

Popular Culture
Friday 14:45 – 16:15 L807

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Office: L322

Office hour: Monday 2nd period

Using specific objects, we will investigate the history of American popular culture, as well as its various iterations. In addition to gaining greater insight into the nature of popular culture and its role in American society, we will explore different and competing theoretical approaches to popular culture.

Every week, we will alternate between theory and object. First, we look at the theory that will help us analyse a specific object of popular culture. On that week, you are expected to do the required reading, which will then be discussed more fully in class. The following week, we look at a specific object of popular culture through the theory we saw the previous week.

Expectations:

You are expected to attend all classes, arrive on time, be awake and mentally present. This means you will not multi-task, use your cell phone to matters not class-related, or sleep.

In general, I assign readings for every second class. The readings are, however, not easy, and you need to set aside enough time to do them. If you have a question regarding the reading, you are expected to ask it in class.

While I make every effort to choose my words to be easily understood, misunderstandings may occur. You are expected to seek clarifications immediately when you do not understand something. This means interrupting the lecture (yikes!) rather than wait until after the lecture is over.

*Most classes are filmed, and both the video and presentation slides are uploaded on moodle shortly after class. If you miss a class, it is **your** responsibility to watch the video and review the slides to keep up with the rest of the class.*

Important note on Academic Honesty

Cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration or any other act designed to avoid participating honestly in the learning process is strictly forbidden. Plagiarism includes copying language or ideas without proper attribution. If you register in this class, you are implicitly agreeing to make every effort to avoid plagiarism in your oral and written work. Plagiarism will result in an automatic “F”.

Evaluations:

1. Attendance: 5%
2. Class Participation: 15%
3. Quizzes: 30%
4. Mid-term: 20%
5. Class presentation: 10%
6. Final paper: 20%

1. **Attendance** to all classes is mandatory. Excused absences include absences discussed in advance for religious holidays or absences related to illness. You are allowed one personal leave absence for emergencies. Unexcused absences will lower your grade.
2. **Participation:** In order to participate fully, you must arrive on time and do the required readings before class.
3. Short **quizzes** will test your understanding of the required readings. Unless you can provide a valid reason (a doctor's note or official document), you may not re-take a quiz.
4. The **mid-term** will assess your understanding of course readings and class material. It will focus on the various theories explored throughout the first half of the semester.
5. You will do a class **presentation** (10-15 minutes, plus 10 minutes for Q&A) on your final paper. Students are expected to provide feedback and constructive criticism to the presenters. Presentations will take place during the last weeks of class.
6. Your **final paper** (8-10 pages) will pertain to a film (a full list of films from which to chose will be provided in the next few weeks). You will discuss this film using at least one of the theoretical approaches seen in class.

Readings:

- 📖 John Storey. *Cultural Studies and the Study of Popular Culture*. Second Edition. University of Georgia Press, 2003. Available at the **bookstore**.

CALENDAR

September 16

Week 1: Introduction High Culture / Low Culture

- 🌐 "What is Popular Culture?", Moodle, 1-18.

Assignment for next week:

- 📎 Review the syllabus and note any questions you have.

September 23

Week 2: What to do with Cultural Objects? Encoding & Decoding

- 📖 Textbook, chapter 2, 9-28.

Assignment for next week:

- 📎 Fill out your moodle profile and upload a profile picture. Fill out class survey.

September 30 No class today

October 7

Week 4: Ideology & Emotions

- 📖 Textbook, chapter 3, 29-53.

Assignment for next week:

- 📎 Review the Plagiarism handout and note any questions you have.

*Saturday October 8 Make up class (12:00-14:30)

The Woman's Film

🎧 *Stella Dallas* (King Vidor, 1937, 1h46min)

*****QUIZ 1*****

October 14

Week 5: Television

- 🌐 **To be announced, moodle.**
- 🎧 Excerpts from various reality television and soap opera shows.

October 21

Week 6: Structuralism

- 📖 **Textbook**, chapter 4, 54-74.

Assignment for next week:

- 📎 **Plagiarism checklist must be submitted before November 11.**

***Saturday October 22nd: Make up class (9:45 – noon)**

Week 7: The Film Noir

- 🎧 *Double Indemnity* (Billy Wilder, 1944, 1h47min)

***October 28 No class today**

November 11

Week 8: Gendering

Mid-Term Due in Class Today

November 18

Week 9: Popular Magazines

- 📖 **Textbook**, chapter 5, 75-92.

*****QUIZ 2*****

November 25

Week 10: Marxism

- 🌐 John Storey, "Marxism". Available on **moodle**.

December 2

Week 11: Consumerism

- 📖 **Textbook**, chapter 7, 113-136.

December 9

*****QUIZ 3*****

Week 12: Putting it all Together: Advertising

- 🌐 John Storey. "The Politics of the Popular". Available on **moodle**.

December 16

Week 13: Putting it all Together: Celebrities and the Gossip Industry

- 🎧 TMZ excerpt.
- 🎧 E! excerpt.

December 23

Week 14: Class presentations

January 6

Week 15: Class presentations + Final Paper Due Today