

COURSE SYLLABUS

Popular Culture and Media Theory

FMS 370/570

Fall 2019

Thursdays, 11:30-14:15

Lecturer: Ted Turnau, Ph.D.

Lecturer contact: Ted.Turnau@aauni.edu

Office hours: Thursdays, 14:15-14:35 or by appointment.

Semester Credits	3	Language of Instruction	English
ECTS	6	Level	
Length	15 weeks	Pre-requisites	
Contact hours	42 hours	Course type	

1. Course Description

Songs, TV shows, movies, and magazines form much of the world we live in, our environment. But what do they all mean? We need to understand that, because popular culture and media influence us all. This course will introduce you to scholars who have thought about these issues, and to their very different answers about what the popular culture and media are, and how best to understand them.

We humans enjoy making meanings and sharing them with others. And these meanings have a lot of power to influence us, sometimes in ways we don't even notice. What is the best way to understand popular culture and the media? This course will introduce you to several thinkers – some philosophers, some psychologists (at least one), some anthropologists, and others – who have thought long and hard about the media and popular culture. They have different answers about what is culture and media, how do they make meaning, what is the best ways to interpret their messages? And what do these theories tell us about what it means to be human, what is really real? If these kinds of questions interest you, and you would like know more about the media and popular culture and what it all means, then this course is for you.

2. Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Identify terms associated with various theories of culture and media.
2. Articulate the various theories in his or her own words.
3. Apply the various theories to popular culture works, that is, to analyze popular culture and media from various theoretical perspectives.

3. Course Materials

Required Materials (Available in the Library or to Download)

- Readings posted on class website
- List of required articles (see class schedule or check on website).

Recommended Materials (Available in the Library or via Interlibrary Loan)

Storey, John. *An Introductory Guide to Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*.
Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1993.

Burton, Graeme. *More than Meets the Eye: An Introduction to Media Studies*.

Also, see bibliography at the end of syllabus for more resources.

4. Teaching methodology

Each unit will begin with an introductory lecture about the figure we will be studying, followed by a discussion based on the assigned reading(s). We will then apply the theory we have learned to a specific example of popular culture. Finally, we will discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each theory. Lots of lecture, workshopping and discussion.

5. Course Schedule

We will take this material at a pace you can handle, so we may not get to all the units. Be flexible. I'll try not to rush, and do tell me when I need to slow down. No one gets left behind. All the readings and questionnaires can be found on the class website.

Date	Class Agenda
Sept. 5 th	Topic: "Introduction: Syllabus, Expectations, and What is Popular Culture and Media Theory?" and begin "Highbrow vs. Lowbrow". Description: Finding our feet in this subject matter, as well as what I expect of you, and what you should expect of me. Reading due: None. Assignments/deadlines: None.
Sept. 12 th	Topic: "Highbrow versus Lowbrow: The Emergence of "Popular Culture" and Mass Media" Description: An exploration and critique of the Culture and Civilization Tradition. Reading due: 1. F. R. Leavis: "Mass Civilization and Minority Culture"; 2. William Romanowski, "High and Low Culture Wars." Assignments/deadlines: Have the reading questionnaires ready for in-class discussion (this is true of all the units).
Sept. 19 th	Topic: Culture and Civilization Tradition cont. Begin "Marxism 1: Ideology." Description: An exploration and critique of Classical Marxism. Reading due: 1. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: "Ruling Class and Ruling Ideas." 2. Marx: "Base and Superstructure." 3. Engels: "Letter to Joseph Bloch." Assignments/deadlines: Critiques of Leavisism; reading questionnaires.
Sept. 26 th	Topic: "Marxism II: Rethorizing Ideology" Description: An exploration and critique of the Frankfurt School and Neo-Gramscian Analysis. Reading due: 1. Theodor Adorno: "Culture Industry Reconsidered." 2. Herbert Marcuse: "From Consensual Order to Instrumental Control." 3. Tony Bennett: "Popular Culture and the 'Turn to Gramsci." Assignments/deadlines: Reading questionnaires.
Oct. 3 rd	Topic: "Marxism II," continued. Description: See above.

	<p>Reading due: Possibly Bennett.</p> <p>Assignments/deadlines: reading questionnaires or critiques we didn't get to last week. Test 1, covering vocabulary terms from units 2 and 3 (Culture and Civ. School and Marxist Schools).</p>
Oct. 10 th	<p>Topic: "Culturalism and the Emergence of 'Sub-Culture'"</p> <p>Description: An exploration and critique of Culturalism, esp. the theory of Raymond Williams and early Stuart Hall.</p> <p>Reading due: 1. Raymond Williams: "The Analysis of Culture." 2. Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannel: "The Young Audience."</p> <p>Assignments/deadlines: reading questionnaires.</p>
Oct. 17 th	<p>Topic: "Structuralism I: The System is the Meaning"</p> <p>Description: An exploration and critique of structuralist cultural theories.</p> <p>Reading due: 1. Ferdinand De Saussure: "Signs and Language." 2. Will Wright: "The Structure of Myth."</p> <p>Assignments/deadlines: reading questionnaires.</p>
Oct. 24 th	<p>No class. Have a great midterm break!</p>
Oct. 31 st	<p>Topic: Finish Structuralism I, begin "Structuralism II: The Mythological System"</p> <p>Description: An exploration and critique of the cultural theories of Roland Barthes.</p> <p>Reading due: 1. Roland Barthes: "Myth Today," and 2. Roland Barthes, "The World of Wrestling." 3. Watch the video "Wrestling Isn't Wrestling."</p> <p>Assignments/deadlines: Reading questionnaires.</p>
Nov. 7 th	<p>Topic: "Poststructuralism I: The System Gets Slippery"</p> <p>Description: An exploration and critique of the theory of Jacques Derrida.</p> <p>Reading due: 1. Jacques Derrida: "Différance." (Optional) Derrida: „Structure, Sign, and Play."</p> <p>Assignments/deadlines: Reading questionnaires. Test 2, covering units 4 and 5 (Culturalism and Structuralism I and II).</p>
Nov. 14 th	<p>Topic: "Poststructuralism I" cont.</p> <p>Description: An exploration and critique of the theory of Louis Althusser.</p> <p>Reading due: Louis Althusser: "From Capital to Marx's Philosophy."</p> <p>Assignments/deadlines: Reading questionnaires.</p>
Nov. 21 st	<p>Topic: "Poststructuralism II: Identity and Power"</p> <p>Description: An exploration and critique of the theory of Jacques Lacan.</p> <p>Reading due: 1. Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage," (and the reading guide),</p> <p>Assignments/deadlines: reading questionnaires.</p>
Nov. 28 th	<p>Topic: "Poststructuralism II" cont.</p> <p>Description: An exploration and critique of the theory of Michel Foucault.</p> <p>Reading due: Michel Foucault: "Method," and Chris Weedon: "Feminism and the Principles of Poststructuralism."</p> <p>Assignments/deadlines: reading questionnaires.</p>
Dec. 5 th	<p>Topic: "A Christian Approach: Popular Culture as Dialogue"</p> <p>Description: An exploration (and critique?) of my own approach to popular culture.</p> <p>Reading due: 1. Theodore Turnau: "Popular Cultural Theory from a Christian Worldview Perspective," 2. Turnau, "Jack Be Evil, Jack Be Quick," 3. Turnau, "Displacing the Sacred."</p> <p>Assignments/deadlines: Write some discussion questions based on the readings. Test 3, covering schools of poststructuralism.</p>

Dec. 12 th	Final exam (covers whole semester)! Study hard. Final deadline for term papers and extra-credit papers.
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6. Course Requirements and Assessment (with estimated workloads)

Assignment	Workload (average)	Weight in Final Grade	Evaluated Course Specific Learning Outcomes	Evaluated Institutional Learning Outcomes*
Reading Questionnaires (graded on completion, not correctness – just do it, even if you get some stuff wrong).	2-3 hours/week	10%	Reading comprehension, critical thinking skills, putting abstract concepts into your own words, and application of said concepts.	1,2,3
Tests, three times in the semester.	5-6 hours study time	24% (8 points each)	Identifying and defining key terms, understanding their significance within the broader cultural theories.	1,2
Term paper (see description below)	20-25 hours	30% (15% for grad students)	Comprehending and summarizing of culture and media theory, critical evaluation of these theories, practical application of theoretical perspectives.	1,2,3
Independent research paper (grad students only)	10-15 hours	15% (grad students only)	Find a culture or media theorist <i>not</i> discussed in class, describe his/her theory, critically evaluate his/her theory, and apply the theory to a piece of popular culture.	1,2,3
Final exam	7-8 hours (hopefully more, spread throughout the semester). You can't cram for this exam.	36%	Identifying and defining key terms, understanding their significance within the broader cultural theories, and evaluation of these theories and practical application of them.	1,2,3

Extra-credit reflection paper	2 hours	2%	Critical evaluation of theories.	1,2
TOTAL	Varies student to student, but expect to work hard.	100%		

*1 = Critical Thinking; 2 = Effective Communication; 3 = Effective and Responsible Action

7. Detailed description of the assignments

Homework

Assessed area	Percentage
Assessed on completion rather than correctness. If you have it done by class time, ready for discussion, you get full credit.	100%

Term Paper

I will require one short paper in which you will choose two theorists from different schools of thought (NOT Romanowski or Saussure) and compare and contrast them (or some part of their theories). You will need to: (1) describe the theories; (2) critically compare them (tell me what you like and don't like, and why); and (3) apply the theory you like best to a specific example drawn from your native culture. It should be 7-10 pages, double-spaced, typed. If you use outside sources (even the readings from class), I will expect you to footnote each quote or idea (see plagiarism policy below). A "sources used" list is *not* sufficient.

Assessed area	Percentage
Clarity of written expression (but remember: if I cannot understand your writing, lack of clarity can damage other assessment areas as well; or vica-versa, crystal clear prose cannot help but improve other assessment areas).	10%
Comprehension of theories	20%
Critically engagement with theories	35%
Application of "winning" theory to real life popular cultural example	35%

Independent Research Paper (M.A. only)

For those taking the class for M.A. credit, you are to do an additional paper of similar on a popular cultural theorist *not* covered in class. Give a description of his or her theory, your evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses, and apply it to a piece of popular culture.

Assessed area	Percentage
Clarity of written expression (see above)	10%
Comprehension of theory	20%
Critical engagement with theory	35%
Application of theory to real life popular cultural example	35%

Relevant to both papers: Early papers. If you complete the paper early, I would be happy to read it, make comments, and let you improve it before you had it back to be graded.

Extra-Credit Reflection Paper

If you would like to do an extra-credit paper, you can get a couple extra points from a 2-3 page paper in which you lay out your *own* theory of popular culture and media, interacting with positions and perspectives you found helpful in class.

Assessed area	Percentage
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Critical assessment of theories	33%
Synthesis	33%
Personal reflection	33%

8. General Requirements and School Policies

General requirements

All coursework is governed by AAU's academic rules. Students are expected to be familiar with the academic rules available in the Codex and Student Handbook and to maintain the highest standards of honesty and academic integrity in their work.

Electronic communication and submission

The university and instructors shall only use students' university email address for communication. It is strongly recommended that any email communication between students and instructors take place in NEO LMS.

Each e-mail sent to an instructor that is about a new topic (meaning not a reply to an original email) shall have a new and clearly stated subject and shall have the course code in the subject, for example: "COM101-1 Mid-term Exam. Question".

All electronic submissions are carried out through NEO LMS. No substantial pieces of writing (especially take home exams and essays) can be submitted outside of NEO LMS.

Attendance

Attendance is required. Students who are absent 35 percent of classes will be failed (or administratively withdrawn from the course if most absences are excused). Students might also be marked absent if they miss a significant part of a class (by arriving late or leaving early) as specified in the syllabus.

Attendance policy for Turnau's courses: The lectures and class discussions will be the primary means of learning in this class. Therefore, it is very important that you actually come to as many classes as you can (coming to them all would be ideal). CEA allows for two unexcused absences. In addition, here's my attendance policy: You may miss one class. If you miss a second, then I will require a short writing assignment in return on the unit that you missed. The same for the third. If you miss four classes, you must either withdraw or you will fail. Note: Coming more than 15 minutes late to class will count as one-half of an absence. If you are more than 30 minutes late, I will mark you as absent. Missing classes may adversely affect your grade, so please come to class, and come on time.

Absence excuse and make-up options

Should a student be absent from classes for relevant reasons (illness, serious family matters), s/he must submit to the Dean of Students an Absence Excuse Request Form supplemented with documents providing reasons for the absence. The form and documents must be submitted within one week of the absence. If possible, it is recommended the instructor be informed of the absence in advance. Should a student be absent during the add/drop period due to a change in registration this will be an excused absence if s/he submits an Absence Excuse Request Form along with the finalized add/drop form.

Assignments missed due to unexcused absences cannot be made up which may result in a decreased or failing grade as specified in the syllabus.

Students whose absence has been excused by the Dean of Students are entitled to make up assignments and exams provided their nature allows for a make-up. Students are responsible for contacting their instructor within one week of the date the absence was excused to arrange for make-up options.

Late work: No late submissions will be accepted – please follow the deadlines.

Electronic devices

No electronic devices (laptops, tablets, smartphones) are to be used during class (wait until break). Notes should be handwritten using the outline sheets provided. Electronic devices should be put away and turned off during tests and exams.

Eating is not allowed during classes.

Cheating and disruptive behavior

If a student engages in disruptive or other conduct unsuitable for a classroom environment of an institution of learning, the instructor may require the student to withdraw from the room for the duration of the activity or for the day and shall report the behavior to the Dean.

Students engaging in behavior which is suggestive of cheating (e.g. whispering or passing notes) will, at a minimum, be warned. In the case of continued misbehavior the student will be expelled from the exam and the exam will be marked as failed.

Plagiarism and Academic Tutoring Center

Plagiarism is “the unauthorized use or close imitation of the language and thoughts of another author and the representation of them as one’s own original work.” (Random House Unabridged Dictionary, 2nd Edition, Random House, New York, 1993) Turnitin’s White Paper ‘The Plagiarism Spectrum’ (available at <http://go.turnitin.com/paper/plagiarism-spectrum>) identifies 10 types of plagiarism ordered from most to least severe:

1. CLONE: An act of submitting another’s work, word-for-word, as one’s own.
2. CTRL-C: A written piece that contains significant portions of text from a single source without alterations.
3. FIND-REPLACE: The act of changing key words and phrases but retaining the essential content of the source in a paper.
4. REMIX: An act of paraphrasing from other sources and making the content fit together seamlessly.
5. RECYCLE: The act of borrowing generously from one’s own previous work without citation; To self plagiarize.
6. HYBRID: The act of combining perfectly cited sources with copied passages—without citation—in one paper.
7. MASHUP: A paper that represents a mix of copied material from several different sources without proper citation.
8. 404 ERROR: A written piece that includes citations to non-existent or inaccurate information about sources
9. AGGREGATOR: The “Aggregator” includes proper citation, but the paper contains almost no original work.
10. RE-TWEET: This paper includes proper citation, but relies too closely on the text’s original wording and/or structure.

As the minimum policy the types of plagiarism from 1 through 8 results in the failing grade from the assignment and must be reported to the Dean. The Dean may initiate a disciplinary procedure pursuant to the Academic Codex. Allegations of bought papers and intentional or consistent plagiarism always entail disciplinary hearing and may result in expulsion from AAU.

If unsure about technical aspects of writing, students are encouraged to consult their papers with the tutors of the AAU Academic Tutoring Center. For more information and/or to book a tutor, please contact the ATC at:

<http://atc.simplybook.me/sheduler/manage/event/1/>.

Please also see "What Is Plagiarism?" on the website. **If you are unsure whether you have committed plagiarism, please see me *before* you hand in the paper. I would love to give you guidance and advice. I'm all sorts of forgiving before the deadline. I'm all sorts of *not* forgiving (read: fire and sulfur raining down from the sky on your immortal soul) after you hand it in. Be smart and avoid plagiarism like the plague. Please.**

Students with Disabilities: Students with disabilities are asked to contact their lecturer as soon as possible to discuss reasonable accommodation.

9. Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Percentage	Description
A	95 – 100	Excellent performance. The student has shown originality and displayed an exceptional grasp of the material and a deep analytical understanding of the subject.
A-	90 – 94	
B+	87 – 89	Good performance. The student has mastered the material, understands the subject well and has shown some originality of thought and/or considerable effort.
B	83 – 86	
B-	80 – 82	
C+	77 – 79	Fair performance. The student has acquired an acceptable understanding of the material and essential subject matter of the course, but has not succeeded in translating this understanding into consistently creative or original work.
C	73 – 76	
C-	70 – 72	
D+	65 – 70	Poor. The student has shown some understanding of the material and subject matter covered during the course. The student's work, however, has not shown enough effort or understanding to allow for a passing grade in School Required Courses. It does qualify as a passing mark for the General College Courses and Electives.
D	60 – 64	
F	0 - 59	Fail. The student has not succeeded in mastering the subject matter covered in the course.

Bibliography and Additional Resources

This is a list of good collections of primary sources and some secondary sources that you might want to track down if you would like to study further. The articles you read were taken from some of these books (though not all of them).

If it looks like too much to sort through, allow me to suggest a few good places to start: Storey's *Introductory Guide* would be a good place to start for popular culture theory, though it may be out of print. He covers a lot of the same ground in his later *Cultural Studies and the Study of Popular Culture*, though he organizes it around different genres of popular culture instead of around different theoretical schools. Burton's book is a good primer on media studies. And the introductory sections of each of these big readers contain good overviews of the field of popular culture and media theory.

Alexander, Jeffery C. and Steven Seidman. *Culture and Society: Contemporary Debates*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Burton, Graeme. *More than Meets the Eye: An Introduction to Media Studies*.

- Cashmore, Ellis and Chris Rojek, eds. *Dictionary of Cultural Theorists*. London: Arnold, 1999.
- Dirks, Nicholas B., Geoff Eley and Sherry B. Ortner, eds. *Culture/Power/History: A Reader in Contemporary Social Theory*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994.
- Durham, Meenakshi Gigi and Douglas M. Keller, eds. *Media and Cultural Studies: Keywords*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2001.
- During, Simon, ed. *The Cultural Studies Reader*. London: Routledge, 1993.
- Gray, Ann and Jim McGuigan, eds. *Studying Culture: An Introductory Reader*. 2d ed. London: Arnold, 1997.
- Jenks, Chris. *Culture: Key Ideas*. London: Routledge, 1993.
- Kearney, Richard, and Mara Rainwater, eds. *The Continental Philosophy Reader*. London: Routledge, 1996.
- MacKay, Hugh and Tim O'Sullivan, eds. *The Media Reader: Continuity and Transformation*. London: Sage, 1999.
- Marris, Paul and Sue Thornham, eds. *Media Studies: A Reader*. 2d ed. Washington Square, NY: New York University Press, 2000.
- Mukerji, Chandra, and Michael Schudson, eds. *Rethinking Popular Culture: Contemporary Perspectives in Cultural Studies*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991.
- Romanowski, William D. *Pop Culture Wars: Religion and the Role of Entertainment in American Life*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996.
- Storey, John. *An Introductory Guide to Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1993.
- _____, ed. *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*. Hertfordshire, UK: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994.
- _____, ed. *What is Cultural Studies: A Reader*. London: Arnold, 1996.
- _____, *Cultural Studies and the Study of Popular Culture: Theories and Methods*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1996.
- Surber, Jere Paul. *Culture and Critique: An Introduction to the Critical Discourses of Cultural Studies*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998.
- Turnau, Ted. *Popologetics: Popular Culture in Christian Perspective*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2012.

Prepared by and when: Ted Turnau, 23rd July, 2019.

Approved by and when: Dean's office August 23, 2019