**Introduction to Popular Culture**

**UNST 254M**

**Fall 2014**

Monday and Wednesday

“Cultural Studies delineates how cultural artifacts articulate social ideologies, values, and representations of gender, race and class, and how these phenomena are related to each other. Situating cultural texts in their social context thus involves tracing the articulations through which societies produce culture and how culture in turn shapes society through its influence on individuals and groups.”

Douglas Kellner, *Media Culture*

**Instructor:** Leslie W. Batchelder **Mentor:** Rudina Cekani

**Office:** Cramer, D117 **Email:** [rudinac@pdx.edu](mailto:rudinac@pdx.edu" \t "_blank)

**Email:** [lwbatch@pdx.edu](mailto:lwbatch@pdx.edu)

**Office phone:** 725-8158

**Office Hours:**

**Course Description:** This course is designed to introduce the student to the study of popular culture. Because we are literally steeped in popular culture ranging from the annoying to innocuous in our everyday lives, it is often fairly difficult to approach popular culture with an eye towards critical analysis and frankly why would you want to? It’s all harmless fun anyway isn’t it? Well not exactly…

As educated people and critical thinkers we need to be able to assess the images and ideas that bombard us daily with an eye towards understanding the complex mythologies, ideologies and political stakes involved. As Douglas Kellner reminds us there are always possibilities for intervention and reinvention. For example, one could ask why certain images/ideas are possible while others are not. How do/can consumers of popular culture intervene in the production of meaning? How does popular culture affect our ideas, beliefs and values as individuals and as a society?

**Are We In Sinq?**

This class is conceived as part of the University Studies program. As such it is designed to help students to make progress towards the four goals of University Studies:

Critical Thinking and Inquiry Communication

Ethical and Social Responsibility Diversity of Human Experience

The University Studies Program is a unique General Education program designed to provide students with more holistic and integrated college experience. The program stresses student centered learning, developing a sense of community amongst students and community based learning.

Many of the assignments are designed with specific goals in mind such as the Media Analysis Portfolio (Critical Thinking and Inquiry & Communication) or the Alternative Media Assignment (Ethical and Social Responsibility & Diversity of Human Experience).

**Required Course Readings:**

*Popping Culture* by Murray Pomerance and John Sakeris, **seventh edition!**

ISBN 10:1-256-84016-5

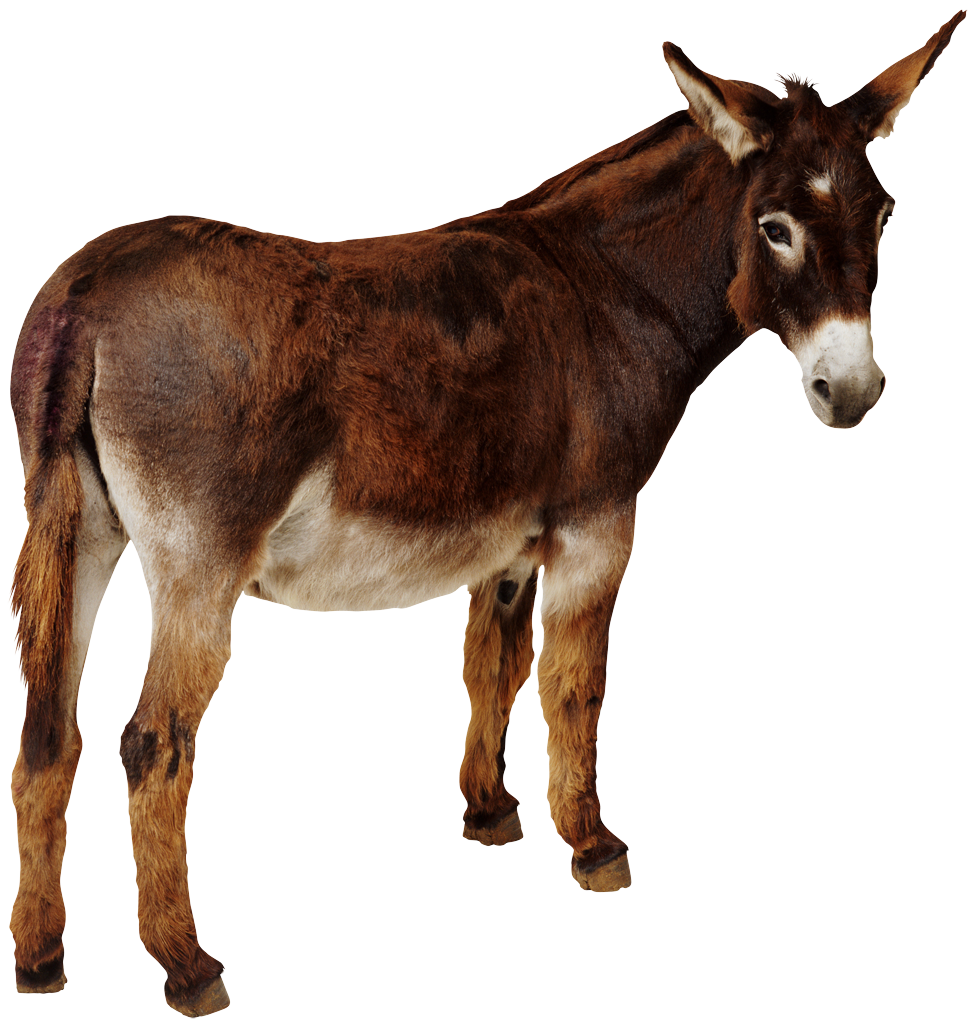
Available at PSU Bookstore

**Course Policies:**

**MCj02923720000%5b1%5dThis is a cell phone free zone! This is NOT an online classroom.**

**All electronic devices including cell phones, iPods and computers** are to be stowed for the duration of the class period. Not only are these devices a distraction for you but they also distract and annoy other students.

**Class participation** is an important part of this course**. Part of our goal is to create a learning community**. Creating a dynamic, strong and supportive community requires that each of you be actively engaged in, and **responsible** **for**, the learning environment. Participation does not mean merely showing up. It means that you should be prepared to participate and display a command of the readings. Lack of participation in either the mentor section or the main class will be reflected in your final grade. (See grading rubric for more details)



* **Don’t be an ass!** Respectful behavior towards your classmates, the mentors and the professor are expected at all times. This means its fine to disagree but please do so in a thoughtful manner. To familiarize yourselves with “Student Conduct Code” at PSU see: <http://www.ess.pdx.edu/osa/osa_> There is a new module in D2L

Creating a Safe Campus: Preventing Gender Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Assault, you will be expected to complete as soon as possible.

Late Work Policy

Assignments completed after the original due date may be turned in at the beginning of the next class with a 10% deduction in grade. Should you also miss that deadline, an assignment that is a week late will receive a 25% deduction. No assignments will be accepted a week after the original due date.

**Plagiarism** means utilizing the ideas, expressions, phrases or words of another person without correctly citing that person or source. Plagiarism will result in a failing grade may lead to more serious consequences depending on the gravity of the offense.

**The Right to be successful**: Students with disabilities, who may require accommodations, are encouraged to contact the PSU Disabilities Resource Center and the professor at the beginning of the term to arrange accommodations.

Course Material and class updates are online. At times we will make an announcement or send a message to the class regarding an assignment or class session. You are responsible for all material posted to the course website. **YOU SHOULD BE CHECKING THE CLASSWEBSITE ON D2L** several times a

week!

**ll2_vo2x%5b1%5dSave all of your work!** Get in the habit of **saving all work on your “H” drive**.

**Course Requirements:**

1. **Attendance and participation**

Attendance in both the main class and the mentor section is crucial. In order to foster a productive exchange and engaging academic environment each of you needs to participate by coming to class prepared and actively participating in class discussions and mentor session activities.

1. **Reading Response Posts**

You will be expected to write a 250-500 word critical response to each of the required readings. This is *a critical thinking exercise* in which we are practicing the university studies goal of Critical Inquiry. This means you should engage with the texts and attempt to respond to them on their terms, (in other words no whining about style, content etc. Respond to the text assigned in terms of the ideas it offers. Remember these authors are all contributors to this text having undergone a strict peer review process. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that their ideas are just “stupid” or “too difficult.”

You should pick a passage from the readings and analyze it, comment on it and/or respond to it. What did you find most interesting, compelling or confusing? Why*?*

Your grade will be based on your **ten best** posts.

1. **Media Analysis Portfolio (Due dates vary. See assignment handout)**

Each student will write three media analysis papers based on the readings and their own observations about a specific popular culture artifact*.* Each student must complete:

1 An Advertising Analysis

2. A Television Show Analysis

3. A Film Analysis

***5****.* **Alternative Media Presentation; Due December 1 (See assignment handout)**

For this project you will need to select three other partners, (people in your mentor section). You will work together to put together a presentation that deals with an alternative media source here in the Portland area. This assignment will require fieldwork. The Vanguard, Rearguard and other campus oriented newspapers do not count for the purposes of this project. There are many great alternative media sources here in Portland such as KBOO community radio, Laughing Horse Books, In Other Words Books, *Street Roots*, *The Alliance*, NW Film Institute (newspaper) etc.

**Assignments for the course have been assigned the following values:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Participation | 15% |
| Reading Responses | 30% |
| Media Response Portfolio | 30% |
| Alt.Media Presentation | 25% |

**Please note:** This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor. All changes will be announced in class.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **DATE** | **Class Topic** | **Mentor** | **Due** |
|  | **Wk**  **1** | **9/29** | What is Pop Culture? | Getting to know you |  |
|  |  | **10/1** | Nike Ad Analysis |  |  |
|  | **Wk 2** | **10/6** | Kellner 25-34 |  | Your Pop Pleasure  Building a website |
|  |  | **10/8** | Muzzatti 191-201 |  |  |
|  | **Wk**  **3** | **10/13** | Ewan 35-43 |  |  |
|  |  | **10/15** | Practice Ad analysis |  |  |
|  | **Wk**  **4** | **10/20** | Doherty 313-323 | Peer Review AD analysis |  |
|  | **10/22** | Turner 75-86 |  | AD  Analysis |
|  | **Wk**  **5** | **10/27** | TV analysis Practice  “Big Bang Theory” |  |  |
|  | **10/29** | Walsh 179-190 | Peer Review TV |  |
|  | **Wk**  **6** | **11/3** | Morrison 361-369 |  | TV  Analysis |
|  | **11/5** | Film Analysis Practice |  |  |
|  | **Wk**  **7** | **11/10** | Wartenberg 15-33 | Peer Review Film |  |
|  |  | **11/12** | Turnock 301-311 |  | Film  Analysis |
|  | **Wk**  **8** | **11/17** | Giroux 159-176 |  |  |
|  | **11/19** | Hatch 65-74 |  | Peer Review Portfolio |
| **Wk**  **9** | **11/24** | Farrell 201-212 |  |  |
|  | **11/26** | **TBA** |  |  |
| **Wk**  **10** | **12/1** | Group Presentations |  | Send me a copy of your slides |
|  | **12/3** | Group Presentations |  | Don’t forget to hand in your Peer Comments form |