Instructor Information

Instructor: Nate Carpenter
Office Location: Walker 149
Telephone: 487-3280 (during office hours only)
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Office Hours: M 3:00-4:30PM
W 12:00-1:45PM, 3:00-4:30PM
F 12:00-1:45PM

Course Information

Course Number: HU3860 – R01
Course Name: Popular Culture
Course Location: Fisher Hall 125
Class Times: MWF: 2:05 – 2:55 PM
Prerequisites: UN 1002 or 1003

Course Description & Objectives

What is popular culture? Where does it come from? What do we learn from it? What does popular culture reveal about the ways in which society’s values, feelings, and beliefs are created and maintained? What role does “the Media” play in creating and maintaining popular culture? What role do we play as consumers and producers of cultural artifacts?

We will explore possible answers to these and many other questions by examining historical, social, political, and economic theories from within a communications framework. We will read key writings by several prominent theorists and use these readings to contextualize contemporary issues in popular culture.

Course readings, classroom discussion, reading quizzes, response papers, and presentations will help you learn how to define, explain, and critique several different theories of popular culture. You will then be expected to use these theories to make your own analyses and critiques of popular phenomena.

Required Course Texts


*Additional web-based readings will be assigned at www.hu.mtu.edu/~njcarpen/hu3860
**Assignments and Projects**

**Reading Quizzes** (20% of total grade): there will be at least four short-answer reading comprehension quizzes. These may or may not be announced, so it will be up to you to carefully study and engage the assigned readings.

**Response Papers** (30% of total grade): there will be two short papers (3-4 pages each) in which you will apply your understanding of the readings to an assigned question or related topic.

**Group Panel Presentation** (10% of total grade): you will work in a group of 3-4 classmates to analyze and critique a popular culture topic of your choosing in a 20-minute presentation.

**Individual Panel Paper** (30% of total grade): in addition to the group presentation, you will write a short research / analytical paper (7 – 8 pages) that discusses your group’s popular culture topic in relation to the theories discussed in class.

**Classroom Practices** (10% of total grade): come to every class on time, prepared to discuss the readings, and participate in a thoughtful and meaningful way.

**Grading Scale**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Grade Points/credit</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93% &amp; above</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AB</td>
<td>88% – 92%</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>Very good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>82% – 86%</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC</td>
<td>76% – 81%</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>Above average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70% – 75%</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD</td>
<td>65% – 69%</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>Below average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60% – 64%</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>Inferior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>59% and below</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>Failure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Course Policies**

**Assignments & Quizzes**

Detailed assignment sheets will be distributed before each assignment sheet or project is due. Failure to complete all of the response papers and the individual panel paper will result in automatic failure. Late assignments will be marked down one whole grade letter per day late. Make-up work will be permitted only under extenuating circumstances, as negotiated with your instructor. Missed quizzes cannot be made up.

**Attendance**

This class will not be effective without your daily participation; therefore, your instructor will be taking attendance by means of a daily sign-in sheet. Students may miss three classes without penalty. For each additional absence, your classroom practices grade will drop by two percentage points.
Participation
Besides attendance, your instructor will be gauging whether or not you are putting the necessary energy into classroom discussion and assignments. Take this course seriously, engage the materials, and make connections between the classroom and the world beyond the walls of the university.

Listserve
Your instructor will be using the class listserve hu3860-l@mtu.edu to communicate with you. Check your e-mail regularly (before class if possible) for any updates. Please feel free to use this listserve to continue or initiate discussion related to the class.

University Policies

Academic regulations and procedures are governed by University policy. Academic dishonesty cases will be handled in accordance with the University's policies.

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 see me as soon as possible so that we can make appropriate arrangements. The Affirmative Action Office has asked that you be made aware of the following:

_Michigan Tech complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. If you have a disability and need a reasonable accommodation for equal access to education or services at Michigan Tech, please call the Dean of Students Office, at 487-2212. For other concerns about discrimination, you may contact your advisor, department head or the Affirmative Action Office, at 487-3310._

Also be aware of the following statements and resources:

_Academic Integrity: http://www.studentaffairs.mtu.edu/dean/judicial/policies/academic_integrity.html_
_Affirmative Action: http://www.admin.mtu.edu/aoa/
_Disability Services: http://www.admin.mtu.edu/urel/studenthandbook/student_services.html#disability_

Disclaimer

Your instructor reserves the right to make changes to this syllabus and course calendar as necessary to meet the needs of this class. Unless you meet with your instructor and explicitly state otherwise, it is assumed that you have carefully read this syllabus and agree to its policies and procedures.
Daily Course Calendar

Note: Readings and assignments are due on the day they are listed. This calendar is subject to change.
WR = web reading, available at www.hu.mtu.edu/~nicarpen/hu3860

Week 1: Introduction / Mass Culture
M 1/12: Overview: Introduction to Course Policies and Themes
W 1/14: Strinati xi – 19; MacDonald “Mass Culture” (WR)
F 1/16: Strinati 19 – 43

Week 2: A Contemporary Response to Mass Culture Theory
M 1/19: No class (MLK Jr. Day)
W 1/21: Johnson 1 – 62
F 1/23: Johnson 62 – 136

Week 3: The Frankfurt School
M 1/26: Strinati 46-57; Adorno “Jazz: Perennial Fashion” (WR)
W 1/28: Strinati 58-76; Benjamin “Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (WR)
F 1/30: Negus “Industry” (WR); Croteau & Hoynes “New Media Giants” (WR)

Week 4: The Music Industry: Culture Industry in Action?
M 2/2: Before the Music Dies (movie); RESPONSE #1 DUE
W 2/4: Before the Music Dies (movie)
F 2/6: No class (Winter Carnival)

Week 5: Structuralism / Semiology
M 2/13: Strinati 78-96
W 2/25: Eco “Narrative Structure in Ian Fleming” (WR)
F 2/27: Strinati 96-114; Barthes “Wrestling” (WR)

Week 6: Marxism / Ideology
M 2/9: Strinati 116-129; FORM GROUPS (do not be absent or you will be placed in a group!)
W 2/11: Strinati 129-157
F 2/13: Jhally “Watching as Working” (WR); Hebdige “From Culture to Hegemony” (WR)

Week 7: Cultural Economy & Fan Culture
M 2/16: Bourdieu “Intro to Distinction” (WR); Fiske “Cultural Economy” (WR)
W 2/18: Borthwick & Moy “Indie” (WR)
F 2/20: deCerteau 19-39 from “The Practice of Everyday Life” (WR); Jenkins “Get a Life!” (WR)

Week 8: Feminist Approaches
M 3/2: Strinati 160-177; GROUP TOPIC REPORT DUE
W 3/4: Strinati 177-201; Mulvey “Visual Pleasure” (WR)
F 3/6: Ducille “Dyes and Dolls” (WR)

SPRING BREAK (3/9 – 3/13)
Week 9: Postmodern Theory
M 3/16: Strinati 204 - 221
W 3/18: Strinati 221 – 238
F 3/20: Group Conferences

Week 10: Conference Week (Read Ahead in Niedzviecki)
M 3/23: Group Conferences
W 3/25: Group Conferences
F 3/27: Group Conferences

Week 11: Individualism & the Popular
M 3/30: Choudry “Mirror, Mirror on the Web” (WR); RESPONSE #2 DUE
W 4/1: Niedzviecki Part I
F 4/3: Niedzviecki Part II

Week 12: Individualism, Continued
M 4/6: Niedzviecki Part III
W 4/8: Niedzviecki Part IV
F 4/10: Johnson Part II

Week 13: Wrap-Up & Panel Presentations
M 4/13: Final Discussion & Evaluations
W 4/15: Groups 1 & 2
F 4/17: Groups 3 & 4

Week 14: Panel Presentations
M 4/20: Groups 5 & 6; PANEL PAPERS DUE
W 4/22: Groups 7 & 8
F 4/24: Groups 9 & 10