

Department of English & Writing Studies

English 2250F (001) - Introduction to Cultural Studies
Fall 2015

Wednesdays 6-9pm
AHB 1B08

Instructor: Dr. Amanda Di Ponio
Office location: Arts and Humanities Building 2G28E
Office Hours: Wednesdays 3-5pm and by appointment
E-mail: adiponi@uwo.ca

Feel free to e-mail me with brief questions. Students can expect to receive responses to e-mails within 24-48 hours. Please contact me via e-mail to make an appointment to see me or speak with me outside of regular office hours. If possible, please make an appointment to see me during office hours so that students who wish to see me are able to. During peak times (i.e. before essays submissions and the final exam), additional appointment times outside of regular office hours will be made available to students.

TA: Zinaka
E-mail: pzinaka@uwo.ca
Office location: Arts and Humanities Building 0N85
Office hours: Wednesdays 2-4pm (provisional)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces students to the strategies of analyzing culture, from 1950s Birmingham, where the discipline began, to present day. Students will take an interdisciplinary approach to exploring how culture is produced and processed, the objects of which are carefully shaped, advertised, distributed, and consumed. We respond to culture in diverse ways, and through collective and individual discussion and research, students will investigate aspects of culture – literature, art, music, theatre, television, film, customs and traditions – in order to understand them in relation to their social, political, aesthetic, ethical, and subjective contexts. With a thorough understanding of the key concepts of Cultural Studies, gathered from a range of theoretical, creative, and critical texts, students will be prepared for advanced future study.

PREREQUISITE(S): At least 60% in 1.0 of English 1020E or 1022E or 1024E or 1035E or 1036E or both English 1027F/G and 1028F/G, or permission of the Department.

REQUIRED TEXT

The Cultural Studies Reader, ed. Simon During. 3rd edn. New York: Routledge, 2007 [ISBN 978-0415374132]

Some readings/ critical materials not included in the above will be distributed to students throughout the term, either electronically through OWL powered by Sakai or in class.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Close-read and respond to a range of theoretical, critical, and creative texts to decipher and amass meaning.

Identify, discuss, and then apply key concepts and theoretical approaches to Cultural Studies.

Experience culture at the local level and determine what approaches to culture are employed.

Understand strategies and practices in cultural studies to interpret meaning.

Engage in cultural discourse with critical perspectives that reflect social, aesthetic, ethical, and political contexts.

Participate in readings and classroom discussion in order to engage with theoretical texts collaboratively.

Research and engage with scholarly/critical secondary texts.

Incorporate evidence, from both primary and secondary texts, in essay writing in support of arguments.

Write essays that logically and persuasively present complex and debatable arguments.

Apply principles of quotation integration using MLA documentation.

ASSIGNMENTS

Study in Local Culture (1,000 words) 10%

Midterm 15%

Research Essay + Introductory paragraph and Annotated Bibliography (2,000-2,500 words) 25%

Participation (includes attendance, discussions, etc.) 15%

Final Exam 35%

NOTE: In accordance with Department of English standards, students must pass BOTH the term work and the final examination in order to pass the course. Students who fail the final examination (regardless of term mark) automatically fail the course.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF ASSIGNMENTS

A Study in Local Culture: This assignment will require students to spend time in the local community, choosing a space/location to visit, to consider cultural space in the urban place. On the visit itself, the associated task is to solely observe the space itself – its design, décor, etc. – and the people therein – their behaviour, dress, interaction with the space (the challenge will be to do so free from any preconceived notions of the space). The notes you take will help in your analysis, post-visit, which will be supported by course readings to help you develop your ideas. Additional instruction will be given to students in the second week of classes.

Research Essay: A formal, extended critical analysis of one reading or critical strategy studied in the course. Students will want to challenge the theoretical approach chosen, offering more than one possible interpretation of the theory in practice. These challenges should be supported by the inclusion of examples of texts, literature, artifacts, musical compositions/videos, theatre, television, film, etc. in your analyses. The research essay should endeavour to go beyond the simple exposition of ideas. Secondary research is required (at least 3 materials – essays/articles from books/academic journals). Further instruction, essay-writing tips, and research tips will be provided. MLA citation style is required.

Introductory paragraph and Annotated Bibliography: Prior to submission of the Research Essay, students will submit their introductory paragraphs – including thesis statement – for their essays in addition to an Annotated Bibliography for approval. This task is worth 5% of the Research Essay. Details to follow.

The Essay is due on the date specified in the lecture and reading schedule below. **Late assignments will incur a late penalty of 2% per day**, up to a maximum of two weeks. Assignments handed in late should be submitted as an electronic copy **only** and submitted to the assignments tab on our course website on OWL; these assignments will not be appended with comments. Assignments submitted after the two-week period will not be accepted. Extenuating circumstances will be considered provided students seek academic accommodation if/when necessary (see below).

Midterm: The Midterm test will take place in class in Week 7/ Wednesday, October 28.

Final Exam: A combination of short answer and essay questions. The exam will be cumulative and will be written during the December examination period (date, time, location TBA).

Participation: The participation grade is comprised of two components: students' attendance and their participation in classroom activities, including in-class discussions and their accompanying tasks. Complete details of student responsibilities regarding the participation grade will be outlined in the first week of classes.

The Western Academic Calendar states: "Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course, will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course (after due warning has been given). On the recommendation of the department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course".

NOTE. If students miss class, they are not entitled to Academic Accommodation regarding the Attendance and Participation grade. This particular grade registers only students' presence in class and their participation. If you are absent from class, for whatever reason, your attendance and participation grade will decline. Exceptional circumstances are always considered. Please consult with me directly.

PLAGIARISM

There is zero tolerance for plagiarism in this course. Students must write their essays in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage, from another author in this case including from course notes, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing in the form of citations. This includes Internet sources. Plagiarism is a major academic offence. See the English Department's information sheet on plagiarism: <http://www.uwo.ca/english/undergraduate/Student%20Information.html>

Plagiarism checking: All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the

detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

For English Department regulations governing term work, exams, faculty office hours, academic relief (appeals, petitions, complaints), and other matters, please consult Information for Students on our Department website at

<http://www.uwo.ca/english/undergraduate/Student%20Information.html>

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth (either alone or in combination) 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counseling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department.

Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. The Student Medical Certificate (SMC) can be found at http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf.

See the full policy here:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf

Mental Health @ Western

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health @ Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

TECHNOLOGY

While the use of technology is permitted in class, students should use their devices – laptops, tablets, etc. – for classroom-related activities and note-taking only. If the use of technology becomes distracting or disrupts classroom proceedings, the use of devices will be revoked. Kindly be responsible for your use of technology.

LECTURE AND READING SCHEDULE

- Week 1** Introduction: History, Theory, Method
Wednesday, Sept. 16 Course presentation: readings, objectives, assignments, participation, etc.
Course texts: *The Cultural Studies Reader*, 3rd edn.
A brief history ft. key concepts: Arnold, Leavis, Hoggart, and Williams; Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS)
What is Culture Studies?
- Week 2** Ideology
Wednesday, Sept. 23 Stuart Hall, “Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies”
Antonio Gramsci, “The Organization of Education and Culture” from *The Prison Notebooks*
Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus” (handout)
- Week 3** Culture in the Urban Space
Wednesday, Sept. 30 Henri Lefebvre, “Notes on the New Town”
Michel de Certeau, “Walking in the City”
Raymond Williams, “Ideas of Nature”
- Week 4** Language and Power
Wednesday, Oct. 7 Signs and Signifiers; Ferdinand de Saussure
Derrida and *Différance*
Roland Barthes, “From Work to Text”
Brazil, dir. Terry Gilliam
- Week 5** The Popular Culture Industry
Wednesday, Oct. 14 Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as mass deception”
Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in an Age of Mechanical Reproduction”
- Week 6** Media and Public Spheres
Wednesday, Oct. 21 Stuart Hall, “Encoding, Decoding”
Jodi Dean, “The Net and Multiple Realities”
The Digital space
Study in Local Culture due (10%)
- Week 7** Positing Posts: Postmodernism, Poststructuralism, Postcolonialism
Wednesday, Oct. 28 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, “Postmodernization, or the Informatization of Production”
Midterm Test (15%)

- Week 8** The Language of Difference: Gender, Sexuality, Race, Class
Wednesday, Nov. 4 Simone de Beauvoir, “The Independent Woman” from *The Second Sex*

Judith Butler, “Subversive Bodily Acts” from *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*
Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, “Axiomatic” from Introduction to *Epistemology of the Closet*
Paul Gilroy, “The Crisis of ‘Race’ and Raciology”
- Week 9** Identity and Subjectivity
Wednesday, Nov. 11 Dick Hebdige, “Subculture and Style”
Fashion and Culture: Hipster
Léolo, dir. Jean-Claude Lauzon
Research Essay Intro + Annotated Bibliography (5%)
- Week 10** Power and Consumption
Wednesday, Nov. 18 Mike Featherstone, “Theories of Consumer Culture”
(handout)
Michel Foucault, “We ‘other’ Victorians” from *The History of Sexuality Part I* (handout)
- Week 11** Nature vs. Science and Cyberculture
Wednesday, Nov. 25 Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in an Age of Mechanical Reproduction”
Donna Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto”
Blade Runner, dir. Ridley Scott
- Week 12** Globalization and Nation
Wednesday, Dec. 2 Edward Said, “Travel Theory Reconsidered”
Arjun Appadurai, “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy”
Bruno Latour, “War of the Worlds”
Research Essay due (20%)
- Week 13** Wednesday, Dec. 9 Course recap and exam prep
Exam Date/Location TBA (35%)

Week-by-week schedule is subject to change. Updates will be made online via OWL.