COMM 5304 Cultural Studies
Spring 2014
Times R 7-9:30pm
Room: Bay Hall, Rm. 126

Professor David Gurney
Office: Bay Hall Rm. 326
Office Hours: T 2-4pm, W 1-2pm, R 2-4pm & by appointment

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Course Description:
This course examines theoretical approaches to cultural studies; focuses on interdisciplinary research of media and audiences, covering a range of methods and theoretical frameworks; concentration varies.

About the Course:
This seminar in cultural theory examines key theories and methods used to study popular culture in-depth. It contextualizes the fundamental methods and related theories for understanding the construction of meaning in media such as film, television, popular music, and advertising within the various academic disciplines and traditions of cultural studies. Throughout the course, we will endeavor to connect this critical and intellectual history with contemporary media culture.

Student Learning Objectives:
1. Understand a variety of frameworks for interpreting popular culture
2. Apply interpretive frameworks and analyze popular culture
3. Create original media criticism and research by applying cultural theories

Required Course Texts:
All additional reserve readings will be made available through library or Blackboard.

Course Assignments & Grading:

Essay #1: 10%. Judging Pop Culture: Two 400-500 word essays in a point/counterpoint format that argue the Culture & Civilization vs. Culturalism approaches to an example of popular media. Details to come. Due 2/13.

Essay #2: 15%. Analyzing Pop Culture: A 1250-1600 word essay that analyzes contemporary popular culture by utilizing theories studied in the course. Details to come. Due 3/6.

Essay #3: 15%. Seminar Paper Proposal: A 1250-1600 word essay that explains both object of study and proposed critical methodologies to be applied. Details to come. Due 3/27.

Reading Presentations: 10%. Students will be assigned a week to do a reading presentation, which will require you to introduce, lead discussion on, and bring pertinent examples to apply to a particular reading. Readings with an asterisk (*) next to them are those you may select.
Seminar Paper: (12-15 pages): 30%. Students will develop a substantial course project, in most cases a seminar paper, in consultation with the professor. This project will include choosing a subject of media or cultural production and applying a critical methodology in order to research and interpret that subject. Due 5/8.

Presentation of Seminar Paper: 5%. In addition to turning in a final paper on the course project, students will introduce their work in a 15-minute presentation to the class. Due week 13 or 14.

Attendance/Participation: 15%. Attendance is mandatory and active participation in class is vital to your experience (and grade) in the course. Ten points will be deducted from your participation grade for each class missed. You are allotted one absence without penalty. You will receive a midterm report on your attendance/participation grade along with your midterm grade.

Grade Scale: A = 100-90, B = 89-80, C = 79-70, D = 69-60, F = 59 and under.

Course Policies
» Attendance is mandatory. See grading policy above. Excused absences are only given in the case of illness or a death in the immediate family, and require official documentation.
» Late work will be penalized by ten points (all assignments will be on 100-point scales) for each day it is late.
» While in class, please make sure your cell phone is off and stowed away.
» A note on competing media: Laptops are permitted for note taking purposes only, but please do not abuse this privilege. While you may personally feel capable of multitasking during class while still paying attention to lecture and discussion, your surrounding classmates will more likely find your in-class extracurricular activities distracting, so please, for the sake of your peers, respect this restriction.
» Please remember to check your email regularly during the week and monitor the course Blackboard site for any course updates.
» If you would like to discuss any course readings, lectures, or assignments outside of class, you should feel free to contact me via email or by arranging to visit me during my office hours. If you need to schedule a time to meet outside of office hours, please let me know.
» All writing for this course must be composed using a standard, 12-point font size, and with standard 1" margins.

Academic Integrity:
University students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes all forms of cheating, such as illicit possession of examinations or examination materials, falsification, forgery, complicity or plagiarism. (Plagiarism is the presentation of the work of another as one’s own work.) In this class, academic misconduct or complicity in an act of academic misconduct on an assignment or test will result in a failing grade (F) for the assignment, at the very least, or a report to the Chair of the Department of Communication and Theatre, the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, and the Office of Student Affairs.

» For the purposes of citation, please follow American Psychological Association (APA) Style Guide. For reference, see: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/
Dropping a Class:
I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. Please consult with me before you decide to drop to be sure it is the best thing to do. Should dropping the class be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class. April 11, 2014, is the last day to drop a class with an automatic grade of "W" this term.

Classroom/Professional Behavior:
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, as an academic community, requires that each individual respect the needs of others to study and learn in a peaceful atmosphere. Under Article III of the Student Code of Conduct, classroom behavior that interferes with either (a) the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or (b) the ability of other students to profit from the instructional program may be considered a breach of the peace and is subject to disciplinary sanction outlined in article VII of the Student Code of Conduct. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior may be instructed to leave the classroom. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including classrooms, electronic classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.

Academic Advising:
The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. The Academic Advisor will set up a degree plan, which must be signed by the student, a faculty mentor, and the department chair. The College’s Academic Advising Center is located in Driftwood 203E, and can be reached at 825-3466.

Notice to Students with Disabilities:
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act in making reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. If you suspect that you may have a disability (physical impairment, learning disability, psychiatric disability, etc.), please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities Office, located in Driftwood 101, at 825-5816. If you need disability accommodations in this class, please see me as soon as possible.

Grade Appeal Process:
As stated in University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, and University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible through the University Rules Web site at http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Office of Student Affairs.
Course Schedule
Readings are to be completed before the under which they are listed. Schedule is subject to change at the discretion of the professor.

Week 1. January 23. Introduction to the Course and Concept of Popular Culture
Conversation will incorporate material from Storey Intro: Chapters 1.

Week 2. January 30. “Culture and Civilization” and Culturalism
Storey Intro: Chapters 2 & 3
Storey Reader: Part Two: Chapters 3-6

Week 3. February 6. Marxism and the Culture Industry
Storey Intro: Chapter 4
Storey Reader: Part Three: Chapters 8-13

Week 4. February 13. Structuralism
Storey Intro: Chapter 6
Storey Reader: Part Five: Chapters 24, 25, and 27
Reserve: Levi-Strauss, Myth and Meaning*
ESSAY #1 DUE

Week 5. February 20. Psychoanalysis
Storey Intro: Chapter 5
Storey Reader: Part Five: Chapters 22, 23, and 30
Reserve: Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”*

Week 6. February 27. Feminism and Gender
Storey Intro: Chapter 7
Storey Reader: Part Four: Chapters 17, 18, and 19
Reserve: Spigel, "Women’s Work"*

Week 7. March 6. Politics of the Popular (Audiences)
Storey Reader: Chapters 48, 50, 51
Reserve: Hall, “Encoding/Decoding”; Hebdige, “From Culture to Hegemony”; Press & Livingstone, “Taking Audience Research into the Age of New Media”; Jenkins, “’Welcome to Bisexuality, Captain Kirk’”*
ESSAY #2 DUE

SPRING BREAK (No class meeting on March 13)

Week 8. March 20. Representation, Race, Colonialism
Storey Intro: Chapter 8
Storey Reader: Part Six: All chapters
Week 9. March 27. Politics of the Popular (Taste)
Storey Intro: Chapter 10
Storey Reader: Part Eight: Chapters 44 and 45
Reserve: Bakhtin, “Introduction” to Rabelais and His World*; Sconce, “Trashing the Academy”*
ESSAY #3 DUE

Week 10. April 3. Postmodernism
Storey Intro: Chapter 9
Storey Reader: Part Seven: Chapters 37, 40, 41, 42, and 43
Reserve: Baudrillard, Selections from The Conspiracy of Art*; Jameson, “Postmodernism or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism”*

Week 11. April 10. No Class Meeting

Week 12. April 17. Post-Structuralism & Discourse
Storey Intro: Review pp. 128-133
Storey Reader: Part Four: Chapter 21; Part Five: Chapters 28 and 29


Final seminar papers will be due by noon on Thursday, May 8.