

LIBS 497
Popular Culture as Liberal Study
Texas A&M University - Commerce – Spring 2023
Mon/Wed/Fri 3:00-3:50 (201 David Talbot Hall)

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Office Hours: MW 4:00-5:00, Tues 3:30 – 4:30 or by appointment
(Zoom meetings welcomed)

Course Description: Film, television, music, fashion, video games, sport, museums, cultural heritage, folklore... popular culture surrounds us, and this course invites the chance to explore why. Through readings and discussion, this course will apply an interdisciplinary approach to examining popular culture across its social, historical, political, and global contexts.

Course Objectives:

1. Students will demonstrate critical thinking by reading a variety of narrative styles and applying the principles of interdisciplinary scholarship to analyze and synthesize ideas, theories, and normative prescriptions.
2. Students will communicate aspects of popular culture in a manner appropriate to audience and occasion in either written, oral and/or visual format.
3. Students will demonstrate intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities through personal self-reflection and expression.

Evaluation:

Reflective Short Papers:	25%
Meetings:	5%
Global Artifact Project:	15%
Analysis Project:	20%
Reflective Essay:	20%
Participation and Engagement:	15%

Grading System:

A (exceptional) = 100 - 90% B (good) = 89 - 80% C (average) = 79 - 70%
D (minimally sufficient) = 69 - 60% F (failure) = <60%

Though I am a believer in the philosophies of ungradedness, some versions of grading still exist. That stated, I am also a believer in the intrinsic pursuit of knowledge and discovery. If you join in that pursuit, there should be no worries or concerns of final grades. In nearly all grading instances, I start from a mindset that one begins at middle “C” (75%), and one proves their relative ability to shift above, shift below, or remain at that mark with their work.

Covid 19 Considerations

Please note that as of the writing of this syllabus, per university direction, this is planned to be an entirely face-to-face class with no scheduled virtual attendance option. Students, faculty, and staff are strongly encouraged to get vaccinated, wear a mask in public indoor settings, and wash hands frequently. These actions can reduce the spread of COVID-19. Review the whole of the university’s Fall 2021 [COVID-19 Management and Guidance Plan](#) thoroughly and be prepared to strictly adhere to it.

Brief Assignment Explanations:

Reflective Short Papers: At three points in the semester, students will reflect on the course as a whole as informed through course content.

Meetings: Students will meet at least once with the professor one-on-one.

Global Artifact Project: Students will select some artifact of non-Western popular culture not formally covered within the course and familiarize themselves with both the object's history as well as to its geocultural significance. This will be conveyed through the creation of a shareable form, be it document, recorded presentation, or other alternative means of communication.

Analysis Project: Students will apply course concepts and principles by deconstructing and contextually analyzing some version of popular cultural phenomenon as tied to a specific thematic point of emphasis/consideration.

Reflective Review: Students will reflect on the course as a whole via a personalized consideration of the whole of the portfolio generated across the term.

Participation and Engagement: Whether in the classroom or online, students are expected to dialogue in a way that provokes, clarifies, challenges, and enlightens the course community. In these communications, the concepts of a liberal studies approach to higher education will be practiced and varying interpretations, particularly in relation to the course readings, will be shared.

Additional considerations of a student's relative level of engagement and academic integrity will also be made across all aspects of the course including but not limited to completion and quality of tasks and assignments, communications, following instructions and guidelines, and accessing materials. As mentioned previously, all students will start as receiving 75% and will be assessed as to their respective demonstration of proficiency/deficiency/adequacy across the term.

Course Readings and Materials

There is a required text for the course:

Waskul, D. & Vannini, P. (Eds.). (2016). *Popular Culture as Everyday Life*. London: Routledge. ISBN 9781138833395 – MSRP: \$42.36 paperback or e-Book

[Popular Culture as Everyday Life - 1st Edition - Dennis Waskul - Phil \(routledge.com\)](https://www.routledge.com/9781138833395/Popular-Culture-as-Everyday-Life-1st-Edition-Dennis-Waskul-Phil)

All additional course readings and other materials will be available via D2L Brightspace.

Academic Dishonesty

All coursework is to be an original work by the student and created specifically for fulfilling the requirements for this course. Plagiarism, cheating, or otherwise representing another's work or ideas as one's own without proper attribution will not be tolerated. It is the student's responsibility to:

1. research and write their own papers
2. give proper credit through documentation when using words or ideas of others
3. rely on their own knowledge when taking tests
4. refuse to give another student the opportunity to be dishonest

Any act of academic dishonesty may result in the automatic failure of the course and may be subject to further disciplinary action by the university.

“Attendance” policy, instructor’s rights and expectations:

All courses demand active participation and regular attendance. It is imperative that the student do all assigned work in a timely fashion. In particular, the benefits from discussion specifically depend on each student’s respective preparation and distinctive contribution. Failure to do so hurts not only the individual student, but the collective community as a whole.

All assignments are devised for the explicit purpose of offering educational benefit, be that academic growth, hands-on experience, development and display of critical thought, or expression of our academic selves. Coursework is to be completed as assigned and is to be turned in via the D2L Brightspace dropbox no later than the formal due date. Any work turned in after due dates may incur a penalty respective of its relative degree of tardiness (to a point of no credit whatsoever). Given conditions of the Covid 19 pandemic, considerable flexibility in applying this will be enacted. Failing to complete assignments not only inhibits the immediate learning process but, again, ultimately hurts the overall learning community as discussion of the process and its results can prove insightful as well.

Please Note:

Popular culture and entertainment media use life as its muse. As such, it is comprised of the themes, subjects, and contents that contribute to everyday life. These contents, at times, can and do include aspects of violence, threat, sexuality, conflict, oppression, discrimination, inequality, profanity, varying ideology, crime, and impropriety. While effort has been taken to keep decorum in mind, engaging music and gender through albums as narratives is intended for collegiate/adult maturities and some of the examples encountered in the course will comprise aspects of these contents.

Student Conduct

Course participation includes aspects of respectful, thoughtful, class interaction and engagement in group discussions. This course’s expectations work in conjuncture with what the [Student Guidebook](#) describes as Civility in the Classroom. Additionally, all students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. (See Policies and Procedures, Conduct, pg. 35-45).

ADA Statement

Students with Disabilities

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services

Texas A&M University-Commerce

Velma K. Waters Library Rm 162

Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835

Fax (903) 468-8148

Email: studentdisabilityservices@tamuc.edu

Website: [Office of Student Disability Resources and Services](#)

Nondiscrimination Notice

Texas A&M University-Commerce will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

Concealed Carry Notice

Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in Texas A&M University-Commerce buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and A&M-Commerce Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations.

For a list of locations, please refer to the [Carrying Concealed Handguns On Campus](#) document and/or consult your event organizer.

Web url:

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf>

Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all A&M-Commerce campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

A&M-Commerce Supports Students' Mental Health

The Counseling Center at A&M-Commerce, located in the Halladay Building, Room 203, offers counseling services, educational programming, and connection to community resources for students. Students have 24/7 access to the Counseling Center's crisis assessment services by calling 903-886-5145. For more information regarding Counseling Center events and confidential services, please visit www.tamuc.edu/counsel

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

LMS

All course sections offered by Texas A&M University-Commerce have a corresponding course shell in the myLeo Online Learning Management System (LMS). Below are technical requirements

LMS Requirements:

<https://community.brightspace.com/s/article/Brightspace-Platform-Requirements>

LMS Browser Support:

https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/brightspace/requirements/all/browser_support.htm

YouSeeU Virtual Classroom Requirements:

<https://support.youseeu.com/hc/en-us/articles/115007031107-Basic-System-Requirements>

ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

You will need your campus-wide ID (CWID) and password to log into the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact the Center for IT Excellence (CITE) at 903.468.6000 or helpdesk@tamuc.edu.

Note: Personal computer and internet connection problems do not excuse the requirement to complete all course work in a timely and satisfactory manner. Each student needs to have a backup method to deal with these inevitable problems. These methods might include the availability of a backup PC at home or work, the temporary use of a computer at a friend's home, the local library, office service companies, Starbucks, a TAMUC campus open computer lab, etc.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

If you have any questions or are having difficulties with the course material, please contact your Instructor.

Technical Support

If you are having technical difficulty with any part of Brightspace, please contact Brightspace Technical Support at 1-877-325-7778. Other support options can be found here:

<https://community.brightspace.com/support/s/contactsupport>

Course Outline:

Note: The course outline is only a guideline. It is subject to change based on discussion, current events, or other such influences. Additionally, there is considerable fluidity to when reading assignments will occur. These will be updated in class and through D2L announcements.

Week 1 (January 17-22)

- general course information
- general introduction to liberal studies, ungradedness, and interdisciplinarity

Week 2 (January 23-29)

- What is popular culture?

Week 3 (January 30 – February 5)

- Artifacts

Week 4 (February 6 - 12)

- Artifacts round 2
- **First reflective paper due February 12**

Week 5 (February 13 - 19)

- Personas

Week 6 (February 20-26)

- Personas round 2

Week 7 (February 27 – March 5)

- Popular culture as ritual
- **Second reflective paper due March 5**

Week 8 (March 6 - 19) Spring Break

- Popular culture as nostalgia

Week 9 (March 20 - 26)

- Camp and kitsch

Week 10 (March 27 - April 2)

- Popular culture and politicization
- **Third reflective paper due April 2**

Week 11 (April 3 - 9) * *National PCA/ACA conference week and travels*

- Popular culture and social media

Week 12 (April 10 - 16)

- Popular culture as resistance
- **Global Artifact Project due April 16**

Week 13 (April 17 - 23)

- Global Artifact Project discussion

Week 14 (April 24 - 30)

- Popular culture as culture

“Week” 15 (May 1 - 5)

- Reflections on popular culture
- **Artifact Analysis Project Due May 5**

Finals “Week” (final session in exam week: Friday May 12, 1:15-3:15)

- **Reflective Review due May 9**

final grades available via MyLeo on Tuesday, May 16