INTS 4388-002/4301-002 – Introduction to Popular Culture Spring 2014

Instructor: Professor David Arditi

Meets Tuesday/Thursday 12:30-1:50pm – University Hall 104

**Office Hours** – Tuesday/Thursday 11am-Noon

contact information

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**Purpose**

This course satisfies the University of Texas at Arlington core curriculum requirement for Language, Philosophy, and Culture. It is an elective that is open to all undergraduate students. There are no prerequisites for this course.

**Description**

Culture is the process through which people make symbolic meaning out of the world. Popular culture is mass produced culture that everyone has access to. Whether it is the latest hit song that you hear everywhere from the grocery store to Pandora.com or it is a new video game that you and your friends are obsessed with (the popular song may even be in the video game that is based on a movie), popular culture pervades our everyday lives. Therefore, it is critically important to study popular culture in order to assess its social, political, cultural and economic impact on American society.

This course will demonstrate to students the overall importance of popular culture in their lives. We will explore the ways that language is used (and the way that we use language) to construct the world around us through popular culture. It is important to remember that this is a scholarly approach to popular culture that will use a critical approach to understanding the uses and abuses of popular culture. The class will examine how ideas, values, and beliefs, are constructed through and are reflected by popular culture. Throughout the semester we will explore theoretical frames from cultural studies, semiotics, gender studies, race/ethnic studies and political economy.

Core Curriculum Component Area Objectives

In compliance with the Core Curriculum objectives for Language, Philosophy and Cultures, Students will demonstrate:

* **Critical Thinking Skills** - to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information.
* **Communication Skills** - To include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication.
* **Personal Responsibility** - To include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making.
* **Social Responsibility** - To include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national and global communities.

Student Learning Outcomes for Course

Students will demonstrate the ability to:

* Critically think about popular culture’s role in American society (Critical Thinking).
* Analyze the way that popular culture depends on language to construct meaning (Critical Thinking and Communication).
* Examine the ideological underpinnings of popular culture (Critical Thinking).
* Demonstrate how people use popular culture to construct or reinforce personal beliefs (Personal Responsibility).
* Examine the ethical position of popular culture texts (Personal Responsibility).
* Evaluate sources of popular culture.
* Synthesize theories about popular culture through hands-on cultural criticism (Communication).
* Explore the connection between popular culture and social values (Social Responsibility).
* Understand that popular culture provides an alternative forum to traditional “high” culture for the introduction of outsider voices – such as those marginalized in terms of race, sexuality, or class – into mainstream American culture (Social Responsibility).
* Consider the relationship between technology and cultural change within the sphere of popular culture.

Signature Assignment – Course Based Assessment

Blogging (i.e. web logging) has become an important tool for communicating information in the 21st Century. The blog is a form of communication that allows information about popular culture to be communicated from above and below. Blogs can be affective tools to communicate and construct culture. Within the construction of culture are ideas about politics, social and personal responsibility, and community. Blogs are part of thick interwoven webs of language that help create a sense of identity, as well.

Throughout the semester students will be required to write three (3) blog posts. For each blog students will write about a current object/event in popular culture. There is a lot of leeway for each student to determine the subject of the blog post. Possible subjects include, but are not limited to: albums, movies, video games, television shows, songs, musicians, TV/movie stars, policies that affect popular culture, media technology, genres, etc. Each blog should engage this subject by connecting to ideas from class (both discussions and readings). To do so, students will take on the role of “culture critic.”

\*This will measure Communication, Critical Thinking, Personal Responsibility, and Social Responsibility as outlined in the grading rubric on the assignment, which is included below.

Textbook and Other Course Materials Requirements

Books for purchase:

Du Gay, Paul et al. *Doing Cultural Studies: The Story of the Sony Walkman*. 2nd ed. Los Angeles: SAGE, 2013. Print.

Hall, Stuart, Jessica Evans, and Sean Nixon, ed. 2013. *Representation*. 2nd ed. London: Sage : The Open University.

Grading Policy

The following scale will be applied to both individual assignments and to the course grade as a whole:

**A= 90-100** points. An “A” reflects consistent excellence in the course, strong initiative, and the student’s commitment to his or her own learning and success.

**B=80-89** points. A “B” reflects work that is consistently above the minimum.

**C=70-79** points. A “C” reflects minimum proficiency in the main objectives of the course.

**D=60-69** points. A “D” reflects the fact that a student has not adequately engaged with the material of the class or has not given the instructor a sufficient basis for judgment because of unexcused failure to complete course work.

**F=<60** points. A failing grade will typically reflect missed assignments, academic honesty violations, and/or a lack of engagement with the course.

Grading rubrics will be made available for each assignment and will be posted in electronic form on the Blackboard page for each assignment. Students should consider the rubrics as guidelines for the expectations of the assignment and be aware that their grade will depend on fulfilling the criteria set forward in the rubric.

The student’s grade for the course will be based on the following:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Individual** | **Points** |
| Blog Posts (each Blog Post =10 points, there are 3 required blog posts for the semester) | 30 |
| Midterm Exam | 30 |
| Final Exam | 30 |
| In-class participation exercises, Attendance, Blog commenting | 10 |
| **Total** | **100** |

**Blog Post Timing**

The first blog post is due in the first five weeks (before February 13), second blog post in the second five weeks (before March 27) and the third blog post is due in the final five weeks of the semester (before April 27).

**Late Work Policy**

* All due dates on the syllabus are firm and are defined to the minute.
* **Late work will not be accepted**

**Exceptions may be made when students present documentation of an unforeseeable, significant, and unavoidable situation that prevented their completion of the assignment on time.**

**The Instructor reserves the right to modify assignments with due notice.**

Attendance Policy

Attendance at class meetings is vital to student success and attendance at every session is the default expectation for the course. Students are expected to actively engage in class discussions to demonstrate reading and comprehension. Participation is also a vital part of the learning process. This expectation will be backed up with in-class quizzes and assignments that will be given only in class. However, if you prefer to text, chat, email, sleep during class, this behavior will negatively influence your participation/attendance grade.

**Additionally, you will be expected to comment on your classmates’ blog posts.**

## Drop Policy

**The last Day to Drop is March 28.** Students may drop or swap classes (adding and dropping a class concurrently) through self-service in MyMav from the beginning of the registration period through the late registration period. After the late registration period, students must see their academic advisor to drop a class or withdraw. Undeclared students must see an advisor in the University Advising Center. Drops can continue through a point two-thirds of the way through the term or session. It is the student's responsibility to officially withdraw if they do not plan to attend after registering. **Students will not be automatically dropped for non-attendance**. Repayment of certain types of financial aid administered through the University may be required as the result of dropping classes or withdrawing. For more information, contact the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships (<http://wweb.uta.edu/ses/fao>).

Academic Dishonesty

**Academic Integrity:** students enrolled in this course are expected to adhere to the UT Arlington Honor Code:

*I pledge, on my honor, to uphold UT Arlington’s tradition of academic integrity, a tradition that values hard work and honest effort in the pursuit of academic excellence.*

*I promise that I will submit only work that I personally create or contribute to group collaborations, and I will appropriately reference any work from other sources. I will follow the highest standards of integrity and uphold the spirit of the Honor Code.*

Instructors may employ the Honor Code as they see fit in their courses, including (but not limited to) having students acknowledge the honor code as part of an examination or requiring students to incorporate the honor code into any work submitted. Per UT System *Regents’ Rule* 50101, §2.2, suspected violations of university’s standards for academic integrity (including the Honor Code) will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. Violators will be disciplined in accordance with University policy, which may result in the student’s suspension or expulsion from the University.

Student Support Services Available:

UT Arlington provides a variety of resources and programs designed to help students develop academic skills, deal with personal situations, and better understand concepts and information related to their courses. Resources include tutoring, major-based learning centers, developmental education, advising and mentoring, personal counseling, and federally funded programs. For individualized referrals, students may visit the reception desk at University College (Ransom Hall), call the Maverick Resource Hotline at 817-272-6107, send a message to [resources@uta.edu](mailto:resources@uta.edu), or view the information at [www.uta.edu/resources](http://www.uta.edu/resources).

Americans with Disabilities Act

The University of Texas at Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of all federal equal opportunity legislation, including the *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)*. All instructors at UT Arlington are required by law to provide "reasonable accommodations" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Any student requiring an accommodation for this course must provide the instructor with official documentation in the form of a letter certified by the staff in the Office for Students with Disabilities, University Hall 102. Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. Information regarding diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining disability-based academic accommodations can be found at [www.uta.edu/disability](http://www.uta.edu/disability) or by calling the Office for Students with Disabilities at (817) 272-3364.

E-Culture Policy

The University of Texas at Arlington has adopted the university email address as an official means of communication with students. Through the use of email, UTA is able to provide students with relevant and timely information, designed to facilitate student success. In particular, important information concerning registration, financial aid, payment of bills, and graduation may be sent to students through email.

Students are responsible for checking their UTA email regularly, and the instructor will not be responsible for missed messages sent to UTA email accounts.

Student Feedback Survey

At the end of each term, students will be asked to complete an online Student Feedback Survey (SFS) about the course and how it was taught. Instructions on how to access the SFS system will be sent directly to students through MavMail approximately 10 days before the end of the term. UT Arlington’s effort to solicit, gather, tabulate, and publish student feedback data is required by state law; student participation in the SFS program is voluntary.

**COURSE CALENDAR—Spring 2014**

\*Note – Reading assignments should be done by the day that they are listed on the syllabus

January 14, Tuesday

* Introduction:
  + Review of syllabus, course expectations and design

January 16, Thursday

* What is Popular Culture?
  + Read: Introduction to *Representation*

January 21, Tuesday

* The Work of Representation (Chapter 1 - *Representation*)
  + Representation, Meaning and Language (p.1-15)
  + Reading A
  + Saussure’s Legacy (p.16-20)

January 23, Thursday

* The Work of Representation (Chapter 1 – *Representation*)
  + From Language to Culture: Linguistics to semiotics (p.20-26)
  + Reading B, C and D
* Blogging
  + Review: [**MediaShift: Your Guide to Blogging**](http://www.pbs.org/mediashift/2006/05/digging_deeperyour_guide_to_bl.html)**;**[**Journalism That Clicks**](http://tracearchive.ntu.ac.uk/Opinion/index.cfm?article=123)**;**[**Essentials of a multimedia journalism package**](http://mindymcadams.com/tojou/2008/essentials-of-a-multimedia-journalism-package/)**.**

January 28, Tuesday

* The Work of Representation (Chapter 1 – *Representation*)
  + Discourse, Power and the Subject (p.26-39)
  + Reading E and F

January 30, Thursday

* The Work of Representation (Chapter 1 – *Representation*)
  + Where is ‘the Subject’? (p.39-45)
  + Conclusion (p.45-46)

February 4, Tuesday

* Cultural Studies
  + Introduction to the 1st edition of *Doing Cultural Studies*
  + “Making Sense of the Walkman” in *Doing Cultural Studies*
    - (p.1-13)

February 6, Thursday

* Cultural Studies
  + “Making Sense of the Walkman” in *Doing Cultural Studies*
    - (p.13-35)

February 11 Tuesday

* Production
  + “The Production of the Sony Walkman” in *Doing Cultural Studies*
    - p.36-46

February 13, Thursday

* Production
  + “The Production of the Sony Walkman” in *Doing Cultural Studies*
    - p.46-54
* First Blog Entry due *before* this date

February 18, Tuesday

* “The Spectacle of the ‘Other’” (Chapter 4 – *Representation*)
  + Introduction (p.215-228)

February 20, Thursday - NO CLASS

* Comment on Blackboard discussion board
* “The Spectacle of the ‘Other’” (Chapter 4 – *Representation*)
  + Racializing the ‘Other’ (p.228-237)
  + Reading A

February 25, Tuesday

* “The Spectacle of the ‘Other’” (Chapter 4 – *Representation*)
  + Staging Racial ‘Difference’: ‘And the melody lingered on . . .’ (p.237-246)
  + Reading B

February 27, Thursday

* “The Spectacle of the ‘Other’” (Chapter 4 – *Representation*)
  + Stereotyping and Signifying Practice (p.247-259)
  + Reading C

March 4, Tuesday

* “The Spectacle of the ‘Other’” (Chapter 4 – *Representation*)
  + Contesting a Racialized Regime of Representation (p.259-266)
  + Reading D
  + Conclusion (p.267-270)

March 6, Thursday

* Midterm Exam

**Spring Break March 10-14**

March 18, Tuesday

* Genre and Gender (Chapter 6 – *Representation*)
  + Introduction (p.335)
  + Representation and Media Fictions (p.336-341)
  + Mass Culture and Gendered Culture (p.341-347)

March 20, Thursday

* Genre and Gender (Chapter 6 – *Representation*)
  + Genre, Representation and Soap Opera (p.347-361)

March 25, Tuesday

* Genre and Gender (Chapter 6 – *Representation*)
  + Genres for Women: The Case of soap opera (p.361-376)
  + Reading A and B

March 27, Thursday

* Genre and Gender (Chapter 6 – *Representation*)
  + Conclusion (p.376-383)
  + Reading C
* Second Blog Entry due *before* this date

April 1, Tuesday

* Design and Intermediaries
  + “Designing the Walkman,” in *Doing Cultural Studies*
  + (p.55-77)

April 3, Thursday

* Consumption
  + “Consuming the Walkman,” in *Doing Cultural Studies*
  + (p.78-90)

April 8, Tuesday

* Consumption
  + “Consuming the Walkman,” in *Doing Cultural Studies*
  + (p.91-102)

April 10, Thursday

* Globalization and Popular Culture
  + “Sony as a Global Firm,” in *Doing Cultural Studies*
  + (p.103-112)

April 15, Tuesday

* Globalization and Popular Culture, Continued
  + John Tomlinson, “Cultural Imperialism” – Blackboard

April 17, Thursday

* Globalization and Culture, Cont.
  + Monroe Price, “Media and Sovereignty” – Blackboard

April 22, Tuesday

* Popular Culture and Regulation
  + “Regulating the Walkman,” in *Doing Cultural Studies*

April 24, Thursday

* Subculture as Articulation
  + Dick Hebdige, “Subculture,” in *Popular Culture*, 355-371
* Third Blog Entry due *before* this date

April 29, Tuesday

* Subculture as Articulation, continued
  + Tricia Rose “A Style Nobody can Deal with: Politics, Style and the Postindustrial City in Hip Hop,” in *Popular Culture*, 401-416

May 1, Thursday

* Review

**May 8, Thursday**

**FINAL EXAM – 11:30am-2pm**

“*As the instructor for this course, I reserve the right to adjust this schedule in any way that serves the educational needs of the students enrolled in this course.” –David Arditi*

INTS 1310 – Introduction to Popular Culture

Blog Post Assignment

Description:

Blogging (i.e. web logging) has become an important tool for communicating information in the 21st Century. Nowhere is this more the case than with popular culture. From blogs about music communities (e.g. OkayPlayer.com) to blogs for TV shows (e.g. <http://blogs.amctv.com/the-walking-dead/>), the blog is a form of communication that allows information about popular culture to be communicated from above and below. From above, producers of popular culture communicate the information about popular culture that they want to disseminate whether that is release dates, narratives about stars, upcoming information, etc. From below, fans of popular culture articulate their likes/dislikes, wishes for future content, desire to keep a show on the air, etc. At times, these blogs work to help cultural producers meet the demands of their fans. But at other times, they act as forms of public relations and free advertising for cultural producers.

In any case, blogs can be affective tools to communicate and construct culture. Within the construction of culture are ideas about politics, social and personal responsibility, and community. Blogs are part of thick interwoven webs of language that help create a sense of identity, as well.

Assignment:

Throughout the semester students will be required to write three (3) blog posts. The first blog post is due in the first five weeks (before February 13), second blog post in the second five weeks (before March 27) and the third blog post is due in the final five weeks of the semester (before April 27). Students will be expected to follow the guidelines given in class to write effective blogs.

For each blog students will write about a current object/event in popular culture. There is a lot of leeway for each student to determine the subject of the blog post. Possible subjects include, but are not limited to: albums, movies, video games, television shows, songs, musicians, TV/movie stars, policies that affect popular culture, media technology, genres, etc. Each blog should engage this subject by connecting to ideas from class (both discussions and readings). To do so, students will take on the role of “culture critic.”

To achieve core area objectives, students will be asked to pay special attention to the following questions:

* How does what you have learned from class apply to the cultural object? (Critical Thinking)
* In what way does the production of the cultural object affect the final product? (Critical Thinking)
* How is the artist/author/musician/actor/director/etc. (artist for short) positioned in society (race, class, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, disability)? (Social Responsibility)
* How does the artist’s position in society affect the production, consumption, interpretation and reception of the object? (Social Responsibility)
* How does the object represent an ethical position? If an ethical position appears to be missing, what could be the reasons that it is missing? (Personal Responsibility)

Write each blog post in a word processor before transferring it to the blog. Each post should be 2-3 pages, standard 12-point font (i.e. Times New Roman, Courier, Cambria), double spaced, one-inch margins.

\*A note on citation. Students will be expected to cite everything. Keep in mind that linking is very important to effective blogging (see Blog Guidelines). You should be linking to everything that you refer to in your blog posts. All instances of plagiarism will result in failing the assignment and will be processed under the Honor Code.

Grading Rubric

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Blog Posts | | Max |  |
| Aspect | Criteria |  |  |
| **Critical Thinking** | Student writes a blog around a clear theme from the course. S/he does this with creativity by applying the theories from the course to an object or by constructing a theorization. Students demonstrate synthesis of theories. Students demonstrate creativity in the selection of their cultural objects. There is a clear thesis statement that is supported by an argument throughout the paper. | 25 |  |
| **Personal Responsibility** | Student demonstrates the ability to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making. Applies knowledge from relevant readings to the framework of the blog post. Explains the limits/constraints and/or supports for author/artist/director/actor/etc to act ethically. Explains the limits/constraints and/or supports for author/artist/director/actor/etc to act ethically. Then student examines what may limit/accentuate the artifact’s ethical position. | 25 |  |
| **Social Responsibility** | Student demonstrates intercultural competency and civic knowledge by engaging effectively in local, regional, national and global communities. Situates the cultural artifact within its cultural and societal position (race/class/gender/ethnicity/religion/sexuality/disability). The post is from a position of social justice that recognizes social, economic and political inequalities. Demonstrates the way that the object is positioned in relation to a locality. | 25 |  |
| **Communication** | Expresses the intended purpose of the post clearly and with precision. Follows the guidelines that establish proper communication skills for blog posts. Paragraphs are arranged logically, with sentences carrying a logical flow of ideas. This is creative writing, so be creative and do not worry about academic writing practices. However, you must proofread! | 25 |  |
|  | Total: |  |  |