SOCI 1310-700 – Introduction to Popular Culture

Spring 2019 – First 8 weeks

Instructor: Dr. Jennifer Miller

Online Section

Office Hours by Appointment

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
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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:

1. Critique popular culture’s role in American society (Critical Thinking).
2. Identify the way that popular culture depends on language to construct meaning (Critical Thinking and Communication).
3. Analyze the ideological underpinnings of popular culture (Critical Thinking).
4. Demonstrate how people use popular culture to construct or reinforce personal beliefs (Personal Responsibility).
5. Analyze the ethical position of popular culture texts (Personal Responsibility).
6. Evaluate sources of popular culture.
7. Synthesize theories about popular culture through hands-on cultural criticism (Communication).
8. Analyze the connection between popular culture and social values (Social Responsibility).
9. Recognize 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).
10. Describe 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.”

Students will have an opportunity to practice for the blog posts through discussion boards about popular culture, a peer-evaluated analysis of a song, a Song Analysis Assignment, and the Album Analysis Assignment.

\*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:

* Grazian, David. 2017. *Mix It Up: Popular Culture, Mass Media, and Society*. 2nd ed. W. W. Norton, Incorporated.
* The Roots – *And Then You Shoot Your Cousin . . .* 2014
* Access to digital content (including music, movies, television, and Netflix)
  + You will need a **subscription to Netflix** from Module 2 through the duration of the class
    - <https://www.netflix.com/signup>
  + The class has a Spotify playlist <https://open.spotify.com/user/davearditi/playlist/56REG3aOC5UIe5dKpVF1LB>
    - You do **NOT** need to subscribe to Spotify to listen – I use the ad-supported version

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.

**EXAMS**: Students take two midterms and a final exam to demonstrate mastery of the concepts covered in the class. Each exam is cumulative with the Final having more comprehensive questions about concepts covered throughout the semester. The exams consist of multiple choice and true/false questions.

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

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| --- | --- |
| **Individual** | **Percentage** |
| Blog Posts (each Blog Post =10 percent, there are 3 required blog posts for the semester) | 30 |
| Midterm Exams (2 exams X 15 percent) | 30 |
| Participation (Discussion Board, Miscellaneous Assignments, Syllabus Quiz, Comments on Blog Posts) | 15 |
| Music Reviews (Popular Song and Album Review) | 10 |
| Final Exam | 15 |
| **Total** | **100** |

**Late Work Policy**

* All due dates on the syllabus are firm and are defined to the minute.
* **Blog posts may be turned in up to one day after the due date with an automatic 10 percent deduction from total points available.** Late assignments reduce your margin for error to pass the course.
* **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 about an additional 9 hours per module 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.

**Extra Credit**: You can receive 2 extra credit points on your final grade. All you have to do is visit a RECORD STORE (recorded music store - not necessarily vinyl records), take a selfie, post the selfie on the relevant discussion board, and tell everyone something about your visit. If it was your first trip to a record store, please tell us.

**DUE**: BEFORE YOU TAKE THE FINAL

**COURSE CALENDAR**

\*Complete Modules by 11:59pm on the day listed – Assignments have exact times listed\*

1/15 Tuesday – Module 1

* Introduction:
  + Review of syllabus, course expectations and design
* What is Popular Culture?
  + Read: Introduction to *Representation* (you may skip where it introduces each chapter xxiii-xxiv) – PDF on Blackboard
* Listening Assignment (non-graded): Bob Marley’s “I Shot the Sherriff”
* **Syllabus Quiz Due**

1/18 Friday - Module 2

* The Work of Representation (Chapter 1 - *Representation*) – PDF on Blackboard
  + Sections 1-2.3 (p.1-20)
  + Reading A
* Listening Assignment: Tower of Power’s “What is Hip?”
  + Participate in Discussion Board
* Watch: *Master of None* – “Indians on TV” (Netflix)
  + Participate in Discussion Board

1/22 Tuesday - Module 3

* The Work of Representation (Chapter 1 – *Representation*) – PDF on Blackboard
  + Sections 3-4.1 (p.20-31)
  + Reading B, C, D and E
* Listening Practice (non-graded) – Sara Bareilles “Love Song”
* Listen to The Roots’ . . . *And then you shoot your cousin* at least two times before participating in discussion board
  + Participate in Discussion Board
* **Song Analysis Assignment due**

1/25 Friday - Module 4

* The Work of Representation (Chapter 1 – *Representation*) – PDF on Blackboard
  + Sections 4.2-Conclusion (p.31-46)
  + Reading F
* Cultural Studies
  + Introduction to the 1st edition of *Doing Cultural Studies* – PDF on Blackboard
* Clothing Choice
  + Participate in Discussion Board
* Watch: *Killing Us Softly 4*

1/29 Tuesday - Module 5

* **Midterm Exam 1**
* **Album Assignment Due**

2/1 Friday - Module 6

The Social Organization of Popular Culture

* *Mix It Up* Chapter 1 (p.3-21)

2/5 Tuesday - Module 7

A Functionalist Approach to Popular Culture

* *Mix It Up* Chapter 2 (p.23-45)
* **First Blog Post Due**

2/8 Friday - Module 8

A Critical Approach to Popular Culture

* Watch *In Time* (rent or find a way to watch it on your own – NOT on Netflix)
  + Participate in Discussion Board
* *Mix It Up* Chapter 3 (p.47-71)

2/12 Tuesday - Module 9

An Interaction Approach to Popular Culture

* *Mix It Up* Chapter 4 (p.73-95)
* Watch *Black Mirror* Season 3, Episode 1 – “Nosedive”
  + Participate in Discussion Board
* Watch *Generation Like* – PBS Frontline

2/15 Friday - Module 10

* **Midterm Exam 2**

2/19 Tuesday - Module 11

Creating Popular Culture

* *Mix It Up* Chapter 5 (p.97-117)
* Watch: *Before the Music Dies*
  + Participate in Discussion Board

2/22 Friday - Module 12

How the Media and Culture Industries Work

* *Mix It Up* Chapter 6 (p.118-142)
* **Second Blog Due**

11/26 Tuesday - Module 13

Cultural Consumption and Social Class in America

* Mix It Up Chapter 7 (p.143-160)

3/1 Friday - Module 14

Audiences and the Quest for Meaning

* *Mix It Up* Chapter 8 (p.161-182)

3/5 Tuesday - Module 15

Popular Culture and Urban Life in the City

* *Mix It Up* Chapter 9 (p.183-204)
* **Third Blog Due**

3/8 Friday – Module 16

**FINAL EXAM**

“*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.” –Dr. Jennifer Miller*

**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 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.

**Disability Accommodations:** UTArlington 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), The Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (ADAAA),* and *Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.* 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 disability. Students are responsible for providing the instructor with official notification in the form of **a letter certified** by the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD).Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. Students experiencing a range of conditions (Physical, Learning, Chronic Health, Mental Health, and Sensory) that may cause diminished academic performance or other barriers to learning may seek services and/or accommodations by contacting:

**The Office for Students with Disabilities, (OSD)** [www.uta.edu/disability](http://www.uta.edu/disability) or calling 817-272-3364. 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).

Counseling and Psychological Services, (CAPS) [www.uta.edu/caps/](http://www.uta.edu/caps/) or calling 817-272-3671 is also available to all students to help increase their understanding of personal issues, address mental and behavioral health problems and make positive changes in their lives.

**Non-Discrimination Policy:** *The University of Texas at Arlington does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, genetic information, and/or veteran status in its educational programs or activities it operates. For more information, visit*[*uta.edu/eos*](http://www.uta.edu/hr/eos/index.php)*.*

To create a safe environment, I personally extend the non-discrimination policy to include: gender-identity or expression, low-income, generation-related education opportunities, marital status, parental status and/or criminal record.

**Title IX Policy:** The University of Texas at Arlington (“University”) is committed to maintaining a learning and working environment that is free from discrimination based on sex in accordance with Title IX of the Higher Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in educational programs or activities; Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VII), which prohibits sex discrimination in employment; and the Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act (SaVE Act). Sexual misconduct is a form of sex discrimination and will not be tolerated.*For information regarding Title IX, visit* [www.uta.edu/titleIX](http://www.uta.edu/titleIX) or contact Ms. Jean Hood, Vice President and Title IX Coordinator at (817) 272-7091 or [jmhood@uta.edu](file:///C:\Users\arditi\AppData\Local\Temp\jmhood@uta.edu).

**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 Surveys**: 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.

**Campus Carry:** Effective August 1, 2016, the Campus Carry law (Senate Bill 11) allows those licensed individuals to carry a concealed handgun in buildings on public university campuses, except in locations the University establishes as prohibited. Under the new law, openly carrying handguns is not allowed on college campuses. For more information, visit <http://www.uta.edu/news/info/campus-carry/>

**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.