

# SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY OF POPULAR CULTURE

## Winter Term 2023

**Instructor:** Dr. David Penner  
**Email:** Via Avenue  
**Lecture:** On Campus Lectures Bi-Weekly in JHE 376 (Tuesdays @ 7:00 PM). Online lectures will be posted on Avenue each week on Mondays.

**Office:** Via Zoom  
**Office Hours:** Fridays 12:00 – 1:00 or by Appointment

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## **Course Description**

This course investigates, through three mediums of popular culture (film, television, music), what popular culture has to offer as a type of social psychology. What does popular culture have to show us about identity, power, gender, authority, sexuality, image, family, institutions, social arrangements, hope, beauty, money, success, protest and many other topics as well? Through a consideration of both the history and the present of these mediums we will explore how popular culture is both a reflection of who we are and a suggestion of who we might become.

## **Course Objectives**

By the end of the course students should be able to:

- Apply principles of Social Psychological analysis to present popular culture artifacts.
- Have a deeper understanding of the relationship between popular culture and reflections/constructions of modern identity.
- Improve their critical thinking and writing skills.

## **Required Materials and Texts**

- Links to pertinent texts will be made available on Avenue to Learn.
- The following are optional texts:  
Ewens, Hannah. *Fangirls*.  
[https://www.amazon.ca/Fangirls-Hannah-Ewens-ebook/dp/B07PMX8ZLB/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?keywords=fangirls&qid=1576093644&sr=8-1](https://www.amazon.ca/Fangirls-Hannah-Ewens-ebook/dp/B07PMX8ZLB/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=fangirls&qid=1576093644&sr=8-1)  
Stanley, Bob. *Yeah! Yeah! Yeah! The story of pop music from Bill Haley to Beyonce*. [https://www.amazon.ca/Yeah-Story-Music-Haley-Beyonce/dp/0393351688/ref=sr\\_1\\_2?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1513027527&sr=1-2&keywords=yeah+yeah+yeah](https://www.amazon.ca/Yeah-Story-Music-Haley-Beyonce/dp/0393351688/ref=sr_1_2?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1513027527&sr=1-2&keywords=yeah+yeah+yeah)  
Thomson, David. *Television*. [https://www.amazon.ca/Television-David-Thomson/dp/0500519161/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1513027607&sr=1-1&keywords=thomson+television](https://www.amazon.ca/Television-David-Thomson/dp/0500519161/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1513027607&sr=1-1&keywords=thomson+television)

## **Class Format**

Each week, I will be posting an online video lecture covering the week's material. It is your obligation and responsibility to view the lectures. Bi-weekly I will provide a live lecture update and discussion session on campus (starting on January 10<sup>th</sup>) On Fridays at 12:00 PM, I will be offering a Zoom office hour to meet with students. This will be by appointment.

Course Evaluation – Overview

## 1. Three Assignments

### **Course Evaluation – Details**

First Assignment: 30% (Due February 15<sup>th</sup> for students seeking comments)

Second Assignment: 35% (Due March 15<sup>th</sup> for students seeking comments)

For students not seeking full comments on their work the final deadline for the first assignment is March 2<sup>nd</sup>. For students not seeking full comment on their work the final deadline for the second assignment is March 31<sup>st</sup>.

Third Assignment: 35% (Due April 24<sup>th</sup> for all students)

There will be three assignments for this course. One week before the due date you will receive a selection of questions. Your task is to write a reflection essay on one of these questions. Electronic submissions through Avenue is the sole method for your submission of the assignment. The assignment is a reflection paper not a demonstration of your ability to repeat the thoughts of the course instructor. You are asked to provide your own thought. Your own thought is not a long-held opinion or a reaction but instead represents your fresh thoughtful consideration of the topic being addressed. You will be graded in relation to the depth of your insight and the clarity with which you express your thought. Brilliance is not expected or demanded. Honest and thoughtful engagement is a prerequisite to a high mark on these assignments.

The first two assignments should not be more than 5 double spaced pages (with 12 pt font and 1" margins) in length.

### **Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings**

#### **Class 1**

**January 10<sup>th</sup>: On Campus Lecture: Course Introduction**

#### **Class 2**

**January 17<sup>th</sup>: Online Lecture: Funny as \*\*\*\* - Laughing at Others in Comedy Films**

Readings: Viewing suggestions will be posted on Avenue.

#### **Class 3**

**January 24<sup>th</sup>: Online Lecture: Heroism, Structures of Society, and Our Role in Hero Films; On Campus Update Lecture on Comedy Films and Hero Films**

Readings: Viewing suggestions will be posted on Avenue.

#### **Class 4**

**January 31<sup>st</sup>: Online Lecture: Fantasy and Dystopian Film – Dreading the Future?**

Readings: Viewing suggestions will be posted on Avenue.

#### **Class 5**

**February 7<sup>th</sup>: Online Lecture: What Are You Afraid Of? Social Psychological Metaphors and Horror Films; On Campus Update Lecture on Fantasy, Dystopian and Horror Films**

Readings: Viewing suggestions will be posted on Avenue.

Note: First Assignment Questions will be posted on the 8<sup>th</sup>.

#### **Class 6**

**February 14<sup>th</sup>: Online Lecture: “Sex and Sadness”: Romance, Strife, and Identity in Popular Music**

Readings: A Spotify Playlist will be posted on Avenue.

Note First Assignment Questions will be due on February 15<sup>th</sup>.

#### **Class 7**

**February 21<sup>st</sup>: Reading Week**

#### **Class 8**

**February 28<sup>th</sup>: Online Lecture: The Changing History of Self- Esteem: Honesty, Self-Love, and Arrogance; On Campus Update Lecture on Love and Identity Songs**

Readings: A Spotify Playlist will be posted on Avenue.

#### **Class 9**

**March 7<sup>th</sup>: Online Lecture: What Does the Soundtrack of Our Times Mean? Are We Angry, Oblivious, or Just Dancing?; On Campus Update Lecture for this Section.**

Readings: A Spotify Playlist will be posted on Avenue.

Note: Second Assignment Questions will be posted on the 8<sup>th</sup>.

#### **Class 10**

**March 14<sup>th</sup>: Online Lecture: Institutions and Corruption on Television**

Readings: Viewing Suggestions will be posted on Avenue.

Note: Second Assignment Questions will be due on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

### **Class 11**

**March 21<sup>st</sup>: Online Lecture: The Past is No Longer Another Country on Television – The Dramatizing of History; On Campus Update Lecture on Television Dramas and History Shows**

Readings: Viewing Suggestions will be posted on Avenue.

### **Class 12**

**March 28<sup>th</sup>: Online Lecture: Reality, Money, And Beauty on Television**

Readings: Viewing Suggestions will be posted on Avenue.

### **Class 13**

**April 4<sup>th</sup>: Online Lecture: Our Fascination with Murder and Other True Crimes; On Campus Update Lecture On Beauty in Television and True Crime Documentaries.**

Readings: Viewing Suggestions will be posted on Avenue.

### **Class 14**

**April 11<sup>th</sup>: Online Lecture: Television Buffoons and Why We Love Them (And Maybe Dislike Ourselves)**

Readings: Viewing Suggestions will be posted on Avenue.

Note: 3<sup>rd</sup> Assignment Questions will be posted on April 12<sup>th</sup>. This assignment will be due on April 24<sup>th</sup>.

## **Course Policies**

### **Submission of Assignments**

All course work will be submitted on Avenue to Learn.

### **Late Assignments**

To be discussed in class.

### **Avenue to Learn**

In this course we will be using Avenue to Learn. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

## **University Policies**

### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/), located at <https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/>

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

- plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- improper collaboration in group work.
- copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

### **AUTHENTICITY / PLAGIARISM DETECTION**

Some courses may use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via an online learning platform (e.g. Avenue to Learn, etc.) using plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students who do not wish their work to be submitted through the plagiarism detection software must inform the Instructor before the assignment is due. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to the plagiarism detection software. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). For more details about McMaster’s use of Turnitin.com please go to [www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity).

### **COURSES WITH AN ON-LINE ELEMENT**

Some courses may use on-line elements (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn, LearnLink, web pages, capa, Moodle, ThinkingCap, etc.). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a course using these elements, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The

available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in a course that uses on-line elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

## **ONLINE PROCTORING**

Some courses may use online proctoring software for tests and exams. This software may require students to turn on their video camera, present identification, monitor and record their computer activities, and/or lock/restrict their browser or other applications/software during tests or exams. This software may be required to be installed before the test/exam begins.

## **CONDUCT EXPECTATIONS**

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities (the “Code”). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, whether in person or online.

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students’ access to these platforms.

## **ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services](#) (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or [sas@mcmaster.ca](mailto:sas@mcmaster.ca) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University’s [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) policy.

## **REQUESTS FOR RELIEF FOR MISSED ACADEMIC TERM WORK**

In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Policy on Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work.<sup>3</sup>



## **ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION FOR RELIGIOUS, INDIGENOUS OR SPIRITUAL OBSERVANCES (RISO)**

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the RISO policy. Students should submit their request to their Faculty Office normally within 10 working days of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

## **COPYRIGHT AND RECORDING**

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, including lectures by University instructors

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

## **EXTREME CIRCUMSTANCES**

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, Avenue to Learn and/or McMaster email.

## **Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy**

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student's own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

## **Course Modification**

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the

opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

## **Grades**

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

<b>MARK</b>	<b>GRADE</b>
90-100	A+
85-89	A
80-84	A-
77-79	B+
73-76	B
70-72	B-
67-69	C+
63-66	C
60-62	C-
57-59	D+
53-56	D
50-52	D-
0-49	F