Introduction

This course presumes that a powerful determinant of political behavior in any society can be found in the way culture shapes an understanding of the nature of human activity. That is, human beings necessarily must develop a way to help the world make sense. Without a framework for such understanding, human action is constantly problematic, human emotion is incomprehensible and social life impossible. To allow humans to establish and maintain satisfying and productive social relations, it is necessary to establish a common set of meanings and patterns of interaction that provide the context in which purposeful and moral action is possible.

These interactions are understood in a normative context. That is, they are characterized by definite but not always explicit values which members of a culture feel in varying degrees obligated to obey. These values are expressed through symbolic communication and manifest in symbolic action whereby members of a society reaffirm and recreate the fundamental commitments and beliefs which characterize the social order. Together, these symbols, commitments, values, meanings, and patterns of interaction shape behavior and prescribe the range of possible human activity within a given society.

Politics is among the behaviors that are shaped by culture. While the power relations which are the most fundamental aspect of politics are grounded in material as well as cultural factors, the experience of politics depends to a large extent on the symbolic context in which the citizen operates. Indeed, any citizen's understanding of his or her place in the political order depends fundamentally on the symbols, myths and rituals that define and express the society’s basic political beliefs. Furthermore, the use of symbols for the expression of authority and the mobilization of interests is as fundamental to the operation of any political system as is the use of economic and military coercion. This is not to say that the political can be reduced to the symbolic. Nor is the cultural an artifact of the arrangement of power relations. Rather, to understand politics, it is necessary to be cognizant of the role of cultural processes in the exercise of power in any society.

This course contends that political symbolic action extends to popular culture. While ideologies and belief systems are directly inculcated in formal institutions such as schools, corporations, and government, individuals are also exposed to the precepts of specific cultures through popular culture. Television, radio, literature, and movies all include symbolic communications and actions which express current and prevailing ideas, values and social relations in a given society. These expressions often serve to reinforce the power of the dominant groups in a society but can be sources of innovation,
change and even revolution. In an era when human beings in advanced industrial societies increasingly devote time to the consumption of popular culture, it becomes increasingly important to recognize that popular culture supports or challenges existing social organization.

**Books**


Lisbet van Zoonen, *Entertaining the Citizen*, (Rowman& Littelfield, 2005)

**Writing Intensive**

This is a writing intensive course. Consequently, it includes assignments that require students to engage in writing as a process, work in multiple drafts, revise written work, complete ungraded writing assignments, write in different genres and produce a certain quantity of written work. As such, the quality of writing will be a significant factor in evaluating all graded assignments.

**Evaluation of Student’s Work**

The student’s grade will be determined on a 300 point basis through the following assignments:

- Research paper final draft: 100 points
- Annotated bibliography: 10 points
- Thesis statement and outline: 10 points
- Peer editing report: 5 points
- Globalization essay: 50 points
- Book review: 50 points
- Advertising project: 25 points
- Instructor evaluation and journal: 50 points
Research Project

Each student will complete a research project regarding the content of popular culture for one of the following topics:

- Gender and sexuality
- Violence
- Race, prejudice, and multiculturalism
- Religion and spirituality

After selecting the topic in consultation with the instructor, students will identify a particular form of popular culture which will serve as the medium of their research – e.g. television show, music albums, a set of movies or novels, or sporting events.

The research for this project will include two types of information. First, students will directly observe a minimum number of examples of the focus of their project and analyze the content for information regarding the normative and cultural beliefs, values, representations, practices or explicit political content manifest in the content of the material being analyzed. {Students can use Cantor’s Gilligan Unbound as a template for the style and content of the discussion of the examples being used.} Second, students must incorporate five library or internet sources that are relevant to the general topic or to the specific focus of the research paper. Students also may include concepts or observations included in the required reading for the course but course materials do not substitute for the five required research sources.

The final paper should be 7 to 12 pages type written. The paper should include:

- a discussion of the library and internet sources and how they relate to the topic or the particular show, etc.
- description of the process the student used to develop the observations
- a summary of the principal observations that were made and concrete examples to illustrate what was observed.

In completing this assignment, students will be required to submit the following on the due dates specified immediately below:

Due dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Requirement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9/7</td>
<td>A statement identifying topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/19</td>
<td>A statement describing the material to be analyzed (i.e. what show, what music, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/3</td>
<td>Annotated bibliography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/19</td>
<td>Thesis statement and outline of the paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/2</td>
<td>A rough draft for peer editing</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/7</td>
<td>Peer editing report</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/18</td>
<td>Final draft</td>
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Annotated Bibliography

This requires that students provide the bibliographic information on each of their selected sources and a paragraph summarizing the content or significance of the source.

Thesis Statement and Outline

This requires a clear statement of the principal thesis of the paper and a good topic outline for the entire paper. The quality of the outline will be judged on how easy it would be for the writer to construct the paper with only the outline in front of him or her. Single page outlines will be ineligible for full credit.

Peer Editing Report

The peer editing report will be a written statement of the principal comments developed by the peer editor for the writer. The peer editor will be expected to share those comments with the writer but a copy of the written comments will be submitted to the instructor as well. KEEP IN MIND THAT THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PEER EDITOR IS TO HELP THE WRITER PRODUCE THE BEST PAPER THEY CAN, NOT TO TRY TO DEMONSTRATE HIS OR HER OWN SKILL OR COMPETENCE. The instructor reserves the right to discuss the peer editors written comments with the writer.

Course Journal

Students will keep a course journal. Journal entries for each class and visual presentation are required. Frequently, the journal entry for a particular class meeting will be a response to a specific statement or assignment from the instructor. In the absence of specific instructions, however, the student is free to respond as they see fit. This could entail a summary of the class discussion, the identification of questions raised by the class meeting but not answered, or a critical (positive or negative) reflection on the reading or ideas presented in class. The journals will be collected periodically and returned with comments but individual entries will not be graded. The instructor will provide feedback as to the overall quality of the journals, however, and the journals will be assessed for consideration in the instructor evaluation portion of the grade.

Globalization Essay

Students will write a 1200 word essay on the relationship between popular culture and globalization. The thesis for the essay will be determined by the student. The course includes several readings that discuss issues of globalization (see assignments for 9/26-9/28) that can provide possible prompts for the thesis of the essay. The essay can be an analytical, narrative or persuasive essay. The initial due date for the essay will be 10/12. The essay will be evaluated by both a peer editor and the instructor and returned for revisions. The revised essay will be due 10/24.
Book Reviews

Students will be required to write a book review of either Black Noise or Sex and the Slayer. Specific assignments will be done in consultation with the instructor. Each review should be typewritten and approximately 5 pages in length. In completing these assignments, the students should strive to go beyond mere summary of the contents of the books and attempt to offer critical (positive or negative) analysis of the principal ideas in the books. Evaluation of the book reviews will include an assessment of the following criteria: (1) Clarity of explanation of central ideas in the book, (2) use of concrete illustrations to demonstrate the student’s understanding of the central thesis of the book, and (3) clarity and organization of the writing.

The book review of Black Noise is due on 11/9 and the book review of Sex and the Slayer is due 11/16.

Advertising Project

Each student will select one or more contemporary advertisement for analysis to assess the proposition that contemporary capitalism assimilates oppositional or resistant ideological themes to promote consumption. The ads can be from print or electronic media. Advertisements from print media can be submitted in class. Advertisements from electronic media will be described in text. The analysis of the advertisements will be presented in writing and are due. The written analysis should include one to three paragraphs summarizing the content (images, symbols, and advertising text) and two to four paragraphs assessing whether or not an oppositional ideology is being used to promote consumption. This assignment is due on 10/3.

Class Schedule and Reading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8/29</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
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<tr>
<td>8/31</td>
<td>Some definitions: Culture, Politics, Popular Culture</td>
<td>Storey, Ch. 1; van Zoonen,, Ch. 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/7-9/12</td>
<td>The Social Construction of Reality</td>
<td>Storey, Ch. 2 and 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/14</td>
<td>Symbolic forms and language</td>
<td>Storey, Ch. 4 and 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/19</td>
<td>Culture and individual behavior</td>
<td>Storey, Ch 7</td>
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<td>9/21</td>
<td>Culture and collective behavior</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/26</td>
<td>Culture and power relations:</td>
<td>Frank, Ch. 1-5</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Legitimation, opposition and ideology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Readings</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/28</td>
<td>Invasion of the Body Snatchers</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/3</td>
<td>Consumption and social change</td>
<td>Leland; Frank, 9 and 10 (skim 6-8)</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/5-10/12</td>
<td>Ideology: Globalization and nationalism</td>
<td>Cantor, <strong>entire</strong>; Barber; Story, Ch. 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/17-10/24</td>
<td>Modernism and Postmodernism</td>
<td>van Zoonen, Ch. 2; Purdy</td>
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<td>10/19</td>
<td>Run Lola Run</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/26-10/31</td>
<td>Entertainment and political discourse</td>
<td>van Zoonen, Ch. 4-9</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/2-11/7</td>
<td>Music</td>
<td>van Zoonen, Ch. 3; Storey Ch. 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/9-11/14</td>
<td>Issues: Race and prejudice</td>
<td>Rose. <strong>entire</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>11/16-11/21</td>
<td>Issues: Gender and sexuality</td>
<td>Jowett, <strong>entire</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>11/28 -12/5</td>
<td>Issues: Religion</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11/28</td>
<td>Saved</td>
<td>Purdy</td>
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