COMM 5304.001 Cultural Studies  
Spring 2020  
Times M 7-9:30pm  
Room: Island Hall, Rm. 158

Professor David Gurney  
Office: Bay Hall Rm. 331  
Office Hours: MW 9am-11am, R 2-3pm, & by appointment

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Course Description:  
This course examines theoretical approaches to cultural studies; it 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: At the conclusion of the course, students should be able to:  
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:  
(Henceforth referred to as “Storey”)  
All additional reserve readings will be made available through the library and/or Blackboard.

Course Policies  
» Attendance at face-to-face meetings is mandatory. See grading policy below. Excused absences are only  
given in cases of genuine hardship. Please contact the instructor should such an occasion arise.  
» Late work will be penalized by ten percent of available points for the assignment 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 class-related 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.  
» 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.
Course Assignments & Grading:

In-Class Attendance/Participation: 150 points. Attendance is mandatory for our face-to-face meetings and active participation in class is vital to your experience (and grade) in the course. Twenty-five points will be deducted from your participation grade for each class missed. You will receive a midterm report on your attendance/participation grade along with your midterm grade.

Reading Presentations and Reactions: You will choose two weeks for which you will do a reading presentation or critique – one of each. The presentations will require you to briefly synopsize and instigate discussion on a reading. The reactions will require you to prepare a shorter but more critical response to a reading, pointing to problems with its argument or avenues it leaves unexplored. Readings with an asterisk (*) next to them are those you may select.
   - Reading Presentation: 100 points. Time: 10-15 minutes.
   - Reading Reaction: 100 points. Time: 3-5 minutes.

Midterm Exam: 150 points. You will have one evening to write a 1250-1600 word response to answer to a question related to the theories we will have covered in the first half of the semester. This will occur between 6pm-10pm on 3/2 and will be done via Blackboard.

Seminar Project Proposal: 150 points. You will write a 1250-1600 word document that explains both your intended object(s) of study and, if appropriate, proposed critical methodologies to be applied. Details to come. Due 3/30 via submission on Blackboard.

Presentation of Seminar Project: 50 points. In addition to turning in a final paper on the course project, students will describe their work in a 15-minute presentation to the class. Done in class during our final meeting on 5/4 and during our scheduled exam time on 5/11.

Seminar Project: 300 points. Students will develop a substantial course project, in most cases a seminar paper or extensive literature review, 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 5/10 via submission on Blackboard.

Grade Scale: A = 1000-900 points, B = 899-800 points, C = 799-700 points, D = 699-600 points, F = 599 points or lower
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, at the very least, in receiving no credit for the assignment or test in question. Any repeat offenses will result in failure of the course.

» 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 your academic advisor, the Financial Aid Office, and me, before you decide to drop this course. 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.

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:
Students pursuing the Master of Arts in Communication will be paired with a graduate faculty member advisor in their first semester. Students should contact their advisors within the first two weeks of a semester to arrange a meeting during which degree plans, tracks, and opportunities for professional development should be discussed. If there is any question regarding whom a student’s academic advisor is, the student should contact Dr. Stephanie Rodriguez, Graduate Coordinator, for assistance (stephanie.rodriguez@tamucc.edu; 361-825-5753). To finalize your degree plan and register for graduation, you must also meet with the Graduate Student Academic Advisor in the Academic Advising Center for the College of Liberal Arts. This office is located in Driftwood 203E and can be reached at (361) 825-3466.
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, Room 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.

Grade Appeal Process:
As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C0.03, 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.C0.03, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. 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. These documents are accessible through the University Rules Web site at: http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/13.02.99.c0.03_student_grade_appeals.pdf.

Course Schedule
Readings are to be completed before the end of the time period or class meeting under which they are listed. Schedule is subject to change at the discretion of the professor.

**Week 1: Class Meeting on January 27**
*Introduction to the Course and the Concepts of Culture and Popular Culture*
Conversation will incorporate material from Storey, Chapters 1, 2, and 3.

**Week 2. Class Meeting on February 3**
*Marxism and the Culture Industry*
Storey, Chapter 4
Reserves:
Adorno, T. W., & Horkheimer, M. Enlightenment as mass deception*
Benjamin, W. The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction*
Cross, S., & Littler, J. Celebrity and schadenfreude*
Fiske, J. The cultural economy of fandom*

**Week 3. Class Meeting on February 10**
*Structuralism and Post-Structuralism*
Storey, Chapter 6
Reserves:
Barthes, R. The death of the author*
Sawyer, R. K. A discourse on discourse: An archeological history of an intellectual concept*
Wright, W. The structure of myth & the structure of the Western film*

**Week 4. Class Meeting on February 17**
*Psychoanalysis, Gender, and Sexuality*
Storey, Chapters 5 & 7
Reserves:
Clover, C. J. Her body, himself: Gender in the slasher film*
McRobbie, A. Post-feminism and popular culture*
Mulvey, L. Visual pleasure and narrative cinema*

**Week 5. Class Meeting on February 24**
*Gender and Sexuality (continued)*
Reserves:
Butler, J. *Gender Trouble* (excerpts)*
Foucault, M. The history of sexuality, vol. 1 (excerpts)*
Lawrence, T. Disco and the queering of the dance floor*
Martin, A. L., Jr. It's (not) in his kiss*
Sedgwick, E. K. Epistemology of the Closet (excerpts)*

**Week 6. No Class Meeting on March 2**
**MIDTERM EXAM – QUESTION RELEASED VIA BLACKBOARD AT 6PM ON MARCH 2, RESPONSE DUE BY 10:00PM – NO CLASS MEETING THAT EVENING**

Begin work on proposals before Spring Break. Spring Break means no class meeting on March 9.
**Week 7. Class Meeting on March 16**
Representation, Race, (Post-)Colonialism
Storey, Chapter 8
Reserves:
Atkins, E. T. The funky divas talk back*
hooks, b. The oppositional gaze*
Fanon, F. Black Skin, White Masks (excerpts)*
McIntosh, P. White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack
Said, E. Orientalism (excerpts)*

Week 8. Class Meeting on March 23
Modernism and Postmodernism
Storey, Chapter 9
Reserves:
Baudrillard, J. The system of objects*
Driscoll, C. On popular music*
Jameson, F. The cultural logic of late capitalism*
Lyotard, J. The postmodern condition*

Week 9. Class Meeting on March 30
Politics of the Popular (Taste)
Reserves:
Bourdieu, P. Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste (excerpts)*
Holland, S. L., & Novak, D. R. “Food changed my life”*
Sconce, J. Trashing the academy*

SEMINAR PAPER PROPOSAL DUE VIA BLACKBOARD ON MARCH 30

Week 10. Class Meeting on April 6
Politics of the Popular (Audiences)
Storey, Chapter 10
Reserves:
Bruns, A. The future is user-led: The path towards widespread produsage
Hall, S. Encoding, decoding*
Hebdige, D. From culture to hegemony*
Jenkins, H. Star Trek rerun, reread, rewritten: Fan writing as textual poaching*

Week 11. Class Meeting on April 13
Politics of the Popular (Audiences, cont.)
Reserves:
Bird, S. E. Are we all produsers now?*
Childish, B. Remodernism: Towards a new spirituality in art
Colburn, S. Filming concerts for YouTube*
Hesmondhalgh, D. Subcultures, scenes or tribes?*
Straw, W. Systems of articulation, logics of change*

Week 12. Class Meeting on April 20
Recent Developments in Cultural Studies
Reserves:
Andrejevic, M. The work that affective economics does*
Grimes, S. M. Little big scene*
Hemmings, C. Invoking affect: Cultural theory and the ontological turn*
Morley, D. Cultural studies, common sense and communications*
Ouellette, L., & Wilson, J. Women’s work*

Week 13. No Class Meeting on April 27
Seminar Project Preparation Week
Individual meetings will be scheduled in lieu of class meeting

Week 14. Class Meeting on May 4
Seminar Project Presentations

Final seminar projects will be due via Blackboard by 11:59pm on Sunday, May 10.

Final Exam Week. Class Meeting on May 11 (Tentative – subject to publication of the official finals schedule)
Seminar Project Presentations
References


