Living Culture

So why am I here and what exactly am I supposed to learn?

According to Diana George and John Trimbur, culture can be looked at as a way of life that characterizes a particular group of people at a particular time. "This view of culture offers a way to think about how individuals and groups organize and make sense of their social experience—at home, in school, at work, and at play. Culture includes all the social institutions, patterns of behavior, systems of belief, and kinds of popular entertainment that create the social world in which people live. Taken this way, culture means not simply masterpieces of art, music, and literature, but a people's lived experience—what goes on in the everyday lives of individuals and groups" (2). In this class, we will be exploring this particular definition of culture by looking at some specific events that created change in our American culture from the 1970's on, but in particular, we will be investigating cultural changes that are currently taking place.

What are the goals for this class?

The main purpose of this class, besides striving to better understand ourselves, our fellow humans, and the world we live in, is to walk away with increased communication skills. We will be practicing 3 modes of communication: oral, written and visual, and will be evaluating these modes via rhetorical analysis and criticism.

What kinds of assignments will be required for this class?

Assignments for this class will include pop quizzes, writing assignments, a visual essay, and oral communication in the form of presentations and discussions. Assignments may be given on a daily basis.

Do I need to buy books for this class?

Yes! We are going to be using Reading Culture 5th Edition (2004) by George and Trimbur.


There will be other reading assignments that you will be required to download off the Revisions web page. You will need to bring these articles with you to class.
Reading assignments will be assigned at least one class period prior to when they will be discussed. You must complete the reading assignments prior to attending class. This will lead to more beneficial discussion.

**How are you going to grade us?**

The following is a breakdown of how I will be evaluating your performance in this class:

- Pop quizzes on the reading – 20%
- Core writing assignments (which may include a final exam) – 35%
- Oral assignments (including class discussion participation) – 25%
- Visual assignments – 20%

**Grading Scale**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>93-100</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>89-92</td>
<td>A/B</td>
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<tr>
<td>83-88</td>
<td>B</td>
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<td>79-82</td>
<td>B/C</td>
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<tr>
<td>73-78</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>69-72</td>
<td>C/D</td>
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<tr>
<td>63-68</td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>62-0</td>
<td>F</td>
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At the end of the semester, all of your work is to be put into a portfolio, including all drafts. This means that if you make revisions on your computer, you must save each and every copy. The visual, verbal, and written work should be separated via dividers. The first page of the portfolio must be a retrospective assessment of your work and your experience with the class. This retrospective should be typed, single-spaced, and at least one full page.

**How are you structuring this class?**

This class is similar to that of a graduate seminar class, that is, I expect you to participate in the class discussions and conversations. It is probable that you will hear, read, and view material that you don’t agree with, or are personally uncomfortable with. I encourage the expression of differing points of view in these situations, and expect that each member of the class will be made to feel comfortable in offering their own particular observations. Part of being a good communicator is learning how to negotiate in the face of differing beliefs and different ways of being in the world. Don’t take apposing viewpoints personally. What matters is how well you learn to communicate your feelings and beliefs in a rhetorically sound and persuasive manner.

**What about the pop quizzes?**

Quizzes are going to be short answer and will allow me to determine how well you understand the arguments made in the readings. Unlike other writing assignments, I am interested in your understanding of the author’s argument only.
What's up with the class presentations?

You will be doing a lot of presenting in this class, most of it in a very informal manner. Each of you will pair up with a partner to lead a class discussion on a required reading. While there is no particular format that needs to be followed, discussion leaders will be graded on their ability to understand and communicate the reading, as well as engage the class. You and your partner will also come up with a reading quiz for your particular reading. Questions should be typed out and handed to students. This should take up no more than the first 5 minutes of the class. If you need a tv/vcr/dvd/projector, you must let me know at least 1 week in advance. If there are any problems with getting these items, I will let you know immediately.

Course Policies

Attendance and active participation are expected and required. Excessive absences will result in a lower final grade. Because readings may be assigned the day before class, it is essential that if you do miss class you have a way to find out what the assignment is. There will be a class list serve generated that will allow you to communicate with each other via email for this purpose. Do not count on me outside of class time or office hours to be available to give you the reading assignment if you miss class. My internet and phone access are severely limited during the summer months.

Promptness is expected as a general rule. If you are consistently late to class, your grade will be adversely affected.

All assignments are due on assigned days. There will be no make-ups. Documented illness or documented emergencies are the only exception to this policy. I know that life can be difficult at times, but work schedule changes, transportation, or family issues, unless documented, are not considered a valid reason for missing assignment deadlines or class meetings. If you miss a quiz and have documentation, you will take the quiz on the next date you attend class. If you find yourself in a difficult scheduling or life-jam, please come talk to me.

If you have a cell phone or pager, either turn them off or set them to vibrator.

Plagiarism

In our western culture, plagiarism is considered cheating and is a serious academic offense. It is defined as "knowingly copying another's work or ideas and calling them one's own or not giving proper credit or citation," and it covers copying sections, major ideas, or entire papers from printed or electronic sources as well as handing in papers written by other students. If you are in doubt, quote. If you are quoting someone directly then you need to list the information within quotation marks and cite a page number. If you are paraphrasing then you need to cite the person and a page number. If you have any questions, please talk to me or consult the Writing Center.
Is there really still a problem with harassment?

Yes, there really is. MTU complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. If you have a disability and need reasonable accommodation for equal access to education and services at MTU, please call Dr. Gloria Melton, Associate Dean of Students (487-2212). For other concerns about discrimination, you may contact your advisor, department chair, or the Affirmative Action Office (487-3310).