Course Description:

Often, we become “fans” who intensely enjoy, learn about, and collect stuff related to a particular band, actor, author, etc. What drives our desire for the object of our affection/obsession? What do we gain from our fandom? How does the pop culture industry play into that fandom? In this course, we will both celebrate and critique pop culture by exploring our own and/or others’ fandoms.

Popular culture, from music to film to television and more, is a big presence in our lives, relating to our tastes, our values, and even our ways of viewing the world. This course examines the contours of that presence. In other words, we will ponder what popular culture means, in both broad and personal terms. We will in effect use pop fandom as a means of developing an awareness of not only what “culture” might mean, but of how we are, inescapably, cultural beings.

Course Goals:

--To learn to think critically about our own and others’ popular culture fandom(s)
--To ponder what is meant by the word/concept “culture”
--To think about what “popular culture” means
--To promote self-awareness of our status as cultural beings
--To develop an ethnorelative orientation in ourselves through exposure to a variety of pop fandoms
--To develop critical capabilities as thinkers and consumers of popular culture
--To think about what it means to say that a critical stance involves both celebration and critique
--To begin to gain the facilities necessary for success as a university student through written and oral practice
Course Graded Requirements

There are five components that factor into the grade you will earn in this course:

1. One Research Paper in which you apply the material learned in class by reporting on, and analyzing, a particular pop culture fandom (your own or someone else's)

2. One in-class Public Presentation in which you share relevant and interesting aspects/findings of your Research Paper

3. One Research Paper Report in which you share with me your initial ideas for and progress on your Research Paper

4. Three Short Reflection Paper (SRP) assignments in which you respond to and demonstrate engagement with the class material

5. APPT(itude): Attending class: being well Prepared for class by closely reading and thinking about the assigned materials; Participating in class discussions and activities; and being Thoughtful both in class discussions and in written work

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Pts</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Paper</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>(40%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Paper Report</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>(7.5%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Presentation of Research</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>(7.5%)</td>
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<td>Short Reflection Papers</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>(30%)</td>
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<td>three @ 100 points =</td>
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<tr>
<td>APPTitude</td>
<td>150</td>
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Total Points = 1000 (100%)

The Quantitative Scale

921-1000 = A
870-920 = AB
821-869 = B
770-820 = BC
721-769 = C
700-720 = CD
600-669 = D
0-599 = F

The Qualitative Scale

A = Excellent work that shows exceptional effort and that goes well beyond the minimum requirements of the assignment. "A" work will demonstrate an excellent grasp of and engagement with several (if not all) of the class material and concepts in relation to our study of culture and pop fandom. If written, this work will have little to no problems as regards spelling, grammar, organization, and the use and citation of research sources.

B = Very good work that shows a very solid effort and that goes beyond the minimum requirements of the assignment. "B" work will demonstrate a good grasp and engagement of the class material and concepts in relation to our study of culture and pop fandom. If written, this work will have minimal problems as regards spelling, grammar, organization, and the use and citation of research sources.

C = Adequate work that shows that enough effort was expended in order to meet the minimum requirements of the assignment—nothing more, nothing less. "C" work will demonstrate a good-enough grasp and engagement of the class material and concepts in relation to our study of culture and pop fandom. If written, this work will have some problems as regards spelling, grammar, organization, and the use and citation of research sources.
D = Work that shows a lack of effort and that does not fully meet the requirements of the assignment. "D" work will show an insufficient grasp and engagement of the class material and concepts in relation to our study of culture and pop fandom. If written, this work will have an unacceptable amount of problems as regards spelling, grammar, organization, and the use and citation of research sources.

F = Work that shows an egregious and obvious lack of effort and that is far from meeting the requirements of the assignment. "F" work will show a poor grasp and engagement of the class material and concepts. If written, this work will have severe problems as regards spelling, grammar, organization, and the use and citation of research sources.

Research Paper
This Paper will be 7-9 pages in length (excluding your Works Cited page), and will present an opportunity for you to both explore a particular pop culture fandom and to celebrate/critique it by applying the knowledge and concepts you will have learned in class through your readings and our classroom discussions. You may explore your own fandom or one that is not your own but which interests you. Your work in this assignment will take the form of a university-level research paper. More details forthcoming with the Paper’s assignment.

Research Paper Report
This Report will allow and encourage you to show me that you are spending adequate time on your Research Paper. The Report will be due well before the Research Paper and will allow me to get a sense of the work and ideas you have so far, so that I may not only check your progress but help you as needed. More details forthcoming with the Paper’s assignment.

Public Presentation of Research
This Presentation, taking place toward the end of the semester, will allow you to share with us the cool, fun, and smart things you will have accomplished in your Research Paper. Though relatively casual in nature, I will nevertheless expect polished and professional delivery that allows us to fully appreciate not only your Paper’s topic but also your critical insights and findings.

Short Reflection Papers
The SRPs will be based on your responses, both personal and critical, to the readings and other stimulus materials used for our course. They will help you hash out some of your ideas and insights, as well as allow me to gauge how the class—and my teaching—is going. These brief papers will average 2-4 pages in length. You may wish to share some of the ideas in your SRPs during our in-class discussions. Some thinking questions will be provided, tied to the class material, for you to work off of. More details forthcoming with each SRPs assignment.

Attendance and Participation Policy (more on APPTitude):
Punctual, consistent attendance is essential for your success in this class and for a fully realized learning environment for us all. Attendance will be taken daily. You will be allowed two "free" absences throughout the semester. Additional absences will be reflected negatively in your APPTitude grade.

I understand that, for personal and/or cultural reasons, different people participate differently in a class. I will try to account for this as much as possible. Nevertheless, I am
quite aware that attendance does not necessarily equal participation. In order to derive the best learning experience from/for our class, it is absolutely essential that students always come to class having read the assigned material and prepared to engage it in the classroom.

I am a pretty good judge of participation in my classes—by which I mean, I can usually tell, from your in-class participation, writing assignments, etc., if you are putting the necessary energy into this class and the readings. Ultimately, it is in your best interest to take this class and its content seriously, as APPTitude is one-fifth of your final grade.

AN IMPORTANT NOTE:
The best way to do well in this class is to not only read all the materials assigned but to take notes as you do so. Write down important points, interesting ideas, lines of argument, cool quotes, etc. Also, be sure to note anything that may be unclear to you (what is not clear is often as useful to your learning as what is). Be sure to bring these notes to class every day. Please, do not be shy: regarding our readings and class material, share with us not only what excites you but also what confuses you—chances are you will help more than just yourself!

A NOTE ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY (i.e., please, no plagiarism!):
Presenting others' work as your own or failing to properly credit and cite any and all resources used in your school work is dishonest and is considered plagiarism in U.S. academic culture. Plagiarizing will very likely be detected by me and can lead to serious consequences for you, including, but not limited to, academic probation. If you ever have any questions about this issue, please do not hesitate to talk to me or to consult a writing coach at the Writing Center (their phone number is 487-2007).

A FEW OTHER NOTES:
You must complete all assignments to pass this class. All writing assignments are due by their due date, at the start of the class period. Assignments cannot be made up after they are due and must be turned in on time, unless you suffer some unforeseen and major life emergency (and I sincerely hope you don't), which can only be excused and validated by the Dean of Students.

If you have a disability that could affect your performance in this class or that requires an accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act, please inform me and contact the Student Affairs Office (their phone: 487-2212) so that we may make appropriate arrangements. Please do this early in the semester: do not wait until problems arise.

THE LAST (AND AN IMPORTANT) NOTE:
Unless you come and talk to me and indicate otherwise, I will assume that you have carefully read this syllabus and that you have understood and are willing and able to abide by its content.