Required text: *Introducing Cultural Studies* by E. Baldwin, B. Longhurst, S. McCracken, M. Ogborn, and G. Smith (BLMOS)

This course provides a basic introduction to the interdisciplinary area of Cultural Studies including theoretical legacies, orienting issues, and contemporary directions. Students will gain an understanding of the contributions of Cultural Studies and how to do a cultural study. In particular, the course thematizes everyday life, popular culture, disability subcultures, and issues of consumption.

**Policies**
- Attendance is required. Five points will be deducted from the final class score for each absence. Only absences approved through the Dean of Students absence will be exempted from this policy.
- Late papers or presentations will be graded down one full grade for each day after the due date.
- Group assignments require commitment and contributions from all members. Individual students may lose points from a group’s final grade for slacking.
- All students are subscribed to the course email list (culturstdies-l@mtu.edu). Students should check for additional email messages about course assignments and activities regularly. This list is meant to facilitate class discussions and questions as well. All postings should be respectful and maintain classroom civilities.
- All non-medical electronic devices (cell phones, pagers, PDAs, etc,) must be turned off or set on mute during class time.
- Breaks from class are discouraged. Please take care of personal needs before and after class time.
- Plagiarism will be reported to the Dean of Students so carefully document any sources you use for your presentations.
- I encourage you to contact me about any questions or suggestions. In addition, please see me about any particular accommodations in accordance with MTU’s ADA policy: MTU complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans with Disability Act (ADA). If you have a disability and need a reasonable accommodation for equal access to education or services at MTU, please call Dr. Gloria Melton, Associate Dean of Students (72212). For other concerns about discrimination, you may contact your advisor, department head, or the Affirmative Action office (7-3310).

**Grading**

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Week 1, 1/9-1/13
Jan 9: Course introduction
Jan 11: What is cultural studies? A history... (http://www.culturalstudies.net/)
http://theory.eserver.org/dir/Cultural_Studies

Hartley (1991)
[flourishing of Cultural Studies in the 1970's 80's] fleeing the tyranny of high culture towards a
promised land where culture may be analysed in terms of class, where consciousness may be true or
false, where feelings and attitudes may be political not psychological, where economics (prosperity)
connects with meaning, and where, crucially, it is important to understand “the womb-world of mass
entertainments”.

Grossberg (1988)
Cultural studies is concerned with describing and intervening in the ways discourses are produced
within, inserted into and operate in the relations between people’s everyday lives and the structures
of the social formation so as to reproduce, resist and transform the existing structures of power.
That is, if people make history but in conditions not of their own making, cultural studies explores
the ways this is enacted within cultural practices and the place of these practices within specified
historical formations.

Jan 13: Reading a cultural study: “Rearticulating the Aunt”

Week 2, 1/16-1/20: Doing cultural studies
Jan 16: Martin Luther King recess
Jan 18: Hoggart—Example of contextualizing; Williams, esp. Structure of feeling (2
examples: speed & popular nihilism)
Jan 20: Jagose, “The invention of lifestyle” and Yue, “Shopping” in Martin, Interpreting
Everyday Culture; Nadesan, “Introduction” (pp. 1-8) in Constructing autism: Unravelling
the ‘truth’ and understanding the social.

Grossberg (2005)
When you think contextually, in the middle, you realize that everything (from crime to the market)
is what it is, is made to be what it is, by the relationships that surround and penetrate and define it,
that is, by its context. But contexts themselves are the result, across time and space, of the relations
among human activities and political agendas, social forces and historical logics.

Week 3, 1/23-1/27: BLMOS Chapter 1
Jan 23: Storey, “Gramscian cultural studies, popular culture and cultural consumption”
(pp. 149-172). In Cultural consumption and everyday life.
Jan 25: Hall, “Introduction” (pp. 1-12) in S. Hall (Ed.), Representation: Cultural
representations and signifying practices
Jan 27: Quiz #1
**Due: Essay on representation & cultural studies analysis

Week 4, 1/30-2/3: BLMOS Chapter 2
Jan 30: Signs & semiotics (http://www.cultsock.ndirect.co.uk/MUHome/cshtml/): read
from signs to signification
Feb 1: Analyzing ads
Read Silk Cut analysis from *Nice Work* by David Lodge (BLMOS pp. 55-58); also at http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/S4B/sem07.html
See also:
Benetton: http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Modules/MainTV/analsad.html
Culture jamming: http://www.levity.com/markdery/jam.html
Ad parodies: http://parody.organique.com/index.html
Readings on television & television news; Encoding/decoding
Quiz #2

**Week 5, 2/6-2/10:** BLMOS Chapter 3: culture, power and inequality
Don Slater’s site on consumer culture: http://homepages.gold.ac.uk/slater/
Hall on “Race as a Floating Signifier”
During on “Enterprise Culture”; Story on “Cultural Consumption as Communication”

**Week 6, 2/13-2/17:** BLMOS Chapter 4: cultural geographies
Readings: Yalom on women as signifiers of nationhood; Gleeson, *Geographies of Disability*
Quiz #3
**Due:** analysis of an ad (Signs, inequalities, encoding/decoding)

**Week 7, 2/20-2/24:** BLMOS Chapter 5: time and history

**Week 8, 2/27-3/3:** BLMOS Chapter 6: cultural politics, power and resistance
Quiz #4
Readings: *Hatless Jack*; news reports on Cindy Sheehan’s protest at the Bush ranch; Treichler, *For Alma Mater*; hooks from *Yearning*; du Gay in *Production of Culture/Culture of Production*
**Due:** proposal for final project
Friday 10:00 PM Spring Break begins

**Week 9, 3/13-3/17:** BLMOS Chapter 7: bodies
Legislating bodies: The Lewinsky/Clinton scandal; Janet Jackson’s “costume malfunction”; what is the “posthuman body”?
Reading: Cavallo, *The Body: An Introduction*
**Due:** utopian/dystopian visions in contemporary culture

**Week 10, 3/20-3/24:** BLMOS Chapter 8: subcultures
Grossberg, *Caught in the Crossfire*
Quiz #5
Week 11, 3/27-3/31: BLMOS Chapter 9: visual culture
Found photographs: http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/without/index.htm

Week 12, 4/3-4/7: technologies & ecoculturalism
Quiz #6

Week 13, 4/10-4/14 Project presentations
Week 14, 4/17-4/21 Project presentations

Instructions for 3 essays and the final project

Essays should be typed, double-spaced and 2-4 pages in length. Grammar and punctuation count so proof-read your work. Bibliographic references both in-text and at the end of the paper should follow a standard bibliographic format.

Essay on representation: Use an example from contemporary culture to illustrate how cultural studies treats popular representations. Drawing on the arguments about representation in BLMOS and Hall, answer the following questions as you discuss the politics of representation going on in your example:

1. According to Stuart Hall, what are the old views and the new view of representation?
2. What are conceptual maps?
3. What does it mean to say that “Nothing meaningful exists outside discourse”?
4. What is the importance of absence for the work of representation?
5. How does representation use “identification”?
6. What is the role of ideology in creating meanings?
7. What is the problem with contesting stereotypes by asserting positive images?
8. What are the questions that we should pose when we are interrogating representations?
9. What is at stake in representation?

Analysis of an ad: Drawing on chapters 2 & 3 in BLMOS and the various web resources, do a semiotic and cultural analysis of one of the Superbowl ads.

1. Semiotic analysis of signs: analyze the way the elements of the ad create meaning as signs
2. Inequalities: identify the contexts of power relations and inequalities that the ad represents, constructs and/or reproduces, especially gender, race, and class;
3. Encoding/decoding: discuss how producers encode a preferred message and how audiences decode a dominant or marginal meaning. Pay particular attention to the ideological “frameworks of knowledge,” relations of production, and technical infrastructures that operate in the processes of encoding/decoding this ad.

If/when Analysis: write an essay explaining how the utopian or dystopian vision of a particular film, tv show, or graphic novel can be read as a response to contemporary
cultural anxieties and fantasies and/or as retaining the ideologies or ambitions of the past. This should NOT be an exercise in psychologizing. Instead, connect your analysis to social, political, and historical events and cultural experiences. For example, The Matrix as a response to anxieties over Big Brother and the loss of individuality and privacy; at the same time, fantasies about instant knowledge, geek revenge, and the redemption of (heterosexual) love.

Respond to the following questions:

I. Contexts: How does this vision respond to the cultural and social contexts that produce and consume it (in which it "makes sense")? How does it challenge dominant ideas, practices, identities and what dominant/marginal views does it reinforce (remember that resistance and reenforcement may be simultaneous and hence, elements of a contradictory stance).

II. Identity politics: who is represented in this vision and who is not? How do these representations speak to those who live these cultural identities? Who is the targeted consumer of these representations?

III. Conclusions: Draw conclusions about who and what becomes empowered through this vision and who and what becomes disempowered. What do you wish to endorse and what should we be wary of if we embrace this vision?

Final project: create a cultural studies project that examines a cultural event/practice/issue in terms of the theoretical perspectives discussed in chapters 4-9 in the textbook.

I. Theoretical framework
   Begin by explaining the theoretical framework you are adopting and answer the following questions: how does this framework offer insights into the particular event/practice/issue you have chosen? How might you extend/revise this framework to account for aspects of this event/practice/issue that it seems to overlook? How well does the evidence support a particular interpretation?

II. Articulation analysis
   Explore the contexts that render the event/practice/issue real and actionable and be careful to include a detailed analysis of ideological, social, political, historical, economic or other contexts and cultural experiences.

III. Re-presentation
   Repackage your final paper using a presentational format. This format should help the class audience understand your analyses and conclusions.