HU 6010 Everyday Politics of Popular Culture

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Office Hours: Monday 5:15 - 6:30, Tuesday 2:00 - 4:00
487-1084 (or by appointment)

Required Texts:

Additional readings, including web-based readings, will be assigned

Course Description:
In this course, we will learn to take popular culture seriously. We will learn how and why popular culture presents a rich, important site for scholarly inquiry. We will consider popular culture as a broad cultural phenomenon, with exposure to some key thinkers and writings. Importantly, we will take care to consider popular culture from the perspective of the popular culture denizen— the avowed fan, the adoring audience, the everyday consumer of media.
There is much to ponder, much to discuss. Debates about worth, about agency, about influence, and about power are at stake.

What does it mean to be a "fan"? Is there a difference between being labeled one by others and self-consciously claiming to be one? How do popular culture fans marshal their own fandom(s) as part of an ongoing game of cultural politics? What does the contest between "high culture" and "low culture" involve, and who benefits, who suffers? What lies behind such discursive practices?

How and why are aesthetic criteria and identity politics often confused?
Is popular culture mere entertainment for the uneducated masses? Is it possible that popular culture is generative, subversive, resistant, even an agent for change? Can individuals and/or groups, in and through their engagement with popular culture phenomena, come to knowledge, to insight, to understanding?

How are consumption and self-definition linked? How are consumption and defining and relating to others linked? How and why is the realm of the physically tangible inextricably tied to the realm of the intangible self?

To study popular culture is to grapple with the workings of culture itself. It is to gain a sense for the interrelations between the everyday practice of individuals and the sociohistorical matrices that both pervade and transcend the individual. It is to reconcile a critique of popular culture and its fans with—at least as importantly—a celebration. In studying popular culture, we can gain a clear sense, in short, of the everyday politics of popular culture.

On Earning Your Grade:
The main graded assignment for the semester will be one article-length Research Paper (20-25 pages, plus Works Cited), due at the end of the semester. There will be two additional assignments (both designed to prepare you for your Research Paper): a Research Report, and a Readings Summary and Application. We will discuss these with plenty of forewarning... More details forthcoming.
HU 6010—Weekly Schedule

**Week One—Jan 14:**
Syllabus & Introductions
McLaughlin, Chapter 1
Jensen, "Fandom as Pathology: The Consequences of Characterization" (WR)

**Week Two—Jan 21:**
NO CLASS (MLK Day)

**Week Three—Jan 28:**
McLaughlin, Chapters 2, 3, 5 (HO)

**Week Four—Feb 4:**
Hebdige, Intro and Part I
Certeau, Part I

**Week Five—Feb 11:**
Hebdige, Part II
Fiske, "The Cultural Economy of Fandom" (WR) (HO)

**Week Six—Feb 18:**
Jenkins, "Get A Life!: Fans, Poachers, Nomads" (WR)
Bourdieu, "The Aristocracy of Culture" (WR) (HO)
Certeau, Part IV

**Week Seven—Feb 25:**
Blau, Chapters 1 and 2
Hibbett, "What is Indie?" (WR)
Hesmondhalgh, "Indie: The Institutional Politics and Aesthetics of Popular Music Genre" (WR) (HO)

**Week Eight—Mar 3:**
Blau, Chapters 3-5
Rogers, "Rhythm and the Performance of Organization" (WR) (HO)
DeChaine, "Affect and Embodied Understanding in Musical Experience" (WR)

**Mar 10-16:** ENJOY SPRING BREAK!!

WR = Web Reading [reading found on website: http://www.hu.mtu.edu/~jablau/hu6010/readings/]
HO = Handout [designated student brings in handout (with key quotes, summary/outline)]
**Week Nine—Mar 17:**
Video: “Ringers: Lord of the Fans” or “Trekkies”

**Week Ten—Mar 24:**
*Frith, Part I (HO)*
*Negus, “Industry” (WR)*
*Croteau and Hoynes, “New Media Giants” (WR)*

**Week Eleven—Mar 31:**
*Frith, Parts II and III*

**Week Twelve—Apr 7:**
*Ekstrom & Brembeck, Intro and Chapters 1-6*
*Cohen, “The Fetish” (WR) (HO)*

**Week Thirteen—Apr 14:**
*Certeau, Part III*
*Frith, “Music and Everyday Life” (WR) (HO)*
*Pino-Ojeda, “A Detour to the Past: Memory and Mourning in Chilean Post-Authoritarian Rock” (WR)*

**Week Fourteen—Apr 21:**
*Niedzviecki, Chapters 1 and 3 (WR)*
*McLaughlin, Chapters 6 and 7 (HO)*
*Certeau, Part Five*

**Finals Week:**
Final Papers due
HAVE A GREAT SUMMER!!!

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