

English 3830: The Literature of Popular Culture
Lecture/3 Credits (3-0-0) UT
Winter 2005

Dr. Louise Saldanha

office: C308

office hours: Thursdays 3:00 – 4:30 p.m.

Fridays 3:00 – 4:30 p.m.

or by appointment

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*** Please note that the prerequisite for this course is English 1000 or English 1010 or equivalent

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course examines aspects of popular culture not as a set of written texts, but as sets of places, media personalities, and events, which create culture(s) in the West that are sometimes “of the people,” sometimes manufactured “for the people,” and sometimes a bit of both. Our discussions include examinations of Disney, Hollywood, the evening news, soap operas, shopping malls, video games, hockey, the Internet, “trash” fiction, among other cultural texts. By looking at aspects of popular culture practices and theories, we will interrogate the relationship between mass culture and society, with a view towards understanding popular culture's role in consolidating (or eroding) identities based upon race, sexuality, class, gender, etc.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS:

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 and are responsible for obtaining information given in classes you miss, including handouts. Since we meet only once a week, if you miss one class you have missed a week's worth of material!

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. Thus, discussions must be engaged with a sense of responsibility to contribute constructively and to move the conversation forward.

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 as this material may be covered on the exam as well. 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—consider it a “freebie.” An excused absence needs to be cleared with me and usually requires documentation. Remember each absence in an evening class is equivalent to missing an entire week of classes!!! Given the final exam, this might prove to be of serious consequence to your success. Furthermore, any unexcused absences beyond one will affect your participation grade.

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.

4) All work must be submitted personally to me. **Keep a copy of all your written work.**

5) **All work must be typed and double-spaced.**

6) **Rules for sending me email messages:** Feel free to send me email messages regarding course related matters. Because of the large number of emails I receive daily, please allow approx. 48 hours for a reply, and please follow these requirements:

- Please include your name, course, and section number in the message as this is not always clear from your email address.
- Avoid “cutesy” or other such unprofessional email addresses (e.g. airhead@yahoo.ca) as these might communicate an impression you do not wish to convey in an academic environment.
- Remember that your communications with me are occurring in an academic environment. Messages can be written informally—but do pay attention to correct grammar and spelling (especially since you are corresponding with an English professor!)

7) **Rules for sending attachments (email):** Should you need to send me an assignment as an attachment, please follow these requirements:

- I can only open attachments if these are sent as a Word document (.doc) or in Rich Text Format (.rtf).
- I will only open attachments if these are accompanied by a note from you in the email message indicating the name of the assignment, its length, and its formatting. I will not open attachments simply sent without a note from you.

I will always inform you upon successful receipt of an attachment.

8) Please see the College Policy on plagiarism under “Academic Conduct” in the Calendar. 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.

9) Class records related to this course will be maintained for one year after the last day of classes for the course. These records will then be destroyed in a secure manner.

TEXTS

English 3830 Coursepack (available in the GPRC College bookstore)

EVALUATION

weekly reading responses	10%
group class presentation	20%
journal	30%
final exam	30%
class participation	10% (this includes contributions to class discussions, improvement, attendance, participation in small group work, as well as participation in large class discussions)

ASSESSMENT

The following grading scheme will be used in this course:

Alpha Grade	4-Point Equivalence	Percentage	Designation
A+	4.0	96 – 100	Excellent
A	4.0	95 – 90	Excellent
A-	3.7	85 – 89	First Class Standing
B+	3.3	80 – 84	First Class Standing
B	3.0	75 – 79	Good
B-	2.7	70 – 74	Good
C+	2.3	67 – 69	Satisfactory
C	2.0	64 – 66	Satisfactory
C-	1.7	60 – 63	Satisfactory
D+	1.3	55 – 59	Poor
D	1	50 – 54	Minimal Pass
F	0.0	0 – 49	Failure

READINGS

- **Always bring the readings to class.**
- Readings may be supplemented/replaced during the semester as necessary. Unless otherwise indicated, all readings are in the Coursepack.
- The following schedule is **extremely tentative** and will be adjusted according to my sense of the class needs (so: please provide feedback!). It is meant only as a rough guideline to provide you with some direction of where we are headed and, for some weeks, you will be offered the opportunity to complete a selection of the readings listed rather than required to complete all of them. The process we will follow will be the provision of a detailed and more exact list of readings a week in advance of the class in which they are due and on which you will complete your reading responses.

January 17:

topic: What is Popular Culture?: Definitions, History, Key Concepts . . .

(note: We will not necessarily be addressing the following articles in the order listed here; readings may be supplemented/replaced as necessary.)

- Felton, “Wrestling with Myself” (2 – 3)
- Sarder & Van Loon, “What is Cultural Studies” (4 – 9)
- Fiske, “The Jeaning of America” (10 – 20)
- Horkeimer & Adorno, “The Culture Industry as Mass Deception” (21 – 23)
- Hebdige, “From Culture to Hegemony” (24 – 29)

January 24 & January 31

topic: Pleasure

(note: We will not necessarily be addressing the following articles in the order listed here; readings may be supplemented/replaced as necessary.)

- Radway, “The Readers and Their Romances” (124 – 143)
- Bobo, “The Color Purple: Black Women as Cultural Readers” (144 – 152)
- Miller, “Sport” (153 – 168)
- Hayward, “Consuming Pleasures: Active Audiences and Soap Opera” (169 – 185)
- Strinati, “The Narrative and Ideology of Hollywood Film” (186 – 199)
- Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (200 – 203)
- Fiske, “Television Culture” (204 – 210)
- Shields, “Social Spatialization and the Built Environment: The West Edmonton Mall” (211 – 225)
- Appignanesi & Garrett, “The Simulacrum” (226 – 229)

February 7 & February 14

topic: Identity

(note: We will not necessarily be addressing the following articles in the order listed here; readings may be supplemented/replaced as necessary.)

- Said, "Orientalism" (30 – 37)
- Morrison, "Black Matters" (38 – 51)
- McIntosh, "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" (52 – 55)
- Appleford, "Coming out from behind the Rocks: Constructs of the Indian in Recent U.S. and Canadian Cinema" (56 – 75)
- Perry, "Who(se) Am I?: The Identity and Image of Women in Hip-Hop" (76 – 88)
- Sedgwick, "Between Men" (89 – 97)
- Raymond, "Popular Culture and Queer Representation" (98 – 110)
- Butsch, "Ralph, Fred, Archie, and Homer: Why Television Keeps Re-creating the White Male Working-Class Buffoon" (111 – 121)
- Sim & Van Loon, "Pierre Bourdieu" (122 – 123)

February 28

topic: Coolness/Hipness

(note: We will not necessarily be addressing the following articles in the order listed here; readings may be supplemented/replaced as necessary.)

- Williams, "Advertising: The Magic System" (230 – 240)
- Klein, "Alt. Everything: The Youth Market and the Marketing of Cool" (241 – 251)
- Ewen, "All-Consuming Images: The Politics of Style in Contemporary Culture" (252 – 254)
- hooks, "Straightening Our Hair" (255 – 260)
- Ouellette, "Inventing the Cosmo Girl: Class Identity and Girl-Style American Dreams" (261 – 273)
- Breazeale, "In Spite of Women: *Esquire* Magazine and the Construction of the Male Consumer" (274 – 287)
- Mizejewski, "Action Bodies in Futurist Spaces: Bodybuilder Stardom as Special Effect" (288 – 298)
- Bordo, "Never Just Pictures" (299 – 315)

March 7

topic: Badness

(note: We will not necessarily be addressing the following articles in the order listed here; readings may be supplemented/replaced as necessary.)

- Rose, "Rap Music and the Demonization of Young Black Males" (316 – 318)
- Walser, "Forging Masculinity: Heavy-Metal Sounds and Images of Gender" (319 – 333)

March 14

topic: Newsworthiness

(note: We will not necessarily be addressing the following articles in the order listed here; readings may be supplemented/replaced as necessary.)

- Herman & Chomsky, "A Propaganda Model" (334 – 351)
- Martin, "The News: Show, Propaganda or Consent?" (352 – 375)

March 21

topic: Youthfulness

(note: We will not necessarily be addressing the following articles in the order listed here; readings may be supplemented/replaced as necessary.)

- Kline, “The Making of Children’s Culture” (376 – 390)
- DuCille, “Dyes and Dolls: Multicultural Barbie and the Merchandising of Difference” (391 – 414)
- Martin, “Comics: Children’s Literature?” (415 – 446)
- McDonnell, “March of the Tweens” (447 – 457)
- Mitchell, “Virtual Spaces: Children on the Cyber Frontier” (458 – 473)

March 28

topic: Canadian-ness

(note: We will not necessarily be addressing the following articles in the order listed here; readings may be supplemented/replaced as necessary.)

- Francis, “The Story of Canada” (474 – 477)
- Devereux, “‘Canadian Classic’ and ‘Commodity Export’: The Nationalism of ‘Our’ *Anne of Green Gables*” (478 – 487)
- Francis, “Performing Indians” (488 – 499)

April 4

topic: Globalisation

(note: We will not necessarily be addressing the following articles in the order listed here; readings may be supplemented/replaced as necessary.)

- Kincaid, “A Small Place” (500 – 503)
- Marks, “Packaged for Export, Contents Under Pressure: Canadian Film and Video in a U.S. Context” (504 – 515)
- Mahtani & Salmon, “Site Reading?: Globalization, Identity, and the Consumption of Place in Popular Music” (516 – 530)
- Chow, “Violence in the Other Country: China as Crisis, Spectacle, and Woman” (531 – 542)

April 11: Review