

# Bellevue College

## SOC 210 Popular Culture

Fully Online Course

2017 Fall Quarter

September 18<sup>th</sup> - December 7<sup>th</sup>

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Office Hours are by appointment and conducted online or on the phone.

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### COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course asks us: What role does popular culture play in our lives? What role do we play in the formation and maintenance of popular culture? We will explore these questions in an attempt to understand various schools of thought in the vast field of cultural studies as we try and understand what makes the popular, popular. We will also assess the role popular culture plays in national and international political forums. Can popular culture be subversive? Who breaks dominant traditions in cultural dynamics? What makes underground cultural acts eventual popular trends?



We will most closely examine the influence of U.S. popular culture in globalization and global settings and will explore the formal elements of film and televisual style as well as the relationship between popular culture texts and audiences as well as political platforms. We will pay close attention to the way in which minorities are represented in popular culture, and how marginalized groups subvert the dominant discourse that has traditionally shaped them through a variety of popular culture mediums.

Finally, we will use sociological tools to interrogate the relationship between mass culture and society, with a goal of understanding popular culture's role in strengthening (or eroding) identities based on race, sexuality, class, gender, patterns of consumption, or other aspects of modern subjectivity. Pop Culture scholar Omayra Cruz (2005) tells us that "...the study of popular culture requires a mindset that can handle...complexity and even contradiction." It is with this *mindset* that we embark on a tour of the popular, no matter what side of it we occupy.

**“The reality is it’s up to you guys to figure out how the media works and break through.”**

- **Claudia Dreifus**

**A NOTE ABOUT COURSE CONTENT:** Since sociologists examine just about every aspect of the social world, we talk about provocative material. Please be advised that when we explore controversial topics, they will always be framed within an academic context. Keeping in mind that when we find ourselves in a space outside of our comfort zone, it's an opportunity for learning, and you may be confronted with subject matter that is difficult to watch, see, listen to, or discuss. Please note, however, that you will be responsible for any course material you miss if you choose not to participate. If you have any questions or concerns about content or climate, feel free to speak with me about it right away.



**READING REQUIREMENTS:**

- Croteau, David, William Hoynes, and Stefania Milan. 2012. *Media/Society: Industries, Images, and Audiences*, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition. Sage: London.
  1. Note: You may use the 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, but the page numbers will occasionally be different, and there will be a couple of different/missing readings in the schedule below. Contact me immediately if you notice a difference in the assigned readings. The schedule below is for the 5<sup>th</sup> Edition.
- Handouts and articles
  - *ALL* handouts are available on the Canvas site.

**RECOMMENDED READINGS:**

- Oxford Dictionary of the English Language
- Any current Sociology Dictionary
- *A Writer’s Reference*, 6<sup>th</sup> Ed. By Diana Hacker.

**LEARNING AND COURSE OUTCOMES:**

Upon your dedicated participation and subsequent completion of this course, you will:

1. Demonstrate a general understanding of concepts used in sociology and popular culture.
2. Show critical analyses of popular culture texts and be able to explain and discuss how the intersections of race, class, and gender are represented and maintained in popular culture texts.
3. Demonstrate a general understanding of the dominant representations and identity constructions of minority people in historical and contemporary analyses of US popular culture.
4. Demonstrate a general understanding of production analysis.
5. Demonstrate a critical understanding of textual analysis.
6. Show your understanding of popular culture through a historical lens.

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:** If you have medical information to share with me in the event of an emergency, please contact me via email. Emergency preparedness is important! If you need course modifications, adaptations, or accommodations because of a disability, please see me immediately so I can also refer you to our Disability Resource Center (DRC). If you prefer, you may contact them directly by going to B132 or by calling 425.564.2498 or TTY 425.564.4110. Information is also available on their website.

**EXPLORE THE LMC!** The Library Media Center is at your fingertips! I *strongly* encourage you to visit the LMC at least once a week, but you can also access it via the web. Talk to a Reference Librarian at the Library (D-126), by calling (425) 564-6161, or by email.

- LMC Research Guide
- Main Library Media Center
- For article databases

**GENERAL RULES & EXPECTATIONS:**

- Check into our online classroom no less than *four times per week* (yes – I do keep track!). This means you log on and surf around the site. No need to check in with me on this one. Make this class work for you on your own time. We're on the Honor System with your presence in class.
- Complete readings and homework assignments *on time*. I do not check whether you complete your readings; again, this is on the honor system. You do need to read your required material to complete homework assignments.
- Late homework assignments *are accepted*, but *late exams are not*. Understand that this is *set in stone*. Take it seriously.
  1. Late homework is docked 10% for every day the work is late, including Saturdays and Sundays, except for Discussion Boards (see special note, below).
  2. Special Note on Discussion Boards:
    1. Initial Posts are due on Thursdays by midnight.
    2. You are required to respond to the *Initial Posts* of at least two colleagues in your Main DBs. These responses are due Sundays by midnight (you may respond to people anytime between Thursdays and Sundays).
    3. To have an opportunity to receive full credit for Main DBs, you must complete the Initial Post *and* Responses. Initial Posts only receive half-credit. Responses-only receive zero credit. Take care to note this. However, to receive credit for Main Discussions, you have to participate in the discussion during the week of the discussion. In other words, when it's active. Think of it this way: if we were in a brick and mortar classroom and you arrived to

participate in the discussion a week later, nobody would be there, correct? Same deal here.

4. If you are late on your DBs, I deduct based on your Initial Posts.
- I expect that your behavior in our classroom is respectful. Continued disrespectful behavior in my class will result in your grade lowering. Please keep your postings to discussion boards (DBs) thoughtful and polite. One-on-one conversations should be taken offline, so our DBs don't get clogged. If you find at any point that you are uncomfortable with anything posted to a DB, please email me right away. Be wary of soapboxing in this class; you may be tempted to present your opinion and editorialize, but refrain from doing this.

**Remember: Falling behind can be hazardous to your health!**

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:** In this course, you will be completing assigned readings, participating in discussion board assignments, and completing thoughtful essays. The work you do for this class will keep you critically engaged with the world around you from a sociological perspective. There is a Final Exam and a Midterm Exam. Expect to be writing every week. The key to this course is your thoughtful reflection on course material.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

<b>Attendance and Participation*:</b>	100 points
<b>Key Terms Assignments (5):</b>	100 points
<b>Flex Your Head Assignments (4):</b>	200 points
<b>Main Discussion Boards (3):</b>	150 points
<b>Course Exams, Overall:</b>	200 points
<b>TOTAL:</b>	750 points

*The Fine Print:*

\*Participation points accrue with various short assignments in the Discussion Area, such as your Introductory DB. These are labeled **PARTICIPATION DBs**. The Main DB assignments are labeled **MAIN DBs**.\*

**Attendance & Participation:** Check in no less than four times per week, be engaged with all of your discussion board assignments, provoke energetic and polite discussion, listen/read/comprehend actively, work respectfully with your colleagues in class, take loads of notes from your readings, look up words you don't understand, ask questions, think critically about the world around you, etc. Make use of the Q&A Board as well. This is not scored, but even if you don't have questions, you might be able to answer somebody's query – so have some presence there.

**Key Terms Assignments:** You are expected to understand certain terms used in the field of Social Psychology. For these assignments, you will demonstrate your

understanding by following exercises laid out for you in the Key Terms accompanying Prezi presentations. Remember this important note about your KT assignments: you *must do the reading*. There are several Terms in these assignments you will not find in the index of the book, as they are incorporated into the articles. To do well on these assignments, reading the articles all the way through is vital to your success. Be aware that some of these require a few days, or even a week, of preparatory work. Make sure you look ahead at your homework!

**Flex Your Head Assignments:** These short assignments are an opportunity to put your learning to use as you explore the world around you using the themes and theories we examine in this course. Be aware that some of these require a few days, or even a week, of preparatory work. Make sure you look ahead at your homework!

**Main Discussion Board Assignments:** The work done in the Discussion Board area will have you engage course material and work closely together. You are expected to participate in these assignments to generate critical discussion amongst one another. These assignments are always due on Thursdays and Sundays (your initial post goes up Thursday, and your responses to one another are due Sundays). Your DBs are graded on two things: your original post and your responses (two of them) to colleagues of yours in the class. You must do both to earn full credit. A submission with no responses posted earns ½ credit at most, and responses without an original submission receive zero credit.

**Participation Discussion Board Assignments:** These are meant to support you throughout the course. They are required, and the grades get folded into your overall Participation Grade.

**Midterm and Final:** Your Exams cover everything up through the week they're scheduled; the midterm is made up of short-answer questions that engage a documentary film. The Final Exam is a series of short answer questions. Your responses should be clear and concise. You will never be asked a question out of "left field." Questions are based on readings, Main discussion boards, Prezi, and PowerPoint material. Point distribution info will be on the exams.

**For all of your written work:** Submit proofread work **only**. Work not proofread will be returned *once* for a rewrite, expected to be handed in within 48 hours. If you need help with your writing, please make use of the following student support services:

- **Academic Success Center**
- **Academic Tutoring Center**
- **TRiO Student Support Services**
- **Writing Lab @ BC**

**Required Writing Guidelines (emphasis on *required*):**

- *You must follow the required writing guidelines in the syllabus. Not doing so will result in your grade lowering by 2 points per assignment.*
- Twelve-point sized Times font, *double-spaced*. Single spaced assignments will be docked points.
- 1" margins all around
- APA Citations where appropriate - credit must be given even where any *ideas* presented in the paper are not your own (see notes below about avoiding plagiarism)
- Title pages and bibliographies *are not counted* as pages due
- Student information is at the top left of the page, single spaced
- There are no extra spaces between paragraphs.
- Paragraphs contain no less than four sentences.
- Magazines, newspapers, journals, and books are *italicized*. Movie titles, article titles, song titles, etc. are "in quotation marks." Quotes inside of a quotation use 'single quotation marks.'
- Avoid the universal "we", "our", "us" - ask yourself: Can I speak for everyone? If you cannot, do not write it. Avoid phrasing such as "nowadays..." and "since the beginning of time." Be accurate. Know what you're writing and why.
- *Do not ever use* Wikipedia, CliffNotes, or other such encyclopedic references or online dictionaries. Wikipedia is not peer-reviewed and therefore unreliable. Do your research. If you're going to research online (which is encouraged and totally legit), make sure you understand what you're seeking. Do a deep dive into the internet to find your stuff.
- Be sure that no more than 20% of your papers are outside sources. You must be providing your analysis while you draw from material presented to you in class.

### Your written work is evaluated on:

#### 1) Content

- a. You are expected to fulfill the entire assignment. Doing the minimum amount of work expected will likely get you a passing grade, but not an outstanding one. You're expected to go the extra mile.
- b. Fully developing your argument(s) and making use of examples and evidence to support your argument(s).
- c. The flow of thought throughout the paper, with strong analyses and conclusions, should be consistent throughout your writing. I add points to your final grade for continued improvement.

#### 2) Writing Style

- a. Excellent command of the written English language. In other words, most excellent grammar. **NOTE: If you struggle with grammar and spelling or are an ESL student, please let me know! I'm happy to work with you and point you in the right direction.**
- b. Your demonstrated clarity of thought.
- c. Good organization and attention to detail.
- d. The clear and present persuasiveness of your argument/s.

- e. Your ability to be creative, thoughtful, and clever. Make it an interesting read.
- f. PROOFREAD your work. Please do a spell/grammar check before you hand it in. Read it out loud to yourself, too! It helps.
- g. Dude, like totally don't write **colloquially**. A conversation is a conversation. A paper is an entirely different way of presenting your research and ideas. ☺

**Preventing Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is a form of academic dishonesty occurring when students use information or material from outside sources and do not properly cite those sources. This is grounds for disciplinary action. It is your responsibility to understand plagiarism and its consequences. Plagiarism occurs if:

- a. You do not cite quotations and/or attribute borrowed ideas.
- b. You fail to enclose borrowed language in quotation marks.
- c. You do not write summaries and paraphrases in his/her own words and/or doesn't document his/her source.
- d. You turn in work created by another person.
- e. You submit or use your prior work for a current or past course, or work from one current course in another course *without express permission* from your professors. This may also be considered academic dishonesty.
- f. Consequences: If it is determined that you have plagiarized or engaged in other forms of academic dishonesty, you will likely fail the assignment and possibly the course, despite points earned through other work. Acts of academic dishonesty are reviewed for disciplinary action.

**Grading:**

Please use the following rubric to help explain the grade you're given for a given assignment. I offer comments on all of your written work and general comments on the Discussion Boards – sometimes more, sometimes less. Please read my comments and do not hesitate to come to me with any questions you ever have on a grade you receive. There is no limit to how many times you email me! My email door is *always* open.

**90-100 = A.** "A" work shows me you're engaged with all course material by utilizing quotes and ideas. It is writing *completely free* from grammar and spelling errors, demonstrating your command not only of the English language but of the form and flow of a solid piece of written work. I also like to see/read/hear your "writing voice." That is, I want your style to come through! Your arguments should be solid and backed up with intellectual ammunition. You should demonstrate a strong understanding of our readings and the in-class media and how they intersect with one another. Your ideas should be "fleshed out" and not just a series of statements, in other words.

**80-89 = B.** The "B" tells me you're doing very good work. You may have a couple of grammar issues, but your work is still tidy, and the writing is still strong. You have a firm grasp on the themes in the course, but you may not be as well-versed in the

readings and media and/or lecture material as you could be. I should see that you're being challenged and that you're struggling with the course issues and themes, and what they represent to you in an interconnected way. Your understandings of some of the course materials are stronger than others.

**70-79 = C.** "C" work means that you're not as invested in the material as I would like to see. Your writing is relatively weaker than it could be and you're not thinking as critically as I would like you to. You write the bare minimum of the length requirement. Some of what you point out I may not follow logically, and your use of the course materials may not be as solid as it could be. You omit some of the important points raised in class.

**60-69 = D.** Ah, the "D." "D" is for "Don't be Discouraged." I will work closely with each of you as much as time allows, getting you up to speed in class. Your struggles should not be with writing so much at this point but if they are, please see me immediately. "D" work is not proofread, nor does it deal critically with the themes in the course. It responds, perhaps, to one part of one of the readings but there is the little-to-no integration of material, and you're not responding to the questions raised in the assignment. Demonstrated an understanding of the course materials is not presented clearly, or at all. (NOTE: A "D" and below may be rewritten **once** if you choose to do so. It must be turned in within 72 hours, and I enter the better grade.)

**A: 94-100**

**A-: 90-93**

**B+: 87-89**

**B: 84-86**

**B-: 80-83**

**C+: 77-79**

**C: 74-76**

**C-: 70-73**

**D+: 67-69**

**D: 64-66**

**D-: 60-63**

**F: 59 and below**



## COURSE OUTLINE AND SCHEDULE:

**PLEASE TRY NOT TO WORK AHEAD MORE THAN ONE WEEK**

### Week One: September 18

#### Readings:

- Pop Culture Definitions Presentation
- What is Sociology? Presentation

#### Assignments:

- Participation Discussion Board 1: Introductions.
  - Due Sunday, 9/24
- Participation Discussion Board 2: The Sociological Perspective & Popular Culture.
  - Due Sunday, 9/24

### Week Two: September 25

#### Readings:

- *Media/Society*: Chapters 1 & 2
  - Media & The Social World
  - The Economics of the Media Industry

#### Assignments:

- Key Terms Assignment 1
  - Due Sunday, 10/1

### Week Three: October 2

#### Readings:

- *Media/Society*: Chapters 3 & 4
  - Political Influence on Media
  - Media Organizations & Professionals

#### Assignments:

- Key Terms 2
  - Due Sunday, 10/8
- Flex Your Head Assignment 1
  - Due Sunday, 10/8

### Week Four: October 9

Midterm Film Options delivered via Announcements this week. You may request your midterm any time after the options are posted. When you submit your request, I'll send you your exam right away. The sooner you submit your request, the more time you'll have to work on your exam.

#### Readings:

- *Media/Society*: Chapters 5 & 6
  - Media & Ideology
  - Social Inequality & Media Representation

**Assignments:**

- Main Discussion Board 1
  - Initial posting due Thursday, 10/12
  - Respond to two people by Sunday, 10/15

**Week Five: October 16**

**Email your Midterm Film request to me THIS WEEK OR SOONER**

**Assignments:**

- Midterm Examination Covers Weeks 1-5. *Late Midterm Exams ARE NOT accepted*
  - Due Sunday, 10/22
- Participation Discussion Board 3: Check-In
  - Due Sunday, 10/22

**Week Six: October 23**

**Readings:**

- *Media/Society*: Chapter 7
  - Media Influence & the Political World

**Film:**

- *Operation Hollywood*

**Assignments:**

- Key Terms Assignment 3
  - Due Sunday, 10/29
- Flex Your Head 2
  - Due Sunday, 10/29

**Week Seven: October 30**

**Readings:**

- *Media/Society*: Chapter 8
  - Active Audiences & the Construction of Meaning

**Film:**

- *This Film Is Not Yet Rated*. *Please note there is explicit violence, sex, and language in this film.*

**Assignments:**

- Main Discussion Board 2
  - Initial posting due Thursday, 11/2
  - Respond to two people by Sunday, 11/5
- Key Terms 4
  - Due Sunday, 11/5

**Week Eight: November 6**

**Readings:**

- *Media/Society*: Chapter 9
  - Media Technology

**Film:**

- *The Merchants of Cool* – watch the full program

**Assignments:**

- Key Terms Assignment 5
  - Due Sunday, 11/12
- Flex Your Head Assignment 3
  - Due Sunday, 11/12

**Week Nine: November 13**

**Readings:**

- *Media/Society*: Chapter 10
  - Media in a Changing Global Culture

**Assignments:**

- Main Discussion Board 3
  - Initial posting due Thursday, 11/16
  - Respond to two people by Sunday, 11/19
- Flex Your Head 4
  - Due Sunday, 11/19

**Week Ten: November 20**

**Assignments:**

- Participation Discussion Board 4: Quarter Reflection
  - Due Monday, 11/27 (note date!)

**Week Eleven: November 27**

No readings. Final Exam study week.

Please review the syllabus and all homework assignments for your Final Exam.

**Finals Week: December 5-7**

**Final Exam will be open from 8 am 12/5 through midnight 12/7**

**The exam will time out after four hours. Do not start the exam unless you intend to finish it during your chosen period.**

**ABOUT THE INSTRUCTOR:**

I'm an adjunct professor of Sociology and Cultural Studies here at BC as well as at Colorado State University-Global Campus. I'm a Career Coach, Professional Editor & Indexer, and a writer. I have several projects at the moment, including editing a volume of essays on Jews & heavy metal, indexing a book on the gay and lesbian history of jazz music in Ohio, writing a cookbook, and editing my science fiction novel. I received my Ph.D. in Sociology (with an emphasis in American Studies) from UC Santa Cruz. I received my first MA in Sociology from Humboldt State University and my second MA in Sociology from UCSC, my BA in Sociology and Journalism from Mills College, and my AA in English and Creative Writing from Vista Community College. I run a creative writing workshop, have a houseful of teenagers and young adults, a husband, and a cat

named Gimli, Son of Gloin, Cousin of Balin. You can check out my websites at the top of this syllabus if you're so inclined. I look forward to working with each of you this quarter!

*Let's have a wonderful term!*