grade, giving everyone one chance to be absent or otherwise incapacitated. Average of four quizzes: 15% of final grade.

--**Midterm essay.** Midterm essay questions will be distributed on Feb. 1 and are due a week later. The exam will consist of two essay questions; for each, please write a response no more than three double-spaced pages. 30% of final grade.

--**Final exam.** The exam will be comprehensive, asking for brief essays about major concepts of the course. The best way to study is to review both lecture/class notes and the reading assignments. This exam will be heavily weighted toward class-time material. 30% of final grade. **YOU MUST AVERAGE A PASSING GRADE (D or 65%) ON THE QUIZZES AND FINAL EXAM TO PASS THIS COURSE; TO DO THIS, REGULAR ATTENDANCE IS HIGHLY RECOMMENDED.**

--**Course paper due March 6 (4-5 pp):**

Paper requirements: Based on what you will learn from readings and discussions, choose an appropriate text, object, event, or phenomenon to do an analysis. An abstract of your paper (topic and your intended approach) is due on Feb. 20. Your abstract should include your description of what theory or theories you will use in your analysis and why. 25% of final grade

Plagiarism: As defined in University Rule 3335-31-02, plagiarism is “the representation of another’s works or ideas as one’s own; it includes the unacknowledged word for word use and/or paraphrasing of another person’s work, and/or the inappropriate unacknowledged use of another person’s ideas.” Plagiarism is one of the most serious offenses that can be committed in an academic community; as such, it is the obligation of this department and its instructors to report **all** cases of suspected plagiarism to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. After the report is filed, a hearing takes place and if the student is found guilty, the possible punishment ranges from failing the class to suspension or expulsion from the university. Although the existence of the Internet makes it relatively easy to plagiarize, it also makes it even easier for instructors to find evidence of plagiarism. It is obvious to most teachers when a student turns in work that is not his or her own and plagiarism search engines make documenting the offense very simple. Always cite your sources (your TA and/or professor can help with this); always ask questions **before** you turn in an assignment if you are uncertain about what constitutes plagiarism; always see your TA or professor if you are having difficulty with an assignment. To preserve the integrity of OSU as an institution of higher learning, to maintain your own integrity, and to avoid jeopardizing your future, **DO NOT PLAGIARIZE!**

Accommodation of students with disabilities. Students who wish to have an accommodation for disability are responsible for contacting the professor and TA as soon as possible. The Office for Disability Services (150 Pomerene Hall; 292-3307; 292-0901 TDD) verifies the need for accommodations and assists in the development of accommodation strategies.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

I. What is popular culture?

- Jan. 2 Introductions; uses of Shakespeare
 Screenings: clips from West Side Story and Barrio Wars
- Jan. 4 Lawrence W. Levine, “William Shakespeare and the American People,” in RPC
 Jenkins et al, “Defining Popular Culture,” in HOP
- Jan. 9 Habermas, “The Public Sphere,” in RPC
 Chandra Mukerji and Michael Schudson, “Introduction,” in RPC

II. Theories of Everyday Life

- Jan. 11 Roy Rosenzweig, “The Rise of the Saloon,” in RPC
 Mary Douglas, “Jokes,” in RPC

- Jan. 16 QUIZ ONE (includes today's readings)
Bourdieu, "Sport and Social Class," in RPC
Roland Barthes, "Written Clothing," in RPC

III Fans and Reception Theories

- Jan. 18 Henry Jenkins, Reception Theory and Audience Research: The Mysteries of the Vampire's Kiss," PACKET
Janice Radway, "Interpretive Communities and Variable Literacies: The Functions of Romance Reading," in RPC
- Jan. 23 QUIZ TWO (includes today's readings)
Peter A. Chvany, "'Do We Look Like Ferengi Capitalists to You?' Star Trek's Klingons as Emergent Virtual American Ethnics," in HOP
Alexander Doty, "'My Beautiful Wickedness': The Wizard of Oz as Lesbian Fantasy," in HOP
- Jan. 25 Ina Rae Hark, "'Daddy, where's the FBI warning?': Constructing the Video Spectator" PACKET
Sharon Mazer, "Watching Wrestling/Writing Performance," in HOP

IV. Material Cultures

- Jan. 30 Matthew Tinkcom et al, "On Thrifting," in HOP
Elana Crane, "Shopping Sense: Fanny Fern and Jennie June on Consumer Culture in the Nineteenth Century," in HOP
Rosalind Williams, "The Dream World of Mass Consumption," in RPC
- Feb. 1 Kenneth Goings, "The Birth and Adolescence of Aunt Jemima and Uncle Mose: Collectibles as Personifications of Stereotypes," PACKET
John Bloom, "Cardboard Patriarchy: Adult Baseball Card Collecting and the Nostalgia for a Presexual Past," in HOP
MIDTERM ESSAY QUESTIONS DISTRIBUTED

V. Visual Cultures

- Feb. 6 QUIZ THREE (includes today's readings)
Dianne Brooks, "They Dig Her Message;' Opera, Television, and the Black Diva," in HOP
Gerry Bloustein, "Ceci N'est Pas une Jeune Fille': Videocams, Representation, and 'Othering' in the World of Teenage Girls," in HOP
Shanti Kumar, "Is There Anything Called Global Television Studies?"
PACKET
- Feb. 8 Sangeeta Mediratta, "Is Sanjay Dutt the Scariest Man Alive?': Bollywood, Globalization, and Fundamentalisms, " PACKET

Todd Gitlin, "Movies of the Week," in RPC
MIDTERM ESSAYS DUE

Feb. 13 John Berger, "The Suit and the Photograph," in RPC
Anna McCarthy, "The Invisible Burlesque Body of LaGuardia's New York,"
In HOP

VI. Interactive Cultures

Feb. 15 Alan Wexelblat, "An Auteur in the Age of the Internet: JMS, Babylon 5,
and the Net," in HOP
Robert Drew, "Anyone Can Do It': Forging a Participatory Culture in Karaoke
Bars," in HOP

Feb. 20 QUIZ FOUR (includes today's readings)
Ellen Strain, "Narrativizing Cyber-Travel: CD-ROM Travel Games and the Art
Of Historical Recovery," in HOP
N. Katherine Hayles, "The Seductions of Cyberspace," PACKET
PAPER ABSTRACT DUE TODAY!

VII. Music Cultures

Feb. 22 Rodriguez, Richard. "The Verse of the Godfather: Signifying Family and
Nationalism in Chicano Rap and Hip-Hop Culture," PACKET
Norma Coats, "Can't We Just Talk About Music? Rock and Gender on the
Internet," PACKET
Feb. 27 George H. Lewis, "The Color of Country: Black Influence and
Experience in American Country Music," PACKET
Tony Grajeda, "The Sound of Disaffection," in HOP

VIII. Pulp and other Print Cultures

Feb. 29 Stephen Duncombe, "'I'm a Loser Baby': Zines and the Creation of Underground
Identity," in HOP
Eva Illouz, "Reason With Passion: Love in Women's Magazines," PACKET

Mar 1 QUIZ FIVE (includes today's readings)
Scott McCloud, *from* Understanding Comics, PACKET
Mark Oehlert, "From Captain America to Wolverine: Cyborgs in Comic
Books," PACKET

March 6 PAPERS DUE.

Course packet bibliography

- Coates, Norma. "Can't We Just Talk About Music? Rock and Gender on the Internet." Mapping the Beat : Popular Music and Contemporary Theory. Eds. Thomas Swiss et al. Malden, MA : Blackwell Publishers, 1998. 77-99
- Goings, Kenneth. "The Birth and Adolescence of Aunt Jemima and Uncle Mose: Collectibles as Personifications of Stereotypes." Mammy and Uncle Mose: Black Collectibles and American Stereotyping. Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 1994. 1-19.
- Hanke, Robert. "Yo Quiero Mi MTV!": Making Music Television for Latin America." Mapping the Beat : Popular Music and Contemporary Theory. Eds. Thomas Swiss et al. Malden, MA : Blackwell Publishers, 1998. 219-45.
- Hark, Ina Rae. "'Daddy, where's the FBI warning?': Constructing the Video Spectator." Keyframes: Popular Cinema and Cultural Studies. Eds. Matthew Tinkcom and Amy Villarejo. London and New York: Routledge, 2001. 72-81.
- Hayles, N. Katherine. "The Seductions of Cyberspace." Reading Digital Culture. Ed. David Trend. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2001. 305-21.
- Illouz, Eva. "Reason With Passion: Love in Women's Magazines," Critical Studies in Mass Communication 8.3 (1991): 231-48.
- Jenkins, Henry. "Reception Theory and Audience Research: The Mysteries of the Vampire's Kiss." Reinventing Film Studies. Eds. Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams. London, and New York: Oxford UP. 2001. 165-82
- Kumar, Shanti. "Is There Anything Called Global Television Studies?" Planet TV: A Global Television Reader. Eds. Linda Parks and Shanti Kumar. New York: New York University Press, 2003. 135-54.
- Lewis, George H. "The Color of Country: Black Influence and Experience in American Country Music." Popular Music and Society 25:3-4 (2001).107-19.
- McCloud, Scott. Understanding Comics: the Invisible Art. New York: HarperPerennial, 1994.
- Mediratta, Sangeeta. "Is Sanjay Dutt the Scariest Man Alive?: Bollywood, Globalization, and Fundamentalisms." South Asian Review 24:1 (2003). 237-54
- Oehlert, Mark. "From Captain America to Wolverine: Cyborgs in Comic Books." The Cybercultures Reader. Ed. David Bell and Barbara M. Kennedy. London: Routledge, 2000. 112-24.

Rodriguez, Richard. "The Verse of the Godfather: Signifying Family and Nationalism in Chicano Rap and Hip-Hop Culture." In Velvet Barrios: Popular Culture & Chicana/o Sexualities. Ed. Alicia Gaspar de Alba. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 2003. 107-22.

ASC 264 Introduction to Popular Culture Studies
Barry Shank

Description: This course is designed to introduce students to the variety of ways in which popular culture has been rigorously studied at the university level. We will come to terms with the multiple meanings of the key terms of the course: Popular, Culture, Pleasure, Aesthetics, Commodification, Power and Politics. The course will introduce students to the theoretical, methodological and historical problems, tools and concerns facing popular culture studies, and it will consider the connections between popular culture studies and a range of other disciplines. In addition to looking at contemporary popular culture, we will be addressing historical popular cultures and popular cultures from outside U.S./majority culture. Finally the course will introduce a variety of interdisciplinary methods of research and analysis. Students will learn how to recognize serious investigations of popular culture and how to distinguish them from other practices such as trend spotting and bar talk.

Goals: The purpose of the course is to give students historical scope, theoretical frameworks, and interpretive strategies for a variety of popular texts and artifacts. The course paper will give students an opportunity to demonstrate their ability to choose appropriate tools and theories in order to do their own interpretations of a text, event, or object of their own choosing.

Textbooks: Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*
Mervyn Cooke, *Jazz*
Susan Douglas, *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media*
Herman Gray, *Watching Race: Television and the Struggle for "Blackness"*
Kenneth Hall, *John Woo: The Films*
H.G. Bissinger, *Friday Night Lights: A Town, a Team, and a Dream*
James Newman, *Videogames: Routledge Introductions to Media and Communications*

Grading/requirements:

--**Midterm.** This exam will enable students to demonstrate their familiarity with the theoretical concepts and historical material presented in the first half of the course. The format will include identification/short answer and essay responses. 30% of grade.

--**Final exam.** The exam will be comprehensive, asking for brief essays about major concepts of the course. The best way to study is to review both lecture/class notes and the reading assignments. 30% of grade

--**Course paper (4-5 pp):**

Paper requirements: Based on what you will learn from readings and discussions, choose an appropriate text, object, event, or phenomenon to do an analysis. An abstract of your paper (topic and your intended approach) is due by the fifth week of class. Your abstract should include your description of what theory or theories you will use in your analysis and why. Your full paper is due the last day of class. No late papers will be accepted. Abstract: 15% of grade; Full paper: 25% of grade.

Plagiarism: As defined in University Rule 3335-31-02, plagiarism is “the representation of another’s works or ideas as one’s own; it includes the unacknowledged word for word use and/or paraphrasing of another person’s work, and/or the inappropriate unacknowledged use of another person’s ideas.” Plagiarism is one of the most serious offenses that can be committed in an academic community; as such, it is the obligation of this department and its instructors to report **all** cases of suspected plagiarism to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. After the report is filed, a hearing takes place and if the student is found guilty, the possible punishment ranges from failing the class to suspension or expulsion from the university. Although the existence of the Internet makes it relatively easy to plagiarize, it also makes it even easier for instructors to find evidence of plagiarism. It is obvious to most teachers when a student turns in work that is not his or her own and plagiarism search engines make documenting the offense very simple. Always cite your sources (your TA and/or professor can help with this); always ask questions **before** you turn in an assignment if you are uncertain about what constitutes plagiarism; always see your TA or professor if you are having difficulty with an assignment. To preserve the integrity of OSU as an institution of higher learning, to maintain your own integrity, and to avoid jeopardizing your future, **DO NOT PLAGIARIZE!**

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Detailed Syllabus

Week one: Introduction to the course and History and Class, 1

Assigned Reading: Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*, “William Shakespeare in America,” pp.13-81.

First Meeting: Introduction to class. Introduction to key terms: popular, culture, history, ethnography, text, archive, ritual, distinction, highbrow/lowbrow, power, politics, pleasure, aesthetics, commodification.

Second Meeting: Shakespeare becomes high culture in the 19th Century

Week Two: History and Class, 2

Assigned Reading: Levine, "The Sacralization of Culture," pp.85-168, "Order, Hierarchy and Culture," pp.171-242.

First meeting: The Elevation of Classical Music, the Creation of Blackface Minstrelsy

Second Meeting: From Matthew Arnold to Raymond Williams: What we have inherited from the 19th C distinction between high and popular culture

Week Three: Music

Assigned Reading: Mervyn Cooke, *Jazz*

First Meeting: Jazz as popular music, from 1890-1940

Second Meeting: Jazz as art music, from 1940-2000.

Week Four: Mass Media and Feminine Identity

Assigned Reading: Susan Douglas, *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media*, NY Times Books, 1995

First Meeting: What counts as Mass Media? How do different mass media affect identity?

Second Meeting: The law of unintended consequences: consumer desire and political desire.

Week Five: Television

Assigned Reading: Herman Gray, *Watching Race: Television and the Struggle for "Blackness"* 2nd edition (2004)

First Meeting: video, *Color Adjustment*

Second Meeting: Television, visuality and the production of race

Week Six: Midterm

Assigned Reading: none

First Meeting: midterm

Second Meeting: film: *A Better Tomorrow*

Week Seven: Other Cinemas

Assigned Reading: Kenneth Hall, *John Woo: The Films*, pp. 1-109.

First Meeting: The Concepts of National Cinemas and World Cinema

Second Meeting: Discussion of *A Better Tomorrow*.

Week Eight: Sports

Assigned Reading: H.G. Bissinger, *Friday Night Lights: A Town, a Team, and a Dream*

First Meeting: Rituals of Community in Sports Team Fandom

Second Meeting: Rituals of Gender in Sports Participation and Spectatorship

Week Nine: Video Games

Assigned Reading: James Newman, *Videogames: Routledge Introductions to Media and Communications* Routledge, 2004

First Meeting: Privatizing Competition, Victory and Loss in the Home

Second Meeting: Rituals of Gender in Video Games

Week Ten: Pulling it all together

Assigned Reading: None

First Meeting: Popular Culture, Aesthetics and Pleasure

Second Meeting Popular Culture, Politics and Power

Final at time assigned by University Registrar.