Sociology of Popular Culture and Inequality (Soc 3NN3 Summer 2022)

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Asynchronous delivery

Appointments via zoom

**Course Description:**

This course approaches the field of popular culture using various sociological frameworks. As will be seen, there is much debate over what constitutes “popular” and “culture”. Questions about inequality and representation will be explored among many other topics. Here, the objective is to obtain perspective on how race, class and gender hierarchies are configured, maintained and challenged. The course poses the following questions: What is culture? Who does the popular represent? How is inequality measured from a cultural standpoint?

**Learning Outcomes:** The learning outcomes of this course are consistent with McMaster’s undergraduate Degree Level Expectations: <http://cll.mcmaster.ca/COU/pdf/Undergraduate%20Degree%20Level%20Expectations.pdf>). In this course, students will learn about contemporary issues with popular culture and inequality. The content of the course connects to several of the undergraduate degree level expectations including developing a depth and breadth of knowledge and development of critical thinking and communication skills.

**Delivery of course:** This course will be delivered asynchronously and will consist of the following: lectures will be uploaded to Avenue to Learn weekly along with lecture note. in particular, lectures will be prerecorded and uploaded to avenue to learn weekly. Lecture notes will also be uploaded to Avenue to Learn on a weekly basis. Every week, there will be either Q&A sessions or discussion posts on avenue to learn.

**Reading Material:** Storey, John *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture A Reader* Routledge, (2018) or later editions are acceptable too.

The book is available at the McMaster University bookstore

**Reading Summary 30%:**

This course has no formal research essay assignment. Instead, you’re reading and writing skills will be evaluated on the basis of summarizing a selected reading from the textbook. The due date for the summary is **July 4, 2022.** This means that students can select any reading up to July 4 to complete this part of the course. One of the objectives of this assignment is to ensure that students are engaging with the readings. The summary is not an essay. Instead, it is a summary of the main points of the readings where you are to identify the main concepts, ideas and issues discussed in the textbook. It is not your task to criticize the authors ideas and/or arguments.

**Guideline on how to write a summary for this course:** The first goal is to articulate the ideas in the readings back to the reader by explaining them in your own words and by citing the author(s) directly. In addition, students are asked to add their own thoughts by discussing why you feel the ideas are interesting and/or important and how you feel the issues relate to our society. Please ensure that sentences are well structured and that there is a coherent flow of ideas.

The text should be 12-point font single space with standard margins. The summary is to be 3-4 (single space) pages in length. A bibliography should be included as counts as a separate page. Cite the chapter properly, do not plagiarize. Students should aim to begin the summary by stating in a sentence or two what the article is about. Try to formulate in your own words what the main ideas are. You can paraphrase and quote but, be sure to cite accordingly. Here is an example on how to cite (Gramsci, 2019: 25).

In order to start thinking about how to write your summary, here are some questions to consider: What does the title indicate about the reading? What are the main social problems being discussed? Try to organize the author(s) thoughts and ideas into your own words as best as you can and cite their work directly when you want to engage and/or highlight a perspective. Use a direct quote if the author gives a definition of an idea and/or concept. It is a good idea to connect themes and/or issues in your summary to ensure that there is fluidity. One of the main exercises that the summary poses to students is to approach it as if you were explaining the article to someone else.

One way to filter out what to include and/or exclude in your summary is to ask yourself the following: Does this perspective seem central to what the chapter is about and does it make sense to me? Is it interesting enough for me to tell someone else about it? If you find a section of the chapter confusing and/or challenging, explain why. In preparing to write a summary, be sure to take notes as you read the chapter. This will give you a guide as to points to highlight. No formal introduction and/or conclusion is needed for this assignment. As mentioned above, the point of this exercise is to demonstrate comprehension of course material and not to critique it. This exercise is also important because it requires the development of critical academic skills in terms of stimulating identification of main ideas and active reading.

How is the summary graded? Clarity and precision of your writing and accuracy of how ideas and represented and how well your able to explain the main concepts, themes and ideas and connect them to course content – other related themes and issues. The quality of your writing, grammar, citation style for quotes, proper organization of ideas into subsections, title page which includes your name, course code, and name of the instructor. The summary is an individual work projects, not group projects. If you have any questions about the summary assignment, please email the instructor.

**Participation 10%**  is allotted to participation during the weekly Q&A or discussion posts. The aim of the participation tasks is to critically engage with weekly topics. This may be realized orally or in written format. Students are highly encouraged to raise questions that show thoughtful engagement with the readings, articulate a synthesis of the main claims for assigned readings.

**Test 30%** There will be a take home test; the test will be posted on Avenue to Learn and students will some days to complete it. Please see the schedule below to know the due date for Test 1.

**Learning Journal (30%).** The learning journal is the place where individuals write about specific topics which are covered in the course, to show their depth of knowledge of the topic. Students must only use course content for this assignment. Students are asked to engage at least two readings and reflect on the content on the chapters, in particular, the lessons learned about popular culture and inequality. Do not summarize articles, but focus on the issues that have been raised in course content and demonstrate thoughtful reflection on them. Journals must be typed, double-spaced, approximately 3-5 pages long. Similar to the summary assignment, the bibliography for this assignment is to be separate. They may include your reactions, but must primarily be about the issues discussed in the readings and documentary (if applicable). This assignment due on the last day of class.

**Reading Schedule**

Week 1, June 2022 Introduction to course and administrative matters will be covered.

June 22, 2022 Chapter 1 in the Reader: What is Popular Culture pp. 1-16

June 27, 2022 Q&A and/or discussion post on What is Popular Culture

June 29, 2022 Chapter 3 in the Reader: “Culturalism” pp. 38-57

July 5, 2022 Q&A and/or discussion post on Culturalism

July 4, 2022, 2022 Chapter 4 in the Reader: “Marxism” pp. 61-92 **(Summary is due by, 1159 pm)**

July 6, 2022 Q&A and or discussion post on Marxism

July 11, 2022 Documentary Status Anxiety

July 13 2022 **Test 1 Will be uploaded to Avenue to Learn (Test is due July 18, 2022, 1159 pm)**

July 18 2022 Chapter 8 in the reader: Gender and Sexuality pp. 152-183

July 20, 2022 Q&A and/or discussion post on Gender and Sexuality

July 27, 2022 Chapter 9 Race, Racism and Representation pp. 187-200

Aug 1, 2022 No class

Aug 3, 2022 Q&A and or Discussion post on Race, Racism and Representation **(Journal Assignment is due)**

**University Policies**

**Academic Integrity Statement**

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academiccredentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academiccredit 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.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity)**.**

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.

**Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services](https://sas.mcmaster.ca/) (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or [sas@mcmaster.ca](mailto:sas@mcmaster.ca%20) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University’s [*Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities*](http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicAccommodation-StudentsWithDisabilities.pdf)policy.

**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 requiring a [RISO](https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/2019/02/Academic-Accommodation-for-Religious-Indigenous-and-Spiritual-Observances-Policy-on.pdf) accommodation 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.

**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](https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/Code-of-Student-Rights-and-Responsibilities.pdf) (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.

**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.

**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.

**Absences, Missed Work, Illness**

In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work”. Please talk to the course director.

**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.

**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.

**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, A2L and/or McMaster email.

**Grades**

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

| **MARK** | **GRADE** |
| --- | --- |
| 90-100 | A+ |
| 85-90 | 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 |