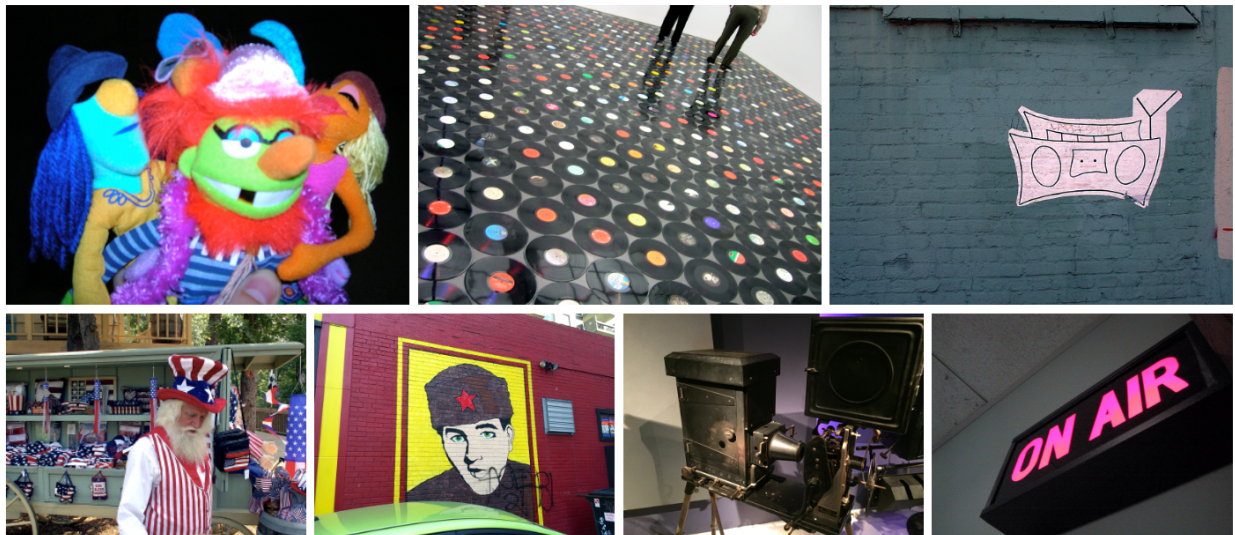


mEDIA & pOP cULTURE



MSTU 3293 • Fall 2023
MW 2-3:15 PM • Chapman 330

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Office hours:

In person: 11 a.m.-noon Tuesdays @ Oliphant 113
Online: 11 a.m.-noon Thursdays @ (see link on Harvey)

“Pop culture doesn’t matter!” ... “Pop culture is all that matters!”
“Actors shouldn’t talk about politics!” ... “Movies are political!”
“Who gives a tweet about Twitter?” ... “Twitter has reshaped social identity!”

Certain folks have argued for ages about the virtues of “high” culture (operas ’n’ orchestras) over the “low” stuff (screens ’n’ streams). **The debate isn’t settled.** This course starts there. We’ll begin by defining culture and what makes it “pop” — making visible the mediating stuff we swim in throughout our everyday lives. We’ll glance back at pop culture’s deep history before then considering debates about pop culture (i.e., **is pop culture bad for us? or is it the best of us?**). We’ll consider various types and artifacts of pop culture from numerous perspectives: producers, audiences, fans & anti-fans. We’ll check the bank balances of our **“cultural capital,”** and we’ll discuss whether or not any of us have any taste. In the latter part of the course, students will take the reins and choose several topics for our analysis.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After successfully completing this course, students will be able to:

- Evaluate and critique the representation, production, and consumption of media and popular culture, including ethical implications and issues of identity, equity, and justice (ILO 2 and 4).
- Communicate clearly and persuasively in writing assignments and oral presentations (ILO 3).
- Propose and execute an interdisciplinary research project (ILO 1 and ILO 3).
- Practice and defend the critical consumption of media and popular culture in everyday civic life (ILO 5).

As such, our learning objectives fulfill the Department of Media Studies’ Program Objectives, which articulate that students will:

1. Evaluate and critique abstract categories, and to use these categories in the analysis of empirical data.
2. Apply concepts of social science methodology to rigorously critique and compare empirical studies, or to construct their own empirical study.
3. Effectively use writing to accurately convey their ideas, and to demonstrate the basic ability to think logically and critically, through their writing.
4. Demonstrate a basic competence in communicating ideas through oral presentations before a group of people.
5. Critique visual images with the use of fundamental theoretical concepts.
6. Be able to understand their lives within a wider social and environmental context, to thoughtfully consider their responsibilities towards other people and the natural world, and to take appropriate and ethical actions based upon those considerations.

***This syllabus** is the menu for your intellectual nourishment this term, and it constitutes a contract between you and me. After the first days of the semester, however, **Harvey will serve as the repository of all active information about the course** — readings, videos, assignments, and communication. This PDF will not be updated with any scheduling changes, but the schedule page on Harvey will be. If you have a question about the course, always check the syllabus and Harvey first. If they don't contain the answer, then you may contact me for help.*

LOGISTICS & AGREEMENTS

Grading: You can expect clear instructions and explanations on all course assignments, followed by consistent procedural support and detailed written feedback on your performance (via Harvey). I make every effort to return assignments with feedback and grades **within two weeks after submission**. I am happy to discuss feedback, but I do not entertain regrade requests.

- In this class, a **B grade** (80-89%) means that the work successfully satisfied all instructions and goals for the assignment; an **A grade** (90% and above) exceeds those expectations. A **C grade** (70-79%) is applied to work that is only satisfactory or falls below expectations; a **D grade** (60-69%) applies to unsatisfactory efforts; and a **failing grade** (below 60%) is for unacceptable work.

Course communications: Check your messages and email regularly! Urgent announcements or schedule/location changes will be communicated to you via email. Please contact me via the messaging available in Harvey. When writing to me, please remember that you are writing in a professional context. I will make every attempt to answer messages quickly, at least within 24 hours, except on Saturdays. You may address me as Professor Conner or Dr. Conner, and my preferred pronouns are he/him/his.

Diversity, equity, inclusion & belonging: We pursue this coursework together in order to learn more about our shared world — and our individual worlds. In doing so, we seek to acknowledge, respect, and encourage each of our diverse perspectives, as every one of these adds vital dimension to our understanding of the world. As a community, we (*students, instructors, guests*) will behave courteously and respectfully to everyone within our shared space, **respecting differing ideas as well as different levels of comprehension** and building awareness of our own positionalities, perspectives, and backgrounds, including categories of identity like race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, nationality, and religion — overall, respecting the magnificent diversity of experience that a university education affords us.

Academic integrity: The university has strict rules and severe punishments for cheating, plagiarism, and other violations of academic integrity. These will not be waived under any circumstances. Read the Academic Misconduct Policy of the College of Arts and Sciences

(<https://artsandsciences.utulsa.edu/advising/academic-misconduct-policy/>), and if you have the *slightest* question about *any* of these parameters, ask me. (You don't get in trouble for *asking*!) If you weren't capable of doing the work, you wouldn't be here. Don't blow it.

Technology: Please **silence cell phones** and any alerts on your various devices. Also, give yourself a break — avoid the social media and other distractions while in class. You're here, and you or some very nice person is paying for this experience: *so focus!*

Student Access and Success: Students who have or believe they may have a disability and would like to set up accommodations should contact **Student Access** within **Student Success** to self-identify their needs and facilitate their rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act and related laws. Student Access provides private consultations to any student. Contact Student Access staff at studentaccess@utulsa.edu or by phone at (918) 631-2315. The application for accommodations may be obtained online at <https://sierra.accessiblelearning.com/s-UTulsa/ApplicationStudent.aspx>. Student Access staff will assist students in the implementation of approved accommodations, and students should submit requests as early as possible for full assistance. Students who qualify for accommodations should meet with the instructor privately (during office hours or by appointment) *as soon as possible* to arrange for their needs and obtain support for the class. Instructors are entitled to notice of 5 business days before the implementation of any required accommodations and all accommodations should be requested by the 12th week of classes for use in that semester, absent an extraordinary and unforeseeable circumstance. TU maintains a list of accessible features for all buildings (e.g., entrances, parking) at maps.utulsa.edu.

Know Your Title IX: Sexual misconduct is prohibited by Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 ("Title IX") and will not be tolerated within the TU community. Sexual misconduct encompasses all forms of sex and gender-based discrimination, harassment, violence, and assault, as well as dating violence, domestic violence, interpersonal violence, stalking and sexual exploitation. For more information about your rights under Title IX, visit <https://utulsa.edu/sexual-violence-prevention-education/policies-laws/>. If you or someone you know has been harassed, assaulted, or stalked, or if you have questions about violence prevention resources available to you, please contact any of the following campus and community resources:

Title IX Coordinator 918-631-4602

Office of Violence Prevention 918-631-2324

TU Counseling and Psychological Services 918- 631-2241

Campus Security 918-631-5555

Domestic Violence Intervention Services 918-585-3163 or 918-743-5763

Tulsa Police Department 918-596-9222 or 911 (emergency situations)

ASSESSMENT

To achieve those objectives, we will meet regularly to discuss course concepts and texts, and students will complete the following assignments throughout the term:

Pop Life — 20%

In biweekly reports in the first half of the course, students will evaluate their own everyday pop-culture experiences and connect them to current course concepts and texts.

- 4 short reports, 5% each
- *Due on Fridays: Sept. 1, Sept. 15, Sept. 29, Oct. 13*

Break It Down — 25%

As a midterm project, students will select a single media object (e.g., TV show, movie, music, video game, or anything that can be thought of as mediating human relationships) and deconstruct it within one of the theoretical paradigms discussed thus far in the course.

- *1,500 words (or the multimedia equivalent), due Oct. 20*

Student Choice — 25%

Midway through the semester, students will step up to program three weeks of the course — choosing topics to cover, selecting texts, and collaboratively leading each day's class.

- *Student Choice days: Oct. 30, Nov. 1, Nov. 6, Nov. 13, Nov. 15*

OK Pop! — 30%

The final project in the course is a thorough analysis of a pop-culture artifact or icon connected to Tulsa or the state of Oklahoma, deconstructed within one of the theoretical paradigms discussed in the course. Students will make short presentations on our finals day.

- *2,000 words (or the multimedia equivalent), due Dec. 4*

See Harvey for detailed assignment descriptions, instructions, and rubrics.

A word about “participation”: Every student is expected to have read or watched completely all assigned texts prior to class, and they are expected to be able to respond to basic questions from the instructor and fellow students about those texts and their ideas — to **arrive to each session with something relevant and productive to contribute or ask about**. Engagement and attendance, however, are not included among the above assessments — *directly*. Your engagement with the course (inside or outside of our classroom) will be *readily* apparent in each assignment — in how properly and deeply you demonstrate a mastery of course concepts and objectives, in the originality of your thinking, and in the vibrancy of connections you make not only between texts but to the wider world. I will maintain a record of

your attendance and engagement levels throughout the term; I may speak to you about these as we proceed, and you may speak to me about this at any time. Encouraging student engagement not only addresses your success in this specific course but your ultimate performance as a scholar from a university of this caliber.

Illness, emergencies, OMGs: If you fall ill or have other difficulties this semester, your health and wellbeing are your top priority. Deadline extensions are available for most assignments, if needed. Make sure you contact me as soon as you're able so we can devise a plan together. Know *I am here to support you* in this class. If you're having any trouble — from illness and family emergencies to caregiving responsibilities and the struggle for basic needs — please reach out so that I might connect you with the multitude of assistive resources available on campus. *Life happens: we will work through it together.*

- If you are required to miss class to participate in an event related to athletics or a student organization, please let me know ASAP. No doubt you already have the dates and information about these events, so the sooner you share the easier we can make a make-up plan.

SCHEDULE OF WORK

The following schedule is subject to slight or radical changes throughout the term. Pay attention to all course announcements as we go.

No textbook is required for the course.

Readings and other media will be delivered via Harvey throughout the term.

Week 1: Pop goes the *what now?*!

Pop culture is the water we swim in every day. Let's make sure we can see it. Let's make sure we know how to recognize it. How can we define it? And, like, what's "popular" really mean?

MONDAY, AUG 21

- *Read:* The course syllabus and Harvey site
- *Watch:* Alexandre O. Philippe, "Why Pop Culture?" (2013)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u_3UYncNwz4

WEDNESDAY, AUG 23

- *Read:* Tony Bennett, John Storey, *New Keywords* entries, "Culture," "Popular" (2005)
- *Read:* Dwight MacDonald, "A Theory of Mass Culture" (1957)
- *Read:* Russel B. Nye, "Notes on a Rationale for Popular Culture" (1978)

Week 2: Ye olde pop culture

The 16th century was pop before pop was cool. Let's zoom out for a bird's-eye view of pop culture — historically, sure, but also just what counts as a popular medium of social meanings.

MONDAY, AUG 28

- *Read:* George Lipsitz, “Popular Culture: This Ain’t No Side Show” (1990)
- *Read:* Chandra Mukerji & Michael Schudson, “Introduction: Rethinking Popular Culture” (1991)
- *Read:* Natalie Zemon Davis, “Printing and the People” (1991)

WEDNESDAY, AUG 30

- *Read:* Brad Millington & Brian Wilson, “Media Research: From Text to Context” (2016)
- *Read:* Scott F. Kiesling, “Dude” (2004)

- *Skim:* Gregory P. Stone, “Halloween and the Mass Child” (1959)
- *Skim:* Bruce A. Lohof, “The Higher Meaning of Marlboro Cigarettes” (1969)
- *Skim:* Pierre Bourdieu, “Sport and Social Class” (1978)
- *Skim:* Raymond Bellour & Roland Barthes, “Interview” (1980)
- *Skim:* Kate Murphy, “What Selfie Sticks Really Tell Us About Ourselves” (2015)
- *Skim:* Roy Rosenzweig, “The Struggle Over the Saloon” (2017)

FRIDAY, SEP 1

Due: Pop Life #1

Week 3: Media matters

Media are not neutral. They help define & contain & transmit & ritualize & popularize culture.

MONDAY, SEP 4 — NO CLASS (LABOR DAY)

WEDNESDAY, SEP 6

- *Read:* James Carey, “A Cultural Approach to Communication” (1989)
- *Read:* Marshall McLuhan, “The Medium Is the Message” (1964)
- *Read:* John B. Thompson, “Mediated Interaction in the Digital Age” (2018)
 - *Optional support text:* John B. Thompson, “The Rise of Mediated Interaction” (1995)

Week 4: Is pop culture bad for us?

Is looking at the Mona Lisa the same experience as seeing her on a coffee mug? Is the actual capitalistic production of pop culture a threat to freedom? If pop culture is such “fluff,” then why have so many theorists panicked & warned & freaked out about it?

MONDAY, SEP 11

- *Read:* Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (1936)
- *Read:* Theodor Adorno & Max Horkheimer, “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception” (1944)

WEDNESDAY, SEP 13

- *Read:* Chris McGee, “Notes on Interpellation”
- *Read:* John Fiske, “Culture, Ideology, Interpellation” (1987)
- *Read:* Slavov Zizek, “Ideology Is the Original Augmented Reality” (2017) <https://nautil.us/ideology-is-the-original-augmented-reality-236862/>

FRIDAY, SEP 15

Due: Pop Life #2

Week 5: Audience, public, citizen

Do we gather around pop culture media, or are we gathered by them? What (and who) defines an audience for a medium? How does the technology itself contribute to that process? Plus, we’ve defined culture overall — but what about pieces of it, the subculture?

MONDAY, SEP 18

- *Read:* John Hartley, “Democratainment” (2004)
- *Read:* Jonathan Gray, “Art With Strings Attached: Creativity, Innovation, and Industry” (2008)

WEDNESDAY, SEP 20

- *Read:* Dick Hebdige, “Subculture: The Meaning of Style” (1979)
- *Read:* John L. Sullivan, “Media Fandom and Audience Subcultures” (2020)

Week 6: Fans, antifans, & ‘producers’

Fans are not passive consumers of pop culture. Fan feedback shapes media and their artifacts. One step beyond: anti-fans come at that process from the other (snarky) side. Several steps beyond: We’ll look at how the fans of Japanese star Hatsune Miku blur all the lines.

MONDAY, SEP 25

- *Read:* Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss, and C. Lee Harrington, “Why Study Fans?” (2007)
- *Read:* Jenny Keegan, “Five Ways I’ve Defined Fan Studies” (2019) <https://www.flowjournal.org/2019/02/defining-fan-studies/>
- *Read:* Sarah Harman & Bethan Jones, “Fifty shades of ghey: Snark fandom and the figure of the anti-fan” (2013)
- *Read:* Dan Ozzi, “Radiohead Is for Boring Nerds” (2014) <https://www.vice.com/en/article/rmwdyr/radiohead-is-for-boring-nerds>

WEDNESDAY, SEP 27

- *Read*: Henry Jenkins, “Rethinking ‘Rethinking Convergence/Culture’” (2014)
- *Read*: Alex Leavitt, Tara Knight, and Alex Yoshiba, “Producing Hatsune Miku: Concerts, Commercialization, and the Politics of Peer Production” (2016)
- *Watch*: Tara Knight, *Mikumentary*, episodes 1 and 3 (2013-2014)

FRIDAY, SEP 29

Due: *Pop Life #3*

Week 7: Social currency & taste

Your taste in movies sucks. Or does it? How do we define and then deploy “taste”? What social currency is afforded by claiming to like this or that (or hiding that we like this or that)? How can we absolve the “guilty pleasure”? How is aesthetic choice computed and programmed?

MONDAY, OCT 2

- *Read*: Pierre Bourdieu, “Introduction” to *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1979)
- *Read*: Pierre Bourdieu, “The Forms of Capital” (1986)
- *Read*: Laboni Bhattacharya, “Interrogating ‘Shakespop’: The Politics of Tasteful Pop Culture” (2017)

WEDNESDAY, OCT 4

- *Read*: Eriq Gardner, “Accounting for Taste” (2008)
- *Read*: Carl Wilson, “Let’s Talk About Taste” and “Let’s Talk About Who’s Got Bad Taste” (2014)
- *Listen*: Celine Dion, *Let’s Talk About Love* (1997)

Week 8: Matter mediates

My generation was dominated by ownership (of stuff). Yours might be by access (to streams). How does the material aspect of culture participate in our experience of popular discourses? If you release an album without actually pressing up vinyl, is it really there?

MONDAY, OCT 9

- *Read*: Arjun Appadurai, “Commodities and the Politics of Value” (1988)
- *Read*: John Storey, “The ‘Popular’ and the ‘Material’” (2016)
- *Read*: Selections from *Nina Simone’s Gum*, Warren Ellis (2021)

WEDNESDAY, OCT 11

- *Read*: Omid Scheybani, “Access vs. Ownership — What’s More Important to You?” (2014) ... <https://medium.com/@moonstorming/access-vs-ownership-whats-more-important-to-you-f74d8f50cf17>

- *Read:* Thomas Conner, “Chicago Musicians Focus on TV, Movies for Extra Income” (2011) ... <https://www.thomasconner.info/clips/chicago-musicians-focus-on-tv-movies-for-extra-income>

FRIDAY, OCT 13

***Due:* Pop Life #4**

Week 9: Representation: queerness

Pop culture greatly facilitates the concept of queering — in a variety of ways. Fan fiction, for instance, helps recode popular narratives to bring marginalized and subaltern social groups into larger fandoms. We’ll look at ways the relationship between pop and queer theory is configured.

MONDAY, OCT 16

- *Read:* Alexander Doty, “There’s Something Queer Here” (1995)

WEDNESDAY, OCT 18

- *Read:* Henry Jenkins, “‘Welcome to Bisexuality, Captain Kirk’: Slash and the Fan-Writing Community” (1992)
- *Read:* Lauren McInroy and Shelley Craig, “Perspectives of LGBTQ Emerging Adults on the Depiction and Impact of LGBTQ Media Representation” (2017)

FRIDAY, OCT 20

***Due:* Break It Down analysis**

Week 10: Representation: blackness

Post-Black Lives Matter, pop cultural explorations of race have proliferated widely — and (as we’ve established) have participated in the reshaping of American ideas and ideals of blackness. Let’s watch the Tupac hologram and have a chat about black masculinity.

MONDAY, OCT 23

- *Read:* John Storey, “‘Race’, Racism, and Representation” (2018)
- *Read:* Stuart Hall: “The Whites of Their Eyes: Racist Ideologies and the Media” (1981)
- *Read:* Stuart Hall, “What is this ‘Black’ in Black Popular Culture?” (1993)

WEDNESDAY, OCT 25

- *Read:* Wesley Morris, “Why Pop Culture Just Can’t Deal With Black Male Sexuality” (2016)

Week 11: TBA (Student choice!)

MONDAY, OCT 30

- *Read:* TBA

WEDNESDAY, NOV 1

— Read: TBA

Week 12: TBA (Student choice!)

MONDAY, NOV 6

— Read: TBA

FRIDAY, NOV 10 — NO CLASS!

Week 13: TBA (Student choice!)

MONDAY, NOV 13

— Read: TBA

WEDNESDAY, NOV 15

— Read: TBA

Week 14: Thanksgiving holiday
NO CLASSES!

Week 15: Pop goes the pandemic

The covid pandemic scrambled many channels of pop culture, rewiring many mediated means of creating and consuming social communication. We'll look at a couple of examples — a Zoom-slash-TV show, a nightclub re-created online — and consider what effects will last.

MONDAY, NOV 27

— Read: J.C. Molano, "Theatre as a Means of "Interpreting" Lockdown: The Case of Staged" (2022)

WEDNESDAY, NOV 29

— Read: Brandy N. Kelly Pryor & Corliss Outley, "'Last Night a DJ Saved My Life' @Dnice #ClubQuarantine: Digitally Mediating Ritualistic Leisure Spaces during Isolation" (2021)

Week 16: Summations

MONDAY, DEC 4

— Read: TBA

Due: OK Pop! analysis

Finals week: OK Pop presentations!

Per the final project assignment listed above, students will present a brief presentation about their OK Pop selection and their original analysis of it.

1-3:25 p.m. THURSDAY, DEC 7

Location: TBA

-30-