PSYC 4390 - Psychology and Popular Culture  
Summer 2017 I (May 30-June 30)

Anthony Zoccolillo, Ph.D.  
Email: Anthony.Zoccolillo@tamucc.edu 
Phone: 361-825-2390  
Class Location: CI 106

Office Hours (BH 318): MTW 9a-950am

Course Description: Despite the fact that most people watch movies as a means of entertainment, there is no denying the influence popular culture has on the typical American citizen. Psychology and Popular Culture will explore the power of the entertainment media and understand its dynamic relationship with American culture through the eyes of psychological theory. Students will gain a broader understanding of the ways psychological principles are communicated to a mass audience as well as assist in provoking thought and analysis of psychological theory and research.

Disclaimer: Every attempt has been made to select films and film clips that minimize offensive content. If given the choice between two similar films, I have always chosen the one that would generally be found as least offensive. That said, the films, clips and images chosen may contain content that some people may find offensive and that content has not been edited out. Offensive features may include sensitive story lines, graphic language and/or images, violence, sexual themes, and drug/alcohol/illegal behavior portrayals or references. There are plenty of references available online for you to read up on the film prior to coming to class – the best of which is the Internet Movie Data Base (www.imdb.com) in the section they have for each film for Motion Picture Rating and Parents Guide. Please review the list of films I propose to show and decide whether or not you think your participation in this class will be impacted by the films selected. Your decision to not attend/view a particular film(s) will not excuse you for understanding how it fits in with the particular unit.

After completing this course students should be able to:

1. Identify examples of psychological principles in film and television
2. Critically analyze popular culture for psychological content
3. Compare and contrast multiple portrayals of psychological content
4. Apply course materials both to both film/TV scenarios as well as “real life”
Note: While many of these films, and all of the discussion will take place in class – there will be an expectation that certain films be viewed on your own time. You will know about them well in advance and they will be movies easily obtainable.

Required Materials:


Part I: Introduction to Psychology and Popular Culture

Introduction and introduction to popular culture – what is it? Why study it? What can we learn about psychology by understanding popular culture? Understanding what we can learn about psychology from film, television and music

Part II: Function and Dysfunction in the American Family

A dysfunctional family is one where conflict, misbehavior, and often abuse on the part of individual family members occurs regularly leading to other members behaving in ways that accommodate those actions. Clearly this dynamic is perfect fodder to explore in film and we will look at how film reflects the cultural and social norms over time. Feature films may include Arsenic and Old Lace (1944), Rebel Without a Cause (1955), Ordinary People (1980), The Royal Tennenbaums (2001), American Beauty (1999), Husbands and Wives (1992).

Your Grade:

Below is a list and a description of how you will be graded this semester. It is expected that all work is to be handed in ON the day they are due, and handed in during the class period. Late work will be subject to a significant penalty of ½ of a letter grade (5 points) per day for each day it is late. Your grade in this course will be the average of the following:

Attendance and Participation (10%):

Your attendance in class to discuss the topics, the readings and the films. Watching it on your own may give you access to the story but not to the rest of the experience. Additionally, the quality of this class is largely based on the quality of the discussions – which you are expected to participate in.
Quizzes (15%):

These will be random quizzes given at the beginning of class designed to make sure you are doing the reading and/or independent viewing. Not coming to class prepared negatively impacts the quality of the discussions we are able to have, and much of the learning in this class comes from those discussions. These are not meant to be difficult and if you do the assignment you will have no problem getting full credit for this portion of your grade. These quizzes cannot be made up.

Research Paper (25%):

This will be a paper of approximately 5-7 pages in length in which you will explore the elements of what makes for a functional family. This is a research paper and as such, your sources should be credible and scholarly. This paper will form the basis of which you will compare many of the films and clips shown to differentiate functional from dysfunctional. You will be graded not only on the content of the paper, but style and quality of your sources. This paper will be due on ____.

Midterm and Final Exam (25% each):

The midterm and final exams will be based on content from the assigned readings, class discussions, and film/film clips shown in class. It is recommended that you take notes as you do your readings.

Grading Scale:

90-100% = A  
80 – 89% = B  
70 – 79% = C  
60 – 69% = D  
less than 60% = F

Expectations

Class will start on time every day, and you should expect it to run the full period. Please avoid disturbing other students (by arriving late, leaving early, talking with a neighbor, etc.). Make sure that your electronic devices are turned off. I expect students to make every effort to attend each class. Should you find it necessary to miss class, please note that you will be held responsible for all material covered during the missed class. It will be your responsibility to speak with a classmate about the course content you missed.

Academic Integrity/Plagiarism

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 zero for the assignment or exam.

**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 course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course 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. Friday, June 16th 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.

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi has a diverse student population that represents the population of the state. Our goal is to provide you with a high quality educational experience that is free from repression. We expect that you will behave in a manner that is dignified, respectful and courteous to all people, regardless of sex, ethnic/racial origin, religious background, sexual orientation or disability. Behaviors that infringe on the rights of another individual will not be tolerated.

**Grade Appeals**

As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures, 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 Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible through the University Rules Web site at http://www.tamu.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Dean’s office in the college in which the course is taught or the Office of the Provost.

Disabilities Accommodations

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall 116.

If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.

Statement of Academic Continuity

In the event of an unforeseen adverse event, such as a major hurricane and classes could not be held on the campus of Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi; this course would continue through the use of Blackboard and/or email. In addition, the syllabus and class activities may be modified to allow continuation of the course. Ideally, University facilities (i.e., emails, web sites, and Blackboard) will be operational within two days of the closing of the physical campus. However, students need to make certain that the course instructor has a primary and a secondary means of contacting each student.
Tentative Course Schedule: These include tentative film selections based upon previous semesters. There may be some variation in the selections.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>In Class Topic</th>
<th>Reading/Work Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 30 &amp; 31</td>
<td>Introduction to Film, Psychology and Culture</td>
<td>Young (2012) Chapter 1, Chapter 9 (Due Class 2)</td>
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<td>June 1</td>
<td>Mental Illness and the Media</td>
<td>Wahl (2003) Chapters 1-3; Tesser, Millar &amp; Wu (1988); Domino (1983)</td>
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<td>June 5</td>
<td>Mental Illness and the Media</td>
<td>Wahl (2003) Chapters 4-7; Rosenhan (1973)</td>
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<td>June 6</td>
<td>Psychology and Film</td>
<td>Anderson (2003); Young (2012) Chapter 2 and 6</td>
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<td>June 7-8</td>
<td>Understanding Psychology and Television</td>
<td>Penn, Chamberlin, &amp; Mueser (2003)</td>
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<td>June 12</td>
<td>Psychology and Music</td>
<td>Young, Boester, Whitt, &amp; Stevens (2008);</td>
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<td>June 13</td>
<td>Wrapping it all Up</td>
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<td>June 14</td>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
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<td>June 15</td>
<td>Introduction to Function and Dysfunction of the American Family.</td>
<td>Functional Family Paper Due.</td>
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<td>June 19</td>
<td>Portrayal of a Functional Family</td>
<td>Mares, Oliver, &amp; Cantor (2008); Simonton, Graham, &amp; Kaufman (2012)</td>
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<td>June 20</td>
<td>Arsenic and Old Lace (1944)</td>
<td>Till, et al. (2011); Plucker, et al. (2009)</td>
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<td>June 21</td>
<td>Rebel Without a Cause (1955)</td>
<td>Young (2012) Chapter 4 and 5</td>
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<td>June 22</td>
<td>Discussion of Arsenic and Rebel</td>
<td>Young (2012) Chapter 7 and 8</td>
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<td>June 27</td>
<td>TRT's (con't)/The Changing notion of Functional Families</td>
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<td>June 28</td>
<td>Make up Day</td>
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<td>June 29</td>
<td>Tying it All Together/Final Reflection</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 30</td>
<td>Final Exam</td>
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