

FEB. 07 2001

**English 3830: History of the Literature of Popular Culture
Winter 2001
Section A3**

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office hours: Mondays 10:00 - 11:30 a.m.
Fridays 10:00 - 11:30 a.m.
or by appointment

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course description:

This course examines aspects of popular culture not as a set of written texts with a "history," but as sets of places, media personalities and events which create cultures in the West that are sometimes "of the people," sometimes manufactured for mass consumption and sometimes a bit of both. By looking at aspects of popular culture practices and theories, we will investigate not only the critique of traditional ways of thinking about culture which popular culture forms often mount, but also at "culture" as a lived set of practices spanning a variety of forms which cuts across (and informs) categorizations such as class, gender, sexuality, race, religion and citizenship. We will read a variety of theoretical approaches to the study of popular culture as we do this. Discussion of popular culture forms include examinations of Disney, Hollywood, the evening news, soap operas, shopping malls, video games, hockey, the Internet, and "trash" literature among other cultural texts.

course expectations

** Please note that English 1010 is a prerequisite for this course.

This will be a discussion-oriented course, and so you will be expected to participate actively in this class by contributing regularly to class discussions. You will be expected to attend class regularly (especially in a class that meets only once a week; if you miss one class, you have missed a week's worth of material!) and are responsible for obtaining information given in classes you miss, including handouts.

Because a large part of this class will revolve around discussion, and because we will often be engaged in talking about issues about which we care deeply, it is crucial that we establish and are committed to respect as our primary ground rule. A respectful learning environment means that we should participate with open minds in order that we all feel comfortable sharing our thoughts and ideas, that we all listen respectfully to one another, and that we encourage others who have not spoken to speak. Discussions must, thus, be engaged with a sense of responsibility to contribute constructively and to move the conversation forward.

texts

John Storey, *An Introduction to Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*. 2nd ed.
Reserve Readings (in Library)

evaluation

class presentation	25%
journal	25%
Q-cards	10%
final project	30%
class participation	10%

assignments

class presentations (25%)

Your group will be responsible for presenting the readings to the rest of the class on the day assigned.

- 1) Presentations should run between 30 - 40 minutes and should promote discussion, even controversy, and should be interesting (i.e. no boring lecturing). Use handouts (I can photocopy these if you give them to me in advance) or overheads to present factual material, rather than spending precious time on reading aloud information that the class will be able to simply read for themselves. Use your time, instead, to synthesize information in ways that will aid in comprehension and to take a critical position to the material you are presenting.
- 2) After the presentation, it will be the group's responsibility to facilitate class discussion.
- 3) Minimum expectations for the presentation
 - a) rather than a summary of each article, you will be expected to pull the readings together in some way around two or three main ideas
 - b) focus your discussion on any specific idea or insight or analysis that your group found illuminating, altering, or challenging. What ideas did these articles introduce that you had not thought of before? What ideas do you not agree with, if any? Why?
 - c) you must also establish some links/connections/applications that can be made between the main ideas found in the reading and your group's personal experience of a relevant cultural text

reading journal (25%):

DUE: JANUARY 29
FEBRUARY 12
MARCH 12
APRIL 2

Your journal must be submitted in a notebook or duo-tang separate from the one you are using for your notes. Your journal must be typed. Please do not use point-form.

The reading journal consists of **four** responses to any of the assignments listed in the attached handout. Your grade will be based on the progress you show throughout the journals and the ways in which you demonstrate a concerted effort to achieve the analysis/critique work required for this assignment. This is why I require you to submit all your entries to me, including those I have already read, for each submission. If you are unclear about these requirements, or your progress within the context of these requirements, come and see me before the deadline (remember of you cannot make my office hours, we can arrange an alternative time). **If you do not see me with your questions, I cannot help you.**

Q-cards

Each week you will be responsible for developing three well-formulated questions/responses that come up for you based on the assigned readings for that week. These questions must be typed. You will be required to bring these questions/responses to class each Monday night in order that you can ask at least one of them to those doing the class presentation that week. You will also be required to submit a copy of your questions to me.

final project (30%)

DUE: April 9, 2001

**** (proposal due March 5, 2001)**

This assignment is to be a final project that is connected to the course material. You should present your project in any way you think best organizes the information: essay, poetry, fiction, visual art, video, etc. **This final project must involve reference to at least FIVE critical pieces (these may include critical articles discussed in class or any other critical articles you have come across in your own reading).** You are required to submit a proposal/outline to me (approx. one page in length) for approval by **March 5, 2001**. This proposal/outline should state the goal, process, form, and length of the project. Collaborative projects are welcome. Your final project must be submitted with the following:

- a three page abstract/summary and critique of your work
- a copy of your original proposal/outline

Final projects must be in MLA format.

class participation (10%)

Class participation includes attendance, facilitation and notetaking in small group work, as well as participation in large class discussions.

Other Stuff:

- 1) Attendance: You are expected to attend all classes and are responsible for obtaining information given in classes you miss. You must check to make sure you received all handouts. I am not able to keep track of who did not receive handouts, so be responsible for yourself.
 - 2) Attendance Policy: You are allowed one unexcused absence. This absence requires no explanation on your part—they are “freebies.” An excused absence needs to be cleared with me. Any unexcused absences beyond one will lower your grade, and your participation grade will be affected.
 - 3) Late assignments will not be accepted unless arrangements for late submissions have been made with me at least two days prior to the date on which the assignment is due. Unless such arrangements have been made, late assignments will be penalized at the rate of 5% a day.
 - 4) All work must be submitted personally to me. Keep a copy of all your written work.
 - 5) Please see the College Policy on plagiarism. Plagiarism is never allowed. Plagiarism includes representing the ideas or words of another person as your own without proper acknowledgment and extends to the work of other students, the Internet, books, magazines, journals, TV shows, films, etc. This would not only include direct copying without citing the source, but paraphrasing as well.
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HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF THIS CLASS:

- 1) Plan enough time to get the assignments done.
- 2) Read actively, take notes, jot down questions as you read.
- 3) Some reading assignments are longer than others; plan your time accordingly.
- 4) Take responsibility for the success of your small group discussions. Since I can't be everywhere (and since I don't think my role is to police your discussions), it's up to each of you to use your time wisely in your small group. This is your opportunity to discuss issues we have not covered in the larger group and to ask questions of your classmates that you may not feel comfortable asking of the larger group.
- 5) Come to my office with your questions. It's difficult to strike a balance in this course between those of you who already have a strong background in literature and those of you who have less experience with literature and are unfamiliar with literary concepts/conventions; therefore, it is important that you let me know if you are having difficulties, or if you feel that you want more in-depth discussion.