CULT3240 - Popular Culture and Society

Course Outline

Course Co-ordinator:  Steve Threadgold
Room: W325a
Ph:  n/a
Fax: 4921 6933
Email: steven.threadgold@newcastle.edu.au
Consultation hours:  By appointment

Semester  Semester 2 - 2009
Unit Weighting  10
Teaching Methods
Lecture
Tutorial

Brief Course Description
This course will engage with the major theories of popular culture, media and society, as well as introduce various artistic and theoretical practices that form the landscape of contemporary culture. We look at aspects and ideologies of popular culture that include topics such as postmodernism, feminism; identity and sexuality; net activism and new technologies; media, television and film analysis. We explore theories that examine the basic issues of popular culture; some examples include power and surveillance, gender and ethnicity, private/public spheres and censorship.

Contact Hours
Lecture for 1 Hour per Week for the Full Term
Tutorial for 1 Hour per Week for the Full Term

Learning Materials/Texts

Course Objectives
This course explores the relationships between popular culture and society; it assists students in developing the skills that will enable them to:
1. Analyse the influence of new technologies on concepts of identity, gender, race and the body;

Course Outline Issued and Correct as at:  Week 1, Semester 2 - 2009

CTS Download Date: 14.7.09
2. Relate concepts, such as race, gender, ideology, pleasure, activism to popular culture and illustrate their significance;
3. Construct a critical argument regarding the issues surrounding popular culture;
4. Apply theory critically in written assessment to analyse a case study;
5. Work well as part of a group;
6. Self-evaluate time management and preparation skills.

Course Content
The course involves:
1. An overview of the many competing theories, methods, concepts and policies surrounding popular culture.
2. Examining a series of case studies from different media and discussing critical issues such as ethics, politics, histories, etc.
3. Questioning the importance of the notion of ‘pleasure and play’ in relation to the formation and experience of popular culture.
4. Evaluating the impact of new technology on popular culture and positions of spectatorship and usage.

Assessment Items
| Essays / Written Assignments | 2,000 words 30% |
| Essays / Written Assignments | 3,000 words 40% |
| Projects | Group project - in class verbal presentation, 30% |

Assumed Knowledge
60 credit points at 2000 Level

Callaghan Campus Timetable
CULT3240
POPULAR CULTURE AND SOCIETY
Enquiries: School of Humanities and Social Science
Semester 2 - 2009
Lecture and Tutorial Tuesday 14:00 - 15:00 [GP101]
and Tutorial Tuesday 10:00 - 11:00 [GP316]
or Tuesday 11:00 - 12:00 [GP216]
or Tuesday 13:00 - 14:00 [GP324]

IMPORTANT UNIVERSITY INFORMATION

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity, honesty, and a respect for knowledge, truth and ethical practices are fundamental to the business of the University. These principles are at the core of all academic endeavour in teaching, learning and research. Dishonest practices contravene academic values, compromise the integrity of research and devalue the quality of learning. To preserve the quality of learning for the individual and others, the University may impose severe sanctions on activities that undermine academic integrity. There are two major categories of academic dishonesty:

Academic fraud is a form of academic dishonesty that involves making a false representation to gain an unjust advantage. Without limiting the generality of this definition, it can include:

a) falsification of data;
b) using a substitute person to undertake, in full or part, an examination or other assessment item;
c) reusing one's own work, or part thereof, that has been submitted previously and counted towards another course (without permission);
d) making contact or colluding with another person, contrary to instructions, during an examination or other assessment item;
e) bringing material or device(s) into an examination or other assessment item other than such as may
be specified for that assessment item; and

f) making use of computer software or other material and device(s) during an examination or other assessment item other than such as may be specified for that assessment item.

g) contract cheating or having another writer compete for tender to produce an essay or assignment and then submitting the work as one's own.

Plagiarism is the presentation of the thoughts or works of another as one's own. University policy prohibits students plagiarising any material under any circumstances. Without limiting the generality of this definition, it may include:

a) copying or paraphrasing material from any source without due acknowledgment;

b) using another person's ideas without due acknowledgment;

c) collusion or working with others without permission, and presenting the resulting work as though it were completed independently.

Turnitin is an electronic text matching system. During assessing any assessment item the University may -

· Reproduce this assessment item and provide a copy to another member of the University; and/or

· Communicate a copy of this assessment item to a text matching service (which may then retain a copy of the item on its database for the purpose of future checking).

· Submit the assessment item to other forms of plagiarism checking

RE-MARKS AND MODERATIONS

Students can access the University's policy at: http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000769.html

MARKS AND GRADES RELEASED DURING TERM

All marks and grades released during term are indicative only until formally approved by the Head of School.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES AFFECTING ASSESSMENT ITEMS

Extension of Time for Assessment Items, Deferred Assessment and Special Consideration for Assessment Items or Formal Written Examinations items must be submitted by the due date in the Course Outline unless the Course Coordinator approves an extension. Unapproved late submissions will be penalised in line with the University policy.

Requests for Extensions of Time must be lodged no later than the due date of the item. This applies to students:

· applying for an extension of time for submission of an assessment item on the basis of medical, compassionate, hardship/trauma or unavoidable commitment; or

· whose attendance at or performance in an assessment item or formal written examination has been or will be affected by medical, compassionate, hardship/trauma or unavoidable commitment.

Students must report the circumstances, with supporting documentation, as outlined in the Special Circumstances Affecting Assessment Items Procedure at:

Note: different procedures apply for minor and major assessment tasks.

Students should be aware of the following important deadlines:

· Special Consideration Requests must be lodged no later than 3 working days after the due date of submission or examination.

· Rescheduling Exam requests must be received no later than 10 working days prior the first date of the examination period.
Late applications may not be accepted. Students who cannot meet the above deadlines due to extenuating circumstances should speak firstly to their Program Officer or their Program Executive if studying in Singapore.

STUDENTS WITH A DISABILITY OR CHRONIC ILLNESS

University is committed to providing a range of support services for students with a disability or chronic illness. If you have a disability or chronic illness which you feel may impact on your studies please feel free to discuss your support needs with your lecturer or course coordinator.

Disability Support may also be provided by the Student Support Service (Disability). Students must be registered to receive this type of support. To register contact the Disability Liaison Officer on 02 4921 5766, email at: student-disability@newcastle.edu.au. As some forms of support can take a few weeks to implement it is extremely important that you discuss your needs with your lecturer, course coordinator or Student Support Service staff at the beginning of each semester. For more information on confidentiality and documentation visit the Student Support Service (Disability) website: www.newcastle.edu.au/services/disability.

CHANGING YOUR ENROLMENT

Students enrolled after the census dates listed in the link below are liable for the full cost of their student contribution or fees for that term.

http://www.newcastle.edu.au/study/fees/censusdates.html

Students may withdraw from a course without academic penalty on or before the last day of term. Any withdrawal from a course after the last day of term will result in a fail grade.

Students cannot enrol in a new course after the second week of term, except under exceptional circumstances. Any application to add a course after the second week of term must be on the appropriate form, and should be discussed with staff in the Student Hubs or with your Program Executive at PSB if you are a Singapore student.

To check or change your enrolment online go to myHub: https://myhub.newcastle.edu.au

STUDENT INFORMATION & CONTACTS

Various services are offered by the Student Support Unit: www.newcastle.edu.au/service/studentsupport/

The Student Hubs are a one-stop shop for the delivery of student related services and are the first point of contact for students studying in Australia. Student Hubs are located at:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Callaghan Campus</th>
<th>Port Macquarie students</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shortland Hub: Level 3, Shortland Building</td>
<td>contact your program officer or <a href="mailto:EnquiryCentre@newcastle.edu.au">EnquiryCentre@newcastle.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunter Hub: Level 2, Student Services Centre</td>
<td>Phone 4921 5000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Precinct</td>
<td>Singapore students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Hub &amp; Information Common, University</td>
<td>contact your PSB Program Executive</td>
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<tr>
<td>House</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Central Coast Campus (Ourimbah)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Hub: Opposite the Main Cafeteria</td>
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OTHER CONTACT INFORMATION

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty Websites</th>
<th>General enquiries</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/business-law/">www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/business-law/</a></td>
<td>Callaghan, City and Port Macquarie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/education-arts/">www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/education-arts/</a></td>
<td>Phone: 02 4921 5000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/engineering/">www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/engineering/</a></td>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:EnquiryCentre@newcastle.edu.au">EnquiryCentre@newcastle.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/health/">www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/health/</a></td>
<td>Ourimbah</td>
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<td>Phone: 02 4348 4030</td>
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This course outline will not be altered after the second week of the term except under extenuating circumstances with Head of School approval. Students will be notified in advance of the change.

**Online Tutorial Registration:**

Students are required to enrol in the Lecture and a specific Tutorial time for this course via the Online Registration system. Refer - [http://studinfo1.newcastle.edu.au/rego/stud_choose_login.cfm](http://studinfo1.newcastle.edu.au/rego/stud_choose_login.cfm)

NB: Registrations close at the end of week 2 of semester.

**Studentmail and Blackboard:** Refer - [www.blackboard.newcastle.edu.au/](http://www.blackboard.newcastle.edu.au/)

This course uses Blackboard and studentmail to contact students, so you are advised to keep your email accounts within the quota to ensure you receive essential messages. To receive an expedited response to queries, post questions on the Blackboard discussion forum if there is one, or if emailing staff directly use the course code in the subject line of your email. Students are advised to check their studentmail and the course Blackboard site on a weekly basis.

**Important Additional Information**

Details about the following topics are available on your course Blackboard site (where relevant). Refer - [www.blackboard.newcastle.edu.au/](http://www.blackboard.newcastle.edu.au/)

- Written Assignment Presentation and Submission Details
- Online copy submission to Turnitin
- Penalties for Late Assignments
- Special Circumstances
- No Assignment Re-submission
- Re-marks & Moderations
- Return of Assignments
- Preferred Referencing Style
- Student Representatives
- Student Communication
- Essential Online Information for Students
Assessment Items

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projects Group project - in-class verbal presentation, 30%. Individual written summaries must be uploaded to Turnitin and submitted by hard copy to the Hub.</td>
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1. Essay 1: 2000 words, Due Week 9, Thursday September 24, 5pm.

Choose one of the following essay questions:

1. Critically analyse the work of the Frankfurt School. What are the strengths and weaknesses of their arguments for use in contemporary culture?
2. Is subculture still a valid concept for analysing youth cultural practices today? Critically analyse the notion of subculture and the post-subculture developments.
3. Critically analyse Bourdieu’s work for analysing contemporary cultural practices. Do his concepts of distinction, symbolic violence, habitus, field and cultural capital remain vital or have recent developments rendered his work less relevant?
4. Engaging with the theories from Week 4 (Bauman, Baudrillard, Miller etc.) critically analyse the relationship between consumer culture and popular culture.

2. Essay 2: 3000 words, Due Week 13, Thursday November 5, 5pm.

This written assignments asks you to do a cultural studies analysis of a popular culture text. You can choose a song, album, music artist, brand, consumer product, celebrity, film, TV show, sport, website etc. The text that you choose and the way you are going to analyse it has to be approved by the course coordinator by/in the Week 10 tutorial.

You need to use relevant theories and research from the course material. You cannot just write about or do a review of something that you like. You need to do a deep critical analysis, engaging with some of the many ways of analysing popular culture that we have covered throughout the semester.

3. Group Project:

As part of a small group you will be asked to do a 15-20 minute presentation in a tutorial. Audio-visual facilities can be used – make sure all requirements are requested in enough time.

The project topic will be assigned in the first few weeks of the course and it will be on one of the following topics:

- Popular Music - Being a Fan: Identity and Taste
- Popular Music – Gatekeepers: Censorship and Music Journalism
- Popular Music – iPods & MP3s: Digital Revolution?
- Sport – Sport/Media/Culture
- Sport – Cricket: Race, Colonialism and Globalization
- Reality and Makeover TV: Symbolic Violence and Governmentality
- The Celebrity: Was Warhol Right?
- Representing Dissent: Is a Subversive Popular Culture Possible in a Global Consumer Culture?

There will be only one presentation on each topic per tutorial.

The presentations will begin the tutorials by engaging with the topic material and theory, using relevant examples to illustrate your points, and answering the tutorial discussion question for the topic.

The 30% mark will be awarded in the following manner:

- 20% group mark for the presentation (each member of the group will receive the same mark)
- 10% for an individual written 500 word summary of your contribution to the presentation.

Helpful hints:

- Group contact details must be shared early on.
- Construct and adhere to your team charter. This will help organisation and maintain individual responsibility in group tasks.
- Delegate tasks fairly and evenly. Each member needs to be aware of their role and that tasks are equitable.
- Research is the core to a successful group presentation. Without a solid theoretical structure your presentation will appear thin and under prepared.
- You must demonstrate that you have engaged and critiqued theoretical material.
- This means you have to use, outline and explain relevant theory for your topic. Presentations that just talk about examples, experiences or are primarily opinion will struggle to pass.
- Be realistic about your project.
- Make sure to allow enough time for AV material if you are going to use it. It all needs to be included within the 15-20 mins.
- Do not take up too much of the time with AV material.
- You will be presenting to the tutorial, not just me. If you want them to respond to questions, leave enough time.

Group Work, Peer and/or Self-Assessment

1. The purpose and function of the group project is to enable you to develop skills that assist academic progression, such as time-management and interpersonal relations. Group Projects are a way of extending non subject-specific knowledge and abilities.
2. Group members will be randomly selected by the tutor in the first tutorial. If any student feels uncomfortable with their assigned group, they are able to seek an alternative group.
3. Group members are to design and implement a ‘team charter’. This will be discussed in the first tutorial where team charter templates will be disseminated. A team charter is a document that all participants agree on, that outlines their group guidelines and strategy for participation. This is a document that all students must agree on as it schedules group meetings and decided agreed upon solutions for possible group conflict. Some scenarios and suggested strategies will be discussed in the introductory class.
4. The whole group should work together and will receive the same mark. If there are problems or disagreements they must be discussed with the course co-ordinator well before the presentation.
5. In the case where students feel as though a fellow student is underperforming, or if there is any conflict between students in a group, the first action is to consult the course coordinator who will discuss the situation.

WEEKLY GUIDE

WEEK 1: The Politics of Pleasure: An Introduction to Popular Culture

Readings:


Further Resources and Reading:
Douglas Kellner – variety of Intro readings at: http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/kellner.html

Tutorial Discussion Questions:
1. How do you define popular culture?
2. Can popular culture be art?
3. Why does the business of popular culture matter?
4. Does the line between high and popular culture still exist?
5. What do the things that you like or don’t like – music, film, sports, clothes, fashion etc – say about you? Are they a representation of who you are?
6. What does the term ‘text’ mean in cultural studies?

WEEK 2: From Frankfurt to Birmingham and Beyond

Readings:


Further Resources and Reading:


Douglas Kellner – variety of Intro readings at: http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/kellner.html


Tutorial Discussion Questions:
1. Is popular culture a narcotic of mass deception?
2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Frankfurt School’s critique?
3. Can resistance be symbolic and through rituals?
4. Are subcultures expressions of individuality or conformism?
5. Is the concept of subculture still a relevant concept for studying the contemporary?
6. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the post-subculture theories?

WEEK 3: Power/Knowledge, Taste and Culture: Bourdieu (and a bit of Foucault)

Readings:


Further Resources and Reading:


Tutorial Discussion Questions:
1. What is habitus and cultural capital?
2. What does Bourdieu mean when he says that taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier?
3. How do power and knowledge interact? Who gets to decide what is art, tasteful, authentic, cool etc.?
4. What does Bourdieu mean by ‘symbolic violence’?
5. What does Foucault mean by ‘governmentality’?
6. Can you think of some discourses in popular culture that produce or encourage specific types of self-discipline?

WEEK 4: Popular Culture and/as Consumer Culture: Spectacle, Media & Identity

Readings:

Further Resources and Reading:


Further Resources and Reading:


Further Resources and Reading:


Further Resources and Reading:


Further Resources and Reading:


Tutorial Discussion Questions:
1. Why do you like the music that you like? Why do you not like the music you don’t like?
2. What do you think are the key practices for being a ‘true’ fan? Do you make judgements about others relating to their music tastes?
3. Do you associate events in your life, emotion, relationships and other forms of meaning to music, gigs etc?
4. What are some of the different ways you ‘use’ music?
5. Are the genres of popular music – rock/pop, mainstream/indie etc. – meaningful distinctions?
6. How credible are Adorno’s two types of popular music listeners (the loner and the lost in the crowd)?

WEEK 6: Popular Music – Gatekeepers: Censorship and Music Journalism

Readings:


Further Resources and Reading:


Tutorial Discussion Questions:
1. What are the different elements of censorship when it comes to popular music?
2. Should retailers be allowed to ban music from their shelves?
3. Is copyright an extension of censorship?
4. How does the music press act as gatekeepers and tastemakers?
5. Do you consider the critical reception of music?
6. Do the music press and the music industry scratch each other’s backs?

WEEK 7: Popular Music – IPods & MP3s: Digital Revolution?

Readings:


**Further Resources and Reading:**


**Tutorial Discussion Questions:**
1. Does the MP3 and peer-to-peer file sharing threaten the music industry? If it does, is this a bad thing?
2. Do you consider the ethical and legal implications or the alleged loss of income to the artist when downloading?
3. Can the new technologies ‘democratise’ the music industry by allowing artists more freedom? What are the limitations of this?
4. What are the implications for copyright?
5. How do MP3 players change how music is consumed?
6. Do new technologies increase or decrease traditional inequalities?

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**WEEK 8: Sport – Sport/Media/Culture**

**Readings:**


**Further Resources and Reading:**


**Tutorial Discussion Questions:**
1. Do we live in a sports impregnated world?
2. What do you think about the dominance of sport in the media?
3. What is the ‘media sports cultural complex’?
4. Is sport just another part of the culture industry?
5. Are you a Knights fan, if so, why? If not, what do you think of the Knights and their fans?
6. How is sport a microcosm of globalization in action?
WEEK 9: Sport – Cricket: Race, Colonialism and Globalization

Readings:


Further Resources and Reading:


Tutorial Discussion Questions:
1. Do the racial issues in sport reflect these issues in the wider world?
2. Does sport lead or follow when dealing with these issues?
3. How is cricket an example of globalization and post-colonialism?
4. Why do the traditional powers – England & Australia – feel so threatened by the burgeoning power of India in the cricketing world?
5. If you were an Australian cricketer what would be more important to you: representing the ‘baggy green’ or a million dollar IPL contract? What if you were a West Indian cricketer?
6. Should sport consider political, moral and ethical issues (for instance, should teams go to Zimbabwe)?

Mid-Semester Break

WEEK 10: Reality and Makeover TV: Symbolic Violence and Governmentality

Readings:


Further Resources and Reading:


**Tutorial Discussion Questions:**

1. When McRobbie speaks of the symbolic violence inherent in fashion and body make over TV shows, what does she mean? What do you think of Bourdieu’s idea of symbolic violence? Is this what these shows purvey? Is this what we do when we make judgements of other in general?
2. Does a show like *Kath and Kim* sympathise, satirise, parody, critique or insult working class life?
3. What are the ‘values’ and behaviours that are rewarded in Reality TV shows?
4. How do some Reality TV shows promote an individualised and reflexive governmentality?
5. Does the competition and strategies of Reality TV contestants say anything about the general public?
6. With the work of Baudrillard in mind, how much reality is there in Reality TV?

**WEEK 11: The Celebrity: Was Warhol Right?**

**Readings:**


**Further Resources and Reading:**


**Tutorial Discussion Questions:**

1. Who deserves to be famous? Do you? Would you want to be?
2. What does Ferris mean by distinguishing between ‘celebrity as pathology’ and ‘celebrity as commodity’?
3. Does celebrity behaviour affect how the general public behave? Are they role models?
4. Why do so many charities and other causes seem to need a celebrity spokesperson?
5. How has the rise of information and communication technology and Reality TV changed the nature of celebrity?
6. Are celebrities spectacular simulations?

**WEEK 12: Representing Dissent: Is a Subversive Popular Culture Possible in a Global Consumer Culture?**

**Readings:**


Lizardo, Omar 2007, ‘Fight Club, or the Cultural Contradictions of Late Capitalism’ in *Journal for Cultural Research*, Vol. 11, No. 3.
Further Resources and Reading:


Tutorial Discussion Questions:
1. Is it possible for popular culture texts to be subversive if they are produced in a culture industry?
2. In what ways do politics and popular culture interact? Can popular music disseminate subversive or radical information?
3. For example, think about the band Rage Against the Machine... they are signed to a major label, appeared on the *Godzilla* soundtrack and have sold millions of records. But their lyrics are radical, refer to the likes of Chomsky and Marx; they are heavily involved in various activism and their records and website have reading lists.
4. Think about the film *Fight Club*... what are the subversive issues it brings up? Or does it just reconfirm patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity?
5. Can culture jamming be an affective means of subversion?
6. Does capitalism sell its own subversion back to the consumer?

WEEK 13: Course Review

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Lecture Topic</th>
<th>Tutorial and Presentation Topic</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1     | 28 July  
The Politics of Pleasure: An Introduction to Popular Culture         | Intro and Presentation Organization                                                   |
| 2     | August 4  
From Frankfurt to Birmingham and Beyond                                  | The Politics of Pleasure: An Introduction to Popular Culture                          |
| 3     | August 11  
Power/Knowledge, Taste and Culture: Bourdieu (and a bit of Foucault)      | From Frankfurt to Birmingham and Beyond                                               |
| 4     | August 18  
Popular Culture and/as Consumer Culture: Spectacle, Media & Identity      | Power/Knowledge, Taste and Culture: Bourdieu (and a bit of Foucault)                  |
| 5     | August 25  
Popular Music - Being a Fan: Identity and Taste                           | Popular Culture and/as Consumer Culture: Spectacle, Media & Identity                  |
| 6     | September 1  
|       | Presentations begin                                                         |                                                                                      |
| 7     | September 8  
| 8     | September 15  
Sport – Sport/Media/Culture                                                 | Popular Music – IPods & MP3s: Digital Revolution?                                     |
| 9     | September 22  
Sport – Cricket: Race, Colonialism and Globalization                       | Sport – Sport/Media/Culture                                                          |
|       | Presentations                                                                 | Essay 1 Due                                                                          |
|       | MID SEMESTER BREAK                                                           |                                                                                      |
| 10    | October 13  
Reality and Makeover TV: Symbolic Violence and Governmentality           | Sport – Cricket: Race, Colonialism and Globalization                                   |
| 11    | October 20  
| 12    | October 27  
Representing Dissent: Is a Subversive Popular Culture Possible in a Global Consumer Culture? | The Celebrity: Was Warhol Right?                                                     |
| 13    | November 3  
Course review                                                              | Representing Dissent: Is a Subversive Popular Culture Possible?                       |
|       | Presentations                                                                 | Essay 2 Due                                                                          |