

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY OF POPULAR CULTURE

Spring Term 2023

Instructor: Dr. David Penner

Email: Via Avenue

Lecture: Asynchronous online delivery.
Lectures will be posted on Avenue every
Monday and Wednesday by 5pm.

Office: Via Zoom

Office Hours: Fridays 12:00 – 1:30 PM
by Zoom 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
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
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

Class Format

Each week, I will be posting two video lectures covering the week's material. It is your obligation and responsibility to view the lectures. On Fridays at 1:00 PM, I will be offering a Zoom office hour for questions and discussion of said material.

Course Evaluation – Overview

1. Three Assignments

Course Evaluation – Details

First Assignment: 30% (Due May 23rd)

Second Assignment: 35% (Due June 6th)

Note: In a Spring session every aspect of the course can feel rushed. It is my intention to be open about extensions for these first two assignments.

Third Assignment: 35% (Due June 16th)

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

May 1st: Course Introduction

Class 2

May 3rd: Funny as ** - Laughing at Others in Comedy Films**

Readings: Viewing suggestions will be posted on Avenue.

Class 3

May 8th: Heroism, Structures of Society, and Our Role in Hero Films

Readings: Viewing suggestions will be posted on Avenue.

Class 4

May 10th: Fantasy and Dystopian Film – Dreading the Future?

Readings: Viewing suggestions will be posted on Avenue.

Class 5

May 15th: What Are You Afraid Of? Social Psychological Metaphors and Horror Films

Readings: Viewing suggestions will be posted on Avenue.

Note: First Assignment Questions will be posted by the 17th.

Class 6

May 17th: “Sex and Sadness”: Romance, Strife, and Identity in Popular Music

Readings: A Spotify Playlist will be posted on Avenue.

Class 7

May 24th: The Changing History of Self- Esteem: Honesty, Self-Love, and Arrogance

Readings: A Spotify Playlist will be posted on Avenue.

Class 8

May 29th: What Does the Soundtrack of Our Times Mean? Are We Angry, Oblivious, or Just Dancing?

Readings: A Spotify Playlist will be posted on Avenue.

Note: Second Assignment Questions will be posted by May 30th.

Class 9

May 31st: Institution and Corruption on Television

Readings: Viewing Suggestions will be posted on Avenue.

Class 10

June 5th: The Past is No Longer Another Country on Television – The Dramatizing of History

Readings: Viewing Suggestions will be posted on Avenue.

Class 11

June 7th: Reality, Money, And Beauty on Television

Readings: Viewing Suggestions will be posted on Avenue.

Class 12

June 12th: True Crime Documentaries: The Staring Abyss

Readings: Viewing Suggestions Will Be Posted on Avenue

Notes: Third Assignment Questions will be posted this week.

Class 13

June 14th: Television Buffoons and Why We Love Them (And Maybe Dislike Ourselves)

Readings: Viewing Suggestions will be posted on Avenue.

Course Policies

Submission of Assignments

All course work will be submitted on Avenue to Learn.

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

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.

Turnitin.com

In this course we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal plagiarism. Students will be expected to submit their work electronically to Turnitin.com and in hard

copy so that it can be checked for academic dishonesty. Students who do not wish to submit their work to Turnitin.com must still submit a copy to the instructor. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, etc.). To see the Turnitin.com Policy, please to go www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

University Policies

Academic Integrity Statement

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behavior in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials 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 academic credit or advantage. This behavior 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, located at www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

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 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

[McMaster Student Absence Form \(MSAF\)](#): 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".

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, A2L and/or McMaster email.