

ANTHROPOLOGY OF POPULAR CULTURE

ANT 2228G:002

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Office hours: Tuesdays 12-1 p.m. or by appointment

Throughout history, humans have always created music, art, festivals and performances to make sense of their world. As such, popular culture both reflects social dynamics but can also generate resistance and change. This course strives to show students the connection between anthropology and everyday life, and to encourage students to think critically about everyday life, by examining phenomena such as television and reality tv, internet and social networking, sports, music, art and fashion. Through these examples, we will reflect on many classic concerns in anthropology, including: the concept of culture and community; the role of myth and ritual in shaping our worldviews; the role of popular culture in shaping and re-shaping identities based on gender, ethnicity or class; and the relationship between popular culture and processes such as modernization and globalization.

Required Readings

1. Boellstorff, Tom. 2008. *Coming of Age in Second Life: an Anthropologist Explores the Virtually Human*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

2. Course package (items marked with an asterisk* are available through the UWO library system)

Assignments

Reflection papers: 3 X 15% = 45%

Online wiki assignments: 5 X 5% = 25%

Take-home exam (essay): 30%

Reflection papers

You will write **three** reflection papers on the readings. Each paper should be between 3-4 pages (double-spaced) in length. The paper should not be a summary of the readings; rather, it should critically reflect on the readings in light of the course's core themes. Feel free to focus on the themes you find most interesting/relevant, and to bring in knowledge and experiences from outside the classroom. **Your assignment must be submitted electronically (uploaded) on WebCT before class on the day it is due AND a hard copy should be submitted in class that same day.**

Wiki Assignment:

Each student will be expected to contribute to a course wiki regarding issues discussed each week during lectures and/or in the readings. This material can include youtube videos, pictures or photos, cartoons, song lyrics, or anything else that can be presented using the technology available. You will upload an image or a link and write a short paragraph explaining why you chose it and how it relates to the course theme for the week. Your submission should be uploaded the evening before the class (eg. Wednesday 6 p.m.) so that I have some time to look at them. Come to class prepared to engage in further discussion on your own as well as other people's contributions – **class discussion constitutes a part of your grade on this assignment.** Over the duration of the course, you are expected to contribute to the course wiki on **five** different weeks. Each contribution will be worth 5%.

Take-home exam

The take-home exam will be in essay format. On the last day of class I will assign an essay topic that will draw on the lecture and reading material throughout the course. The essay will be approximately 8 pages in length and will be due a week later (April 12). Your exam needs to be submitted online via WebCT. If you would like written feedback, please hand in an additional hard copy in my mailbox.

READING OUTLINE

January 12: Introduction

January 19: Anthropology of popular culture & anthropology *in* popular culture

Boellstorff, Tom. 2008. *Coming of Age in Second Life: an Anthropologist Explores the Virtually Human*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapters 1-3, p. 1-86.

January 26: Culture in a Virtual World

Boellstorff, Tom. 2008. *Coming of Age in Second Life: an Anthropologist Explores the Virtually Human*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapters 4-7, p. 89-201.

February 2: Culture in a Virtual World continued

Reflection paper 1 due

Boellstorff, Tom. 2008. *Coming of Age in Second Life: an Anthropologist Explores the Virtually Human*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapters 8-9, pp. 205-249.

February 9: Communication, Kinship and Relationships

Miller, Daniel. 2011. Fifteen Theses on What Facebook Might Be. In *Tales from Facebook*. Pp 164-204. Cambridge: Polity Press.

*Madianou, Mirca and Daniel Miller. 2011. Mobile Phone Parenting: Reconfiguring Relationships Between Filipina Mothers and Their Children in the Philippines. *New Media and Society* 13 (3): 457-470.

*Hardey, Michael. 2004. Mediated Relationships. *Information, Communication & Society* 7(2): 207-222.

February 16: Religion, Ritual and Myth

Voytilla, Stuart. *Myth and the Movies: Discovering the Mythic Structure of 50 Unforgettable Films*. Studio City, CA: Michael Wiese Production. Selections: pages 1-22.

* Gmelch, George. 2000 [1971]. *Baseball Magic*. Available:
<http://windward.hawaii.edu/facstaff/dagrossa-p/articles/BaseballMagic.pdf>

* McCloud, Sean. 2003. Popular Culture Fandoms, the Boundaries of Religious Studies, and the Project of the Self. *Culture and Religion* 4 (2): 187-206.

February 23: READING WEEK

March 1: Nationalism

Reflection paper 2 due

Bairner, Alan. 2001. Maple Leaf Americans: Sport and Questions of Canadian National Identity. In *Sport, Nationalism and Globalization: European and North American Perspectives*. Albany: State University of New York Press. Chapter 6, p 115-137.

* Abu-Lughod, Lila. 1995. The Objects of Soap Opera: Egyptian Television and the Cultural Politics of Modernity. In *Worlds Apart: Modernity through the Prism of the Local* [electronic resource]. Daniel Miller, ed. London; New York: Routledge.

* Fernandes, Sujatha. 2003. Fear of a Black Nation: Local Rappers, Transnational Crossings, and State Power in Contemporary Cuba. *Anthropological Quarterly* 76 (4): 575-608.

March 8: The Global and the Local

Watson, James. 2006. Introduction: Transnationalism, Localization and Fast Foods in East Asia. In *Golden Arches East: McDonald's in East Asia*, 2nd ed. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, p. 1-38.

Turner, Terence. 2002. Representation, Polyphony, and the Construction of Power in a Kayapo Video. In *Indigenous movements, Self-Representation, and the State in Latin America*. Kay B. Warren & Jean E. Jackson, eds. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Napier, Susan. 2007. Introduction: The 'Japan' Fantasy: Orientalism, Soft Power, and Identity. In *From Impressionism to Anime: Japan as Fantasy and Fan Cult in the Mind of the West*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. Pp 1-20.

Global Denim Project. <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/global-denim-project/>

March 15 : Gender, Class, Ethnicity

Jackson, Steven J. and Brendan Hokowhitu. 2005. Sport, Tribes and Technology: the New Zealand All Blacks Haka and the Politics of Identity. In *Sport and Corporate Nationalisms*, ed. Michael Silk et al. Oxford, New York: Berg. Pp 67-82.

* Keyes, Cheryl L. 2004. Empowering Self, Making Choices, Creating Spaces: Black Female Identity via Rap Music Performance. In *That's the Joint! The Hip Hop Studies Reader* [electronic resource], ed. Murray Forman and Mark Anthony Neal. New York: Routledge. Pp. 305-319.

* Sender, Katherine. 2006. Queens for a Day: Queer Eye for the Straight Guy and the Neoliberal Project. *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 23 (2): 131-151.

March 22: Gender, Class, Ethnicity continued

Reflection paper 3 due

* Mattingly, Cheryl. 2006. Pocahontas Goes to the Clinic: Popular Culture as Lingua Franca in a Cultural Borderland. *American Anthropologist* 108 (3): 494-501.

* Shugart, Helene A. 2006. Ruling Class: Disciplining Class, Race, and Ethnicity in Television Reality Court Shows. *Howard Journal of Communications* 17 (2):79-100.

March 29: The Political Economy of Popular Culture

* Blair, Elizabeth M. 2004. Commercialization of the Rap Music Youth Subculture AND
Negus, Keith. 2004. The Business of Rap: Between the street and the executive suite. In
That's the Joint! The Hip Hop Studies Reader [electronic resource], ed. Murray Forman
and Mark Anthony Neal. New York: Routledge. Pp 574-583 and 607-625.

Lawn, Jennifer and Bronwyn Beatty. 2006. 'On the Brink of a New Threshold of
Opportunity' : The Lord of the Rings and New Zealand Cultural Policy. In The Lord of
the Rings: Popular Culture in Global Context, ed. Ernest Mathijs. London: Wallflower
Press. Pp 43-60.

Charlton, Hannah. Introduction. In Che Guevara: Revolutionary & Icon, ed. Trisha Ziff.
New York: Abrams Image. Pp 7-14.

April 5: Popular Culture and Resistance

* Ludlow, Peter. 2010. Wikileaks and Hacktivist Culture. The Nation. Pp 25-26.
Available: <http://xa.yimg.com/kq/groups/7669895/771113000/name/Wikileaks.pdf>

* Kaulingfreks, Ruud and Samantha Warren. 2010. SWARM: Flash Mobs, Mobile
Clubbing and the City. Culture and Organization 16 (3): 211-227.

* Ghosh, Bishnupriya. 2010. Looking Through Coca-Cola: Global Icons and the Popular.
Public Culture: Bulletin of the Project for Transnational Cultural Studies 22 (2): 332-368

April 12: TAKE-HOME EXAM DUE

Other information

Prerequisite(s)

The prerequisite for this course is “Any Arts and Humanities or Social Science 0.5 or 1.0 Essay course.” The University policy states: “Unless you have either the prerequisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you will be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.”

Late/Missed Assignments

All assignments are due at the beginning of the class on the day that it is due. **Late assignments will be penalized 5% per day, up to a maximum of 25%.** It is always in the best interest of the student to save a copy of your assignment in case the copy you hand in becomes misplaced. Late assignments must be deposited in the wooden drop-box outside of the Main Office in the Department of Anthropology – do not slide them under my office door! If, by the last day of class you have not submitted the required number of reflection papers (3) and wiki entries (5), you will not be able to make up the missed work without sufficient documentation (see Special Accommodation section below). Likewise, late final essays will not be accepted without sufficient documentation.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a major academic offense! The university has severe penalties for anyone who is caught plagiarizing someone else's work. While some plagiarism might be unintentional it is always the STUDENT's responsibility to ensure that their work is academically and ethically sound. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. The American Anthropological Association style guide is available at http://www.aaanet.org/publications/style_guide.pdf

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence at the following website: <<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholoff.pdf>>."

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Accessibility

If you need this or any other course information in a different format, or need any other assistance to make this class accessible to you, please contact the professor as soon as possible so she can accommodate you. Where appropriate, get to know the people in Services for Students with Disabilities - Room 4100 in the Western Student Services Building [phone: 661-3031] since they can provide you with additional assistance.

Special accommodation

The University recognizes that a student's ability to meet his/her academic responsibilities may, on occasion, be impaired by medical illness. Illness may be acute (short term), or it may be chronic (long term), or chronic with acute episodes. The University further recognizes that medical situations are deeply personal and respects the need for privacy and confidentiality in these matters. However, in order to ensure fairness and consistency for all students, academic accommodation for work representing 10% or more of the student's overall grade in the course shall be granted only in those cases where there is documentation indicating that the student was seriously affected by illness and could not reasonably be expected to meet his/her academic responsibilities. The University's Policy on Accommodation of Medical Illness is available here: <https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm>.

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical or compassionate grounds for any missed tests, exams and/or assignments must apply to the Academic Counselling Office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Specific guidelines for what to do when you encounter problems are available on the website of the Academic Counselling Office of the Faculty of Social Science:

<http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/havingproblems.asp>. If you have a different home Faculty, you should familiarize yourself with the policies there regarding academic accommodation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department, however you should give me a simple heads up that you will be seeking academic accommodation from the Academic Counselling Office for a specific assignment or examination.