

LIB 373: American Society and Mass Culture

Instructor: Dr. Wendy Burns-Ardolino

Office: LOH 233 **Phone:** 331-8191

Class Meets: Fall 2011

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TR 4:00 - 5:15pm

Office Hours: TR 2-3:30pm

Mak B1116

MW 2-4pm

Course Description: Interdisciplinary approach to how mediated mass culture, including film, television, and popular music, create meaning for people in contemporary American society. Emphasis on the interactive relationship between the mass audience and mass culture.

Course Goals: In this course we will read, discuss, and examine a variety of critical cultural theories. We will hear from thinkers in the fields of sociology, media studies, philosophy, cultural studies, communication, and women's studies. Our work in this course is complex as we will learn to take-up the tools of critique in order to better understand the meaning making systems of popular culture; we will also analyze how categories of race, ethnicity, class, gender and sexuality are constructed for us and by us in the popular culture that we consume every day. Ultimately, we will study how popular culture texts work to create meanings and how we can become critical consumers of those messages.

In LIB 373 students will:

- Discuss, analyze, and evaluate the production and consumption of mass culture
- Examine, explore and critique interdisciplinary theories of mass media
- Write a critical essay of primary sources referencing secondary sources
- Make an oral presentation of critical evaluation using primary and secondary source material

In order to achieve these **Learning Outcomes:**

- To engage in articulate expression through effective speaking
- To engage in articulate expression through effective writing
- To think critically and creatively
- To locate, evaluate, and use information effectively
- To integrate different areas of knowledge and view ideas from multiple perspectives

Required Texts:

Storey, John. *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*. 5th Edition. Essex, U.K: Pearson, 2009.
Dines, Gail & Jean M. Humez. Eds. *Gender, Race, and Class in Media*. 3rd Edition. London: Sage, 2011.

All texts are available through the University Bookstore. In addition, there may be selected readings on Blackboard and/or course reserve through the library's electronic reserve system.

Plagiarism Policy: Plagiarism involves copying another person's words or ideas without citing the source with appropriate documentation. Any student who plagiarizes fails the plagiarized assignment. A plagiarized paper is considered an incomplete assignment. Any student who plagiarizes will fail the course. **All student papers will be submitted to Turnitin.com to check for plagiarism.**

Academic Honesty:

For a complete articulation of the University's policy on Academic Honesty, please see the Student Handbook. University policy prohibits **cheating** (allowing submitting someone else's work under your name), **fabricating** (falsifying or inventing any citation or information in academic work), **plagiarizing** (using another person's words or ideas without proper attribution),

and **facilitating academic dishonesty** (helping or attempting to help someone else commit academic dishonesty). The consequences for academic dishonesty are serious, and may include failing the course or being expelled from the university.

Mid-term Progress Report: The mid-term grade in this course which will be issued on October 18 will account for 30% of the entire course grade. Based on this grade, students may choose to withdraw from the course and receive a grade of "W." Students pursuing this option must withdraw online by October 28. **October 28 is the last day to withdraw without academic penalty.**

Late papers: will be deducted a letter grade for each day late. Papers are to be turned in at the beginning of class. Students are expected to be on time, to be respectful of other students and to be responsible for the readings.

Attendance Policies: 2 tardies = 1 absence. Students who miss more than 3 classes will have their class participation grades lowered by one letter grade for each additional class missed.

Environment: GVSU is committed to providing a respectful and responsible learning environment. If you need academic accommodations because of a learning, physical, or other disability, please contact Disability Support Services (DSS) at 616-331-2490.

Assignments:

You will earn your final course grade based on your success in the following endeavors:

Attendance and Participation: 20%
Blackboard Discussion Posts: 20%
Media Analysis Paper: 20%
Media Analysis Presentation: 20%
Final Exam: 20%

Attendance and Participation (20%):

I expect you to be in class, on time, awake, focused, and prepared to actively participate in discussion. Our classroom community depends on the consistent presence and thoughtful engagement of all members. As members of this community, it is imperative that we listen empathically to one another, that we articulate our disagreements thoughtfully and respectfully, and that we remain committed to critical comprehension of all ideas and materials.

Rude or disruptive behavior, including text messaging and other cell phone use, reading the newspaper, engaging in side conversation, treating classmates disrespectfully, or consistently arriving late or leaving early will lower your attendance and participation grade. **Please turn off your phone, laptop, and ipod before entering the classroom.**

Attendance will be taken by a sign-in sheet. It is your responsibility to sign the sheet. You may miss class three times, for any reason, with no impact on your attendance and participation grade. Each additional absence will lower your attendance and participation grade by one letter grade. **Excessive absence (more than 10) may result in automatic failure of the course.** You should always contact someone else from class to discuss missed class sessions before you contact me.

If you participate in any activity in which you represent GVSU, like band, choir, theatre, or

sports, and will miss class for competitions or performances, it is your responsibility to make up all missed course work.

Blackboard Discussion Posts (20%): Students are required to post to message board discussions. Each discussion board session will be graded on a 10 point scale using the following grading criteria.

Discussion Board Grading Criteria

(Total of 10 points for each Discussion Board assignment).

Student posts should:

1. Mention at least **2 specific points** from the article or reading. (2 points)
2. Relate **new information** to **prior information** learned in the course to. (2 points)
3. Directly answer one of the discussion questions. (2 points)
4. Discuss the reading at a **critical level**, not just recitation of facts from the article. (2 points)
5. Respond to postings from classmates involving **engagement** with the assigned reading (2 points)

Note: Discussion at a critical level means discussing the content of the reading and responding directly to discussion questions and responses from classmates. Postings must be substantive.

Media Analysis Paper (20%) & Presentation (20%):

In the Media Education Film, *Cultural Criticism and Transformation*, bell hooks argues that popular culture is the educational forum of the masses, and Stuart Hall argues that the image is the saturating idiom of our time. Mass communication and media industries dominate the landscape of the American imagination. The significance of popular culture to the fields of cultural studies, media studies and liberal studies is particularly noteworthy. In fact, the interconnection between the media and society is the substance of this course. Students should discuss this powerful relationship and describe how the articulations of this relationship in media forms such as film, television, advertising, music videos, radio, you tube etc. function simultaneously as sites of social control as well as a sites for resistance and transformation. Students will submit a 5 page paper, minimum 1500 words (12-point font, 1- inch margins) accompanying this presentation which will reflect their use of in-class reading to analyze the representations they choose. Students must cite at least 5 sources from class readings. Student presentations should run 5-7 minutes long with a brief question and answer period to follow. The presentation and the paper are respectively worth 20% and 20% of the final course grade.

Final (20%)

There will be an in-class final exam covering the readings, lectures, videos and class discussions.

Unexpected Events:

Sometimes, unexpected events or emergencies occur and must take priority over our academic commitments. If you cannot fulfill your responsibilities for this course because of circumstances beyond your control, please send me an email at: burnsarw@gvsu.edu so we can work together to create a plan.

Grade distribution:

A = 100-93	B =86-83	C =76-73	D =66-60
A- =92-90	B- =82-80	C- =72-70	F =59-0
B+ =89-87	C+ =79-77	D+ =69-67	

Schedule of Readings and Assignments: Note HW means Homework due the next class

CTPC = *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*

GRC = *Gender, Race, and Class in Media*

Week 1 Popular Culture, Mass Culture and Media

T 8/30 – Meet and greet - Review Syllabus

HW – Read **CTPC** – Chapter 1 – What is Popular Culture? 1-14

HW – Read in **GRC** - Cultural Studies Approach to Media: Theory 1-7

HW – Read in **GRC** – Image-Based Culture: Advertising and Popular Culture 199-205

R 9/1- In-class screen *Not Just a Game*

HW – Read **CTPC** – Chapter 2 – The ‘culture and civilization’ tradition 17-35

HW – Read **GRC** – When in Rome: Heterosexism, Homophobia and sports Talk Radio 171-185

Week 2 Consuming Masculinity through Advertising

Labor Day Recess 9/4-9/6

R 9/8 – In-class discussion

HW Read **CTPC** – Chapter 3 – Culturalism 37-58

HW Read **GRC** – Advertising and the Construction of Violent White Masculinity 261-271

Week 3 Consuming and Producing Images

T 9/13 In-class screen *Tough Guise*

HW Read **CTPC** – Chapter 4 – Marxisms 59-88

HW Read **GRC** – The New Politics of Consumption 205-213

R 9/15 In-class discussion

HW Read **GRC** – Reaching African American Consumers 213-221

HW Read **GRC** – Inventing the Cosmo Girl 221-235

Week 4 Identifying Race, Gender and Sexuality in Mass Culture

T 9/20 In-class screen *Cultural Criticism and Transformation*

HW Read **CTPC** – Chapter 7 - Gender and Sexuality 135-164

HW Read **GRC** – Sex, Lies and Advertising 235-243

R 9/ 22 In-class discussion

HW Read **CTPC** – Chapter 8 Race, Racism and Representation

HW Read **GRC** – The Whites of Their Eyes 81-85

Week 5 Hegemonic Identifications

T 9/27 In-class screen *Race: The Floating Signifier*

HW – Read **GRC** – What does Race Have to Do with Ugly Betty? 95-101

HW – Read **GRC** – Hegemony 33-37

R 9/29 In-class discussion

HW - Read **GRC** – There are Bitches and Hoes 321-327

Week 6 What's wrong with Hip Hop?

T 10/4 In-class screen *Beyond Beats and Rhymes*

HW – Read **GRC** – More than Baby Mamas: Black Mothers and Hip Hop Feminism 137-145

R 10/6 In-class discussion

HW Read **CTPC** Postmodernism 181-211

Week 7 Midterm Presentations

T 10/11 Presentations

Midterm Papers Due

R 10/13 – **AIS Conference** Plenary Speaker – Downtown Amway Grand

Week 8 Midterm Presentations

T 10/18 – Presentations

R 10/20 – Presentations

***Midterm Grade Submitted 10/18 – Last day to withdraw with grade of W 10/28**

Week 9 Women and Advertising

T 10/25 Presentations

HW – Read **GRC** Television's New Feminism 111-115

R 10/27 – In-class screen *Killing us Softly 4*

HW – Read **GRC** Tyra Banks is Fat: Reading (Post) Racism and (Post) Feminism in the New Millennium 519-531

***Last day to withdraw with grade of W 10/28**

Week 10 Sporting Women

T 11/2 – In-class discussion

HW – Read **GRC** You Play like a Girl 443-455

R 11/3 – Presentations

Week 11 Women for Sport

T 11/8 – In-class screen *Playing Unfair*

HW – Read **GRC** Resisting, Reiterating and Dancing Through 531-541

R 11/10 – In-class screen *Out for a Change*

HW - This I the Way We Live 337-349

Week 12 Gender and Sexuality on TV

T 11/15 In-class discussion

HW - Read **GRC** La Princesa Plastica: Hegemonic and Oppositional Representations of Latinidad in Hispanic Barbie 375-383

R 11/17 In-class screen *Dreamworlds 4*

HW – Read **GRC** Hetero Barbie? 71-75

Week 13 Race, Class, Gender and Sexuality on TV

T 11/22 In-class discussion

HW – Read **GRC** *Sex and the City*: Carrie Bradshaw's Queer Postfeminism

Read **CTPC** The Politics of the Popular 213-235

11/23-27 Thanksgiving Recess**Week 14 Social Class on American Television**

T 11/29 In-class lecture

HW Read **GRC** Critiquing Reality-based Televisual Black Fatherhood

R 12/1 In-class screen *Coming to Class*

HW Read **GRC** Ralph, Fred, Archie, Homer and the King of Queens

Week 15

T 12/6 In-class discussion

R 12/8 – Review for Final Exam

Week 16

*****Graduation 12/10 VanAndel Arena**

Final Exam R12/15 – 4pm-5:50pm

Final Grades Due 12/20 at noon