

Advanced Seminar: Understanding Media Fandom

Course code: FMS 478

Term and year:

Day and time:

Instructor:

Instructor contact:

Consultation hours:

Credits US/ECTS	3/6	Level	Advanced
Length	15 weeks	Pre-requisite	FMS 150, "Introduction to Media Studies," or FMS 370, "Popular Culture and Media Theory," or instructor's permission.
Contact hours	42 hours	Course type	

1. Course Description

This course explores fandom, particularly media fandom. In a world suffused in popular culture, fans are those who have invested themselves most heavily in enjoying and making meaning from popular culture. Why do they? Are they just weird, just different than us? Or is it simply a more intense expression of how we all make meaning from culture? Drawing on some of the seminal theorists of fan studies (including Michel de Certeau, Pierre Bourdieu, Camille Bacon-Smith, John Fiske, Henry Jenkins, Matt Hills, and D. W. Winnicott), this course seeks to understand fans as meaning-makers as they watch, play, write, create, blog, form communities and hierarchies, even quasi-religions, to understand the object of their fan-desire.

2. Student Learning Outcomes

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

- demonstrate a good grasp of the theoretical concepts associated with the study of media fan subcultures,
- articulate his or her own ideas about what drives fandom,
- demonstrate an ability to reflect on his or her own fandom.

3. Reading Material

Required Materials

- Bacon-Smith, Camille. "Training New Members" and "Homoerotic Romance." Chaps. in *Enterprising Women: Television Fandom and the Creation of Popular Myth*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992.
- _____. "Worldcon: Mobile Geography in Real Time." Chap. in *Science Fiction Culture*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000.

- Bennett, Tony. "Popular Culture and the 'Turn to Gramsci.'" In Tony Bennett, Collin, Mercer, and Janet Woollacott, eds. *Popular Culture and Social Relations*. Milton Keynes, England: Open University Press, 1986. xi-xix.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. "Distinction and the Aristocracy of Culture." Excerpt from *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. Transl. Richard Nice. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984.
- Burton, Tara Isabella. "Harry Potter and the Birth of Remix Culture." Chap. in *Strange Rites: New Religions for a Godless World*. New York: Public Affairs, 2020.
- de Certeau, Michel. "'Making Do': Uses and Tactics," and "Reading as Poaching". Chaps. in *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley, CA/London: University of California Press, 1984.
- Fiske, John. "Madonna." Chap. in *Reading the Popular*. Boston/London: Unwin Hyman, 1989.
- Harrington, C. Lee, and Denise Bielby. "Entering the Wild Zone." Chap. in *Soap Fans: Pursuing Pleasure and Making Meaning in Everyday Life*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995.
- Hills, Matt. "Fan Cultures between Knowledge and Justification." Chap. in *Fan Cultures*. London/New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Jenkins, Henry. "'Layers of Meaning': Fan Music Video and the Poetics of Poaching," and "'Strangers No More, We Sing': Filking and the Social Construction of the Science Fiction Fan Community." Chaps. in *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture*. New York/London: Routledge, 1992.
- Jenson, Joli. "Fandom as Pathology: The Consequences of Characterization." In Lisa Lewis, ed. *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*. New York: Routledge. 1992. 9-29.
- Radway, Janice. "The Readers and Their Romances." Chap. in *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature*. Chapel Hill/London: University of North Carolina Press, 1984, 1991.
- Renae. "Hurt/Comfort: A Confession and a Celebration." [Blogpost]. *The Fanfic Symposium*. June 5th, 2000. <https://trickster.org/symposium/symp55.html>.
- Scodari, Christine, and Jenna L. Felder. "Creating a Pocket Universe: 'Shippers,' Fan Fiction, and *The X-Files* Online." *Communication Studies* 51, no. 3 (2000): 238-257.
- Thornton, Sarah. Excerpts from *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital*. Cambridge/Oxford: Polity Press, 1995.
- Vermorel, Fran, and Judy Vermorel. "A Glimpse at the Fan Factory." In Lisa Lewis, ed. *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*. New York: Routledge. 1992. 191-207.
- Williams, Rebecca. "'It's About Power: Spoilers and Fan Hierarchy in On-Line *Buffy* Fandom.'" *Slayage* 11-12 [3.3-4] (April 2004).

https://www.whedonstudies.tv/uploads/2/6/2/8/26288593/williams_slayage_3.3-4.pdf

- Winnicott, D. W. Excerpt from *Playing and Reality*. New York/London: Routledge, 1971.

Recommended Materials

- Bourdieu, Pierre. "Classes and Classifications." From *Distinction*.
- n.a., "Fan Fiction Timeleines." From *TVwiki.tv*, no longer available online.
- n.a., Fanlore.org. "Race and Fandom." https://fanlore.org/wiki/Race_and_Fandom.
- Gilsdorf, Ethan. "You Have to Become the Con." Chap. in *Fantasy Freaks and Gaming Geeks*. Guilford, CN: Lyons Press, 2009.
- Ingersoll, Julie J. "The Thin Line between Saturday Night and Sunday Morning: Meaning and Community among Jimmy Buffet's Parrotheads." In Eric Michael Mazur and Kate McCarthy, eds. *God in the Details: American Religion in Popular Culture*. London/New York: Routledge, 2001.
- Jenkins, Henry. Excerpt from "Matt Hills Interviews Henry Jenkins." In *Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers: Exploring Participatory Culture*. New York/London: New York University Press, 2006.
- Jindra, Michael. "It's about Faith in Our Future: *Star Trek* Fandom as Cultural Religion." In Bruce David Forbes and Jeffrey H. Mahan, eds. *Religion and Popular Culture in America*. Berkeley/London: University of California Press, 2000.
- Sandvoss, Cornell. "A Text Called Home." Chap. in *Fans: The Mirror of Consumption*. Malden, MA/Cambridge, England: Polity Press, 2005.
- Young, Cathy. "The Fan Fiction Phenomena." *Reason*, February, 2007. <https://reason.com/2007/01/30/the-fan-fiction-phenomena/>.

4. Teaching methodology

The teaching methodology of this course is a combination of lecture, in-class discussion, and student-led seminars.

5. Course Schedule

Date	Class Agenda
Week 1	<p>Topic: An Orientation to Fandom</p> <p>Description: Going over syllabus, an introduction to the subject matter.</p> <p>Reading: None.</p> <p>Assignments/deadlines: None.</p>
Week 2	<p>Topic: The Popular Perception of Fans</p> <p>Description: An overview of the social context within which fan studies emerged (especially seeing fans as pathological).</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fran and Judy Vermorel, "A Glimpse at the Fan Factory," • Joli Jensen, "Fandom as Pathology."

	Assignments/deadlines: Reading questionnaire, due by class time.
Week 3	<p>Topic: Understanding Hegemony, Reception, and Imagination</p> <p>Description: An overview of the theoretical context from which fan studies emerged (specifically, hegemony, reception theory, and imagination).</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tony Bennett, "Popular Culture and 'The Turn to Gramsci,'" " • Janice Radway, "Readings and their Romances." <p>Assignments/deadlines: Reading questionnaire, due by class time.</p>
Week 4	<p>Topic: "First-Wave" Fan Theory: Fan as Trickster Hero</p> <p>Description: An overview of the theories involved in early fan theory in which fans were conceived as the underground resistance to the hierarchies and conforming forces of consumer culture.</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michel de Certeau, "Making Do': Uses and Tactics," and "Reading as Poaching." • John Fiske, "Madonna." • Henry Jenkins, "'Layers of Meaning': Fan Music Video and the Poetics of Poaching." <p>Assignments/deadlines: Reading questionnaire, due by class time.</p>
Week 5	<p>Topic: "First-Wave" continued...</p> <p>Description: See above.</p> <p>Reading:</p> <p>Assignments/deadlines:</p>
Week 6	<p>Topic: Fan Communities</p> <p>Description: An exploration of the emergence of the fan convention.</p> <p>Reading: Required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Camille Bacon-Smith, "Training New Members," ch. 4 from <i>Enterprising Women</i>, and "Worldcon: Mobile Geography in Real Time," from <i>Science Fiction Culture</i>. <p>Optional:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethan Gilsdorf, "You Have to Become the Con," from <i>Fantasy Freaks and Gaming Geeks</i> • "Race and Fandom," from fanlore.org <p>Assignments/deadlines: Reading questionnaire, due by class time.</p>
Week 7	<p>Topic: Fan Productivity</p> <p>Description: An exploration of creative ways fans express themselves, e.g. filking, fanfic, etc.</p> <p>Reading: Required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Henry Jenkins, "'Strangers No More, We Sing': Filking and the Social Construction of the Science Fiction Fan Community" • Camille Bacon-Smith, "Training New Members," (cont., on Mary Sue and Lay stories), and "Homoerotic Romance," from <i>Enterprising Women</i> • Christine Scodari and Jenna L. Felder, "Creating a Pocket Universe: 'Shippers,' Fan Fiction, and the <i>X-Files</i> Online" • Reneae, "Hurt/Comfort: A Confession and a Celebration." <p>Optional:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Henry Jenkins et. al., "Normal Female Interest in Men Bonking" • Cathy Young, "The Fan Fiction Phenomena" • "Fan Fiction Timelines," from twiki.tv. <p>Assignments/deadlines: Reading questionnaire, due by class time.</p>
Week 8	Mid-term break

Week 9	<p>Topic: "Second-Wave" Fan Theory: The Fan as (Sub)Culture Capitalist</p> <p>Description: An exploration of later developments within fan theory, particularly the idea that far from resisting consumer culture and social hierarchies, fan culture replicates them.</p> <p>Reading:</p> <p>Required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pierre Bourdieu, "Distinction and the Aristocracy of Culture," excerpt from <i>Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste</i> • Sarah Thornton, excerpt from <i>Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital</i> • Rebecca Williams, "It's About Power': Spoilers and Fan Hierarchy in On-Line <i>Buffy</i> Fandom." <p>Optional:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bourdieu, "Classes and Classifications," conclusion from <i>Distinction</i>. <p>Assignments/deadlines: Reading questionnaire, due by class time.</p>
Week 10	<p>Topic: "Second Wave" continued...</p> <p>Description: see above.</p> <p>Reading:</p> <p>Assignments/deadlines:</p>
Week 11	<p>Topic: "Third Wave" Fan Theory: The Return of the Individual Fan, Desire, and Identity</p> <p>Description: An examination of the latest theories emerging from fan studies, especially those having to do with fan identity and desire.</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • D. W. Winnicott, excerpt from <i>Playing and Reality</i> • C. Lee Harrington and Denise Bielby, "Entering the Wild Zone," excerpt from <i>Soap Fans</i>. • Matt Hills "Fan Cultures between Knowledge and Justification." <p>Assignments/deadlines: Reading questionnaire, due by class time. Also, begin work on your fan self-ethnography.</p>
Week 12	<p>Topic: "Third-Wave," continued.</p> <p>Description: See above.</p> <p>Reading:</p> <p>Assignments/deadlines:</p>
Week 13	<p>Topic: Fandom as Religion?</p> <p>Description: An exploration of the continuities and discontinuities between fandom and religion.</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tara Isabella Burton, "Harry Potter and the Birth of Remix Culture." <p>Optional Readings (debate over fandom as religion):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cornel Sandvoss, excerpt from chapter 3, "A Text Called Home," from <i>Fans: The Mirror of Consumption</i> • Henry Jenkins and Matt Hills, excerpt from "Interview" • Michael Jindra, "It's About Faith in Our Future: <i>Star Trek</i> Fandom as Cultural Religion" • Julie J. Ingersoll, "The Thin Line between Saturday Night and Sunday Morning: Meaning and Community among Jimmy Buffet's Parrotheads." <p>Assignments/deadlines: Reading questionnaire, due by class time.</p>
Week 14	<p>Topic: Student fandom projects.</p> <p>Description: Student groups A will present their multimedia presentations.</p> <p>Reading: None.</p> <p>Assignments/deadlines: Students from group A need to be ready to present.</p>

Week 15	<p>Topic: Student fandom projects.</p> <p>Description: Student groups B will present their multimedia presentations.</p> <p>Reading: None.</p> <p>Assignments/deadlines: Fandom self-ethnography paper due.</p>
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6. Course Requirements and Assessment (with estimated workloads)

Assignment	Workload (hours)	Weight in Final Grade	Evaluated Course Specific Learning Outcomes	Evaluated Institutional Learning Outcomes*
Class Participation	42	5%	Presence for student fandom presentations is expected. Absence will negatively affect your grade.	2, 3
Reading questionnaires	Approx. 3-4 hours/week	25%	Must be completed by class for in-class discussion. I only grade on completion, not correctness. In other words, your answers are the <i>beginning</i> of our discussion. "Completeness" means writing at least several sentences per question.	1,2
Fandom presentation.	As much time as you need to do it well. Plan on at least 20 hours.	35%	I will be looking for evidence of a grasp of the theoretical concepts we have been discussing in class, as well as your own appropriation of them. You must use seven of these terms in your presentation. For more details, see the grading rubric I will post.	1,2
Fandom self-ethnography (6-8 pages, double-spaced, typed)	5-7 hours.	35% (20% for M.A.)	I will be looking for how well you are able to explore your own fan history, and what drives your own fandom. Besides aiding self-understanding, it is a way of developing empathy with other fans.	1,2,3
TOTAL	150	100%		

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

7. Detailed description of the assignments

Assignment 1: Fandom Research Presentation

Design your own research project on a fandom of personal interest to you and give a multimedia presentation on it to class (undergrads will be able to work in teams if they wish).

Assessment breakdown

Assessed area	Percentage
Research and content (choice of topic, details presented, illustrations/examples, conclusions).	45%

Application of theory (how the theory we learned in class informed the presentation).	30%
Presentation style (visuals, vocal delivery).	25%
Question and answer period.	20%

Assignment 2: Fandom Self-ethnography Paper

Mine your own fan history. What were you a fan of and when. And most importantly, *why*. For detailed guidance, see Matt Hills, "Fan Cultures between Knowledge and Justification."

Assessment breakdown

Assessed area	Percentage
Depth of content (how deep can you dig – see Matt Hills article).	40%
Interaction with content of class (applying what you learned in class give clarity or insight to your understanding of self-as-fan).	40%
Clarity and creativity of the writing.	20%

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 in the Academic 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, with additional communication via NEO LMS or Microsoft Teams. Students sending e-mail to an instructor shall clearly state the course code and the topic in the subject heading, for example, "COM101-1 Mid-term Exam. Question". All electronic submissions are through NEO LMS. No substantial pieces of writing (especially take-home exams and essays) can be submitted outside of NEO LMS.

Attendance

Attendance is not compulsory, but strongly recommended. Generally, students who are absent 35 percent of classes or more do extremely poorly on exams and projects and generally do not manage to pass the course.

Absence excuse and make-up options

Should a student be absent from classes for relevant reasons (illness, serious family matters), s/he can submit to the Dean of Students an Absence Excuse Request Form supplemented with documents providing reasons for the absence. These 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. Students whose absence has been excused by the Dean of Students are entitled to make up assignments and exams provided their nature allows. Assignments missed due to unexcused absences which cannot be made up, may result in a decreased or failing grade as specified in the syllabus. 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

Electronic devices (e.g. phones, tablets, laptops) may be used only for class-related activities (taking notes, looking up related information, etc.). Any other use will result in the student being marked absent and/or being expelled from the class. No electronic devices may be used during tests or exams unless required by the exam format and the instructor.

Eating is not allowed during classes.

Cheating and disruptive behavior

If a student engages in disruptive conduct unsuitable for a classroom environment, the instructor may require the student to withdraw from the room for the duration of the class and shall report the behavior to the Dean.

Students engaging in behavior which is suggestive of cheating will, at a minimum, be warned. In the case of continued misconduct, the exam or assignment will be failed and the student will be expelled from the exam or class.

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.

At minimum, plagiarism from types 1 through 8 will result in a failing grade for the assignment and shall 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 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/>.

Course accessibility and inclusion

Students with disabilities are asked to contact the Dean of Students as soon as possible to discuss reasonable accommodations. Academic accommodations are not retroactive. Students who will be absent from course activities due to religious holidays may seek reasonable accommodations by contacting the Dean of Students in writing within the first two weeks of the term. All requests must include specific dates for which the student requests accommodations.

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+	65-69	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.

* Decimals should be rounded to the nearest whole number.

Prepared by:
Approved by: