INTS 1310 – Introduction to Popular Culture

Fall 2014

Instructor: Professor David Arditi

Meets Tuesday/Thursday 12:30-1:50pm – Pickard Hall 321

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

contact information

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Phone | 817-272-1388 | Email | darditi@uta.edu |
| Office | University Hall Room 514 | WebPage | Course content on Blackboard  |
| Teaching Assistant | Nita Clark | TA Email | nita.clark@mavs.uta.edu  |

**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

Texts for purchase:

* Du Gay, Paul et al. *Doing Cultural Studies: The Story of the Sony Walkman*. 2nd ed. Los Angeles: SAGE, 2013. Print.
* The Roots – *And Then You Shoot Your Cousin . . .* 2014

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 | 20 |
| Assignments | 20 |
| Final Exam | 30 |
| **Total**  | **100** |

**Blog Post Timing**

The first blog post is due before October 28, second blog post before November 13 and the third blog post is due before December 2.

**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.**

**Expectations for Out-of-Class Study**: Beyond the time required to attend each class meeting, students enrolled in this course should expect to spend at least an additional 9 hours per week of their own time in course-related activities, including reading required materials, completing assignments, preparing for exams, etc. A general rule of thumb is this: for every credit hour earned, a student should spend 3 hours per week working outside of class.

Attendance Policy

Attendance at class meetings is vital to student success and attendance at every session is the default expectation for the course. However, I allow students to attend class at their own discretion, and I will not take attendance. Attending and participating in class discussions are important in the learning process, and will greatly improve test scores.

Drop Policy

**Drop Policy:** Students may drop or swap (adding and dropping a class concurrently) classes 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/aao/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, or view the information at [www.uta.edu/resources](http://www.uta.edu/resources).

ADA and Title IX

**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.

**Title IX:** The University of Texas at Arlington is committed to upholding U.S. Federal Law “Title IX” such that no member of the UT Arlington community shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity. For more information, visit [www.uta.edu/titleIX](http://www.uta.edu/titleIX).

E-Culture Policy

**Electronic Communication:** UT Arlington has adopted MavMail as its official means to communicate with students about important deadlines and events, as well as to transact university-related business regarding financial aid, tuition, grades, graduation, etc. All students are assigned a MavMail account and are responsible for checking the inbox regularly. There is no additional charge to students for using this account, which remains active even after graduation. Information about activating and using MavMail is available at <http://www.uta.edu/oit/cs/email/mavmail.php>.

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.

Final Review Week

**Final Review Week:** A period of five class days prior to the first day of final examinations in the long sessions shall be designated as Final Review Week. The purpose of this week is to allow students sufficient time to prepare for final examinations. During this week, there shall be no scheduled activities such as required field trips or performances; and no instructor shall assign any themes, research problems or exercises of similar scope that have a completion date during or following this week *unless specified in the class syllabus*. During Final Review Week, an instructor shall not give any examinations constituting 10% or more of the final grade, except makeup tests and laboratory examinations. In addition, no instructor shall give any portion of the final examination during Final Review Week. During this week, classes are held as scheduled. In addition, instructors are not required to limit content to topics that have been previously covered; they may introduce new concepts as appropriate.

Emergency Exit Procedures

Should we experience an emergency event that requires us to vacate the building, students should exit the room and move toward the nearest exit, which is located as discussed in class. When exiting the building during an emergency, one should never take an elevator but should use the stairwells. Faculty members and instructional staff will assist students in selecting the safest route for evacuation and will make arrangements to assist handicapped individuals.

**COURSE CALENDAR—Fall 2014**

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

8/21, Thursday

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

8/26, Tuesday

* What is Popular Culture?
	+ Read: Introduction to *Representation* (you may skip where it introduces each chapter xxiii-xxiv)
* Listening In-Class: Bob Marley’s “I Shot the Sherriff”

8/28, Thursday

* The Work of Representation (Chapter 1 - *Representation*)
	+ Sections 1-1.3 (p.1-10)
	+ Reading A (p.48-49)

9/2, Tuesday

* The Work of Representation (Chapter 1 – *Representation*)
	+ Sections 1.4-2.3 (p.10-20)
* Listening In-Class: Tower of Power’s “What is Hip?”

9/4, Thursday

* 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/)**.**
* *Song Analysis Assignment due*

9/9, Tuesday

* The Work of Representation (Chapter 1 – *Representation*)
	+ From Language to Culture: Linguistics to semiotics (p.20-26)
	+ Reading B, C and D

9/11, Thursday

* The Work of Representation (Chapter 1 – *Representation*)
	+ Sections 4-4.1 (p.26-31)
	+ Reading E
* Screening In-Class: *Modern Family*

9/16, Tuesday

* The Work of Representation (Chapter 1 – *Representation*)
	+ Sections 4.2-4.5 (p.31-39)
	+ Reading F

9/18, Thursday

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

9/23, Tuesday

* Cultural Studies
	+ Introduction to the 1st edition of *Doing Cultural Studies*

9/25, Thursday

* Listen to The Roots’ *And then you shoot your cousin . . .* at least two times before class and write down your thoughts

9/30, Tuesday

* Cultural Studies
	+ “Making Sense of the Walkman” in *Doing Cultural Studies*
		- (p.1-7)
		- Bruno Latour – “Technology is Society Made Durable” (p.112-116)

10/2 Thursday

* Cultural Studies
	+ “Making Sense of the Walkman” in *Doing Cultural Studies*
		- (p.7-15)
		- Axel Bruns – “Produsage” (p.117-121)

10/7, Tuesday

* Album Review assignment due in class

10/9, Thursday

* Cultural Studies
	+ “Making Sense of the Walkman” in *Doing Cultural Studies*
		- (p.16-20)
		- Walter Benjamin – “The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction” (p.122-125)
		- Raymond Williams – “Towards 2000” (p.126-127)

10/14, Tuesday

* Cultural Studies
	+ “Making Sense of the Walkman” in *Doing Cultural Studies*
		- (p.20-35)
		- Ana Andjelic – “Time to Rewrite the Brand Playbook for Digital” (p.128-129)

10/16 Thursday

* Midterm Exam

10/21, Tuesday

* Production
	+ “The Production of the Sony Walkman” in *Doing Cultural Studies*
		- p.36-46
	+ Nick Lyons – “Scratching a Global Dream” (p.130)
	+ Shu Ueyama – “The Selling of the ‘Walkman’” (p.131-132)

10/23, Thursday

* Production
	+ “The Production of the Sony Walkman” in *Doing Cultural Studies*
	+ p.46-54

10/28, Tuesday

* Discuss *In Time*
	+ Students should either watch *In Time* on their own or attend the class screening before this class
* First Blog Entry due *before* this date

10/30, Thursday

* Design and Intermediaries
	+ “Designing the Walkman,” in *Doing Cultural Studies*
	+ p.55-64
	+ Selected Reading – “How Sony Corp. became first with kids”

11/4, Tuesday

* Design and Intermediaries
	+ “Designing the Walkman,” in *Doing Cultural Studies*
	+ p.64-69

11/6, Thursday

* Globalization and Popular Culture
	+ “Sony as a Global Firm,” in *Doing Cultural Studies*
	+ p.70-77

11/11, Tuesday

* Globalization and Popular Culture, Continued
	+ Tyrell, Bollywood vs. Hollywood (Blackboard)

11/13, Thursday

* Popular Culture and Regulation
	+ “Regulating the Walkman,” in *Doing Cultural Studies*
* Second Blog Entry due *before* this date

11/18, Tuesday

* Consumption
	+ “Consuming the Walkman,” in *Doing Cultural Studies*
	+ p.83-91
	+ Selected Reading – “Listening otherwise, music miniaturized”

11/20, Thursday

* Consumption
	+ “Consuming the Walkman,” in *Doing Cultural Studies*
	+ p.91-95

11/25, Tuesday

* Consumption
	+ “Consuming the Walkman,” in *Doing Cultural Studies*
	+ p.95-102
	+ Selected Readings – “A miniature history of the Walkman”

11/27, Thursday

NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING

12/2, Tuesday

* Review
* Third Blog Entry due *before* this date

**December 11, 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 before October 28, second blog post before November 13 and the third blog post is due before December 2.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: |  |  |