

Department of English & Writing Studies

**English 2250F (001)**  
**Introduction to Cultural Studies**  
Fall 2016

**Instructor:** Emily Kring  
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Office: TBA  
Office hours: TBA, or by appointment

**Location:** Arts & Humanities Building 2R21

**Date/time:** Wednesday 6:30pm-9:30pm

Teaching Assistant: TBA

**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.



Course Description

As a term, “culture” is amorphous: it’s evocative insofar as we answer the question “what is it” with “everything”—so why do we study it? This course asks students to interrogate their assumptions about what constitutes “culture” by introducing them to the central topics, terms, and analytical tools of the interdisciplinary field of cultural studies. With emphasis on applying some of the field’s most famous theories to a range of contemporary texts, events, and phenomena, students are invited to question (a) what are the values of studying culture and its productions, (b) for whom and for what purposes culture operates, and (c) how understanding and engaging the work and works of culture shapes the way we live in the world. As an introductory survey to a diverse field, this course will focus variously on topics such as: ideology, representation, economy, feminism, queer theory, race, globalization, activism, and ecology.

Importantly, this course surveys the field with attention to the work of “intersectional” and “interdisciplinary” approaches to studying culture: what do these terms mean? How does one do work that is “intersectional” and/or “interdisciplinary” in nature? As these approaches are becoming increasingly central to the work of cultural studies—and of literary studies, too—this course will ground students’ introduction to cultural studies in understanding how to skilfully produce and critique intersectional analyses of cultural texts.

**Learning Objectives:**

- To become familiar with the history of cultural studies and its foundational concepts;
- To actively apply these foundational concepts to a range of contemporary cultural texts;
- To develop oral communication skills by way of respectful, engaged dialogue with peers and the instructor/teaching assistant;
- To sharpen existing close-reading abilities by applying those skills to new types of texts;
- To offer students the opportunity to ground the theories and ideas formative to cultural studies in specific geopolitical contexts.

**Learning Outcomes:**

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

- Analyze cultural texts with close attention to their inherent and contextual agendas and effects;
- Apply close-reading skills to written responses and essays that persuasively present nuanced arguments, supported by secondary research;
- Comfortably reference texts and support ideas with the most recent edition of MLA citation format.

Course Materials

**Required Texts:**

All required readings are posted free on OWL

- David France's *How to Survive A Plague*\*
- Göran Olsson's *Concerning Violence*\*
- \*(documentaries will be screened on-campus prior to class)

Methods of Evaluation

Participation & attendance:	10%
Response paper (to one of the weekly case-studies):	10%
Midterm:	15%
Research essay:	30%
Final Exam:	35%

A student must receive a passing grade for both term work and the final examination in order to receive a passing grade for the course. This applies to all courses in all programs offered by the department. Students whose term and final exam grades average 50% or above, even though one of the two is a failure, shall receive a default grade of 48%. **Please note:** The department of English & Writing Studies does not release final grades. All undergraduate grade reports will be available online from the Office of the Registrar.

Students are fully responsible for looking at and being familiar with the information posted on the department website at <http://www.uwo.ca/english/undergraduate/info%20for%20students.html#grade>.

**Participation and Attendance (10%):**

Participation grades will be determined on the basis of your regular attendance to classes and your contributions to class discussions (i.e. asking thoughtful questions, offering your interpretations of the readings and case studies, and respectfully engaging with your peers).

You should come to class ready to discuss the assigned texts and ideas with me and with your peers (please read the texts before class, and bring them with you [either in digital or physical copy]). If you are nervous, shy, or typically avoid speaking up in-class, I encourage you to write down some thoughts, questions, or points of interest when you do the readings, and then to bring those to class so you don't feel pressure to participate on the spot.

The use of technology—laptops, tablets, et cetera—is permitted in this class, but please note that if your use of such technology becomes a distraction to your peers, I will be in touch to ask you to refrain from using technology during class.

**Midterm (1 hour, 15%):**

The midterm is a diagnostic assignment that will allow me to get a sense of your comfort with the material and your ability to apply it to some of the case studies discussed in-class.

The midterm will consist of four definitions (of key terms/concepts we've covered in class) and one essay. The essay questions will be provided in advance of the test: the idea here is to actively practice the kinds of close analysis and reading that we've explored in-class prior to beginning your research essay.

**Response Paper (1000 words max.):**

As outlined in the reading schedule below, each week's topic/area of focus is accompanied by a case study; together, the readings and case studies will form the basis of how we put theoretical texts into conversation with contemporary cultural texts, movements, and music. (i.e. our week on "agency and activism" will be accompanied by a case study of the Indigenous-led movement #IdleNoMore).

The purpose of the response paper is for you to, in advance of the class, prepare a 4-5 page close analysis of the week's readings and case study. Your response paper should not use secondary sources, as the focus of the paper is to perform a close analysis, but it must utilize MLA style to reference the week's texts, and must be handed in at the beginning of the class of your choosing.

The response paper can be handed in at any point during the term up until the second-to-last class; if you wish to write your response paper on a cultural text/movement that is not listed on our syllabus, please visit me in office hours or send me an email to set up an appointment.

**Research Essay (2500 words, 30%):**

This essay is an opportunity for you to research and analyze a particular concept, phenomena, or issue of your choosing in-depth.

You must use secondary sources in your paper, and you must cite all of your research materials according to the MLA style manual. Your essay will be submitted in hard copy at the beginning of the class it is due.

**Please note that you must come to talk either to me or to the course's teaching assistant about your ideas for the research essay prior to its submission. If you do not visit one of us, your paper will not be accepted.**

**Final Exam (3 hours, 35%):**

The final exam will consist of three parts: terms, short answers, and an essay. As with the midterm, you will be given the essay questions in advance of the exam date with the expectation that you prepare an answer with argumentative focus and examples for the exam-day. More information on the final exam will be communicated later in the term.

**What you can expect from me:**

I will respond to emails within 24 hours (48 hours on weekends), and be engaged and ready to discuss our weekly topics, to answer your questions, and to encourage you to develop your critical thinking, research, and writing skills. In addition to holding regular office hours, I will be available for appointments should you wish to discuss class material, assignments, or ideas for your research essays/response papers.

Overall, my role is to teach you the arguments, ideas, and concepts that are central to cultural studies: I encourage you to question my interpretations of texts, and I invite you to disagree with the texts themselves. As stated above, the aims of this course are largely to do with students developing and sharpening their close-analysis skills, while learning about culture and being self-reflexive about our own ideas and work—a sizeable part of this requires an exercise of your intellectual individuality: as an instructor, you can expect me to challenge and support your learning throughout the term.

**Reading Schedule\***

\*Please note: while our reading schedule seems heavy on first glance, many readings are excerpts, and I have chosen the weekly “case studies” to allow you maximum time to dedicate to the readings; most are websites, short interviews, or music videos that require more intellectual labour from you than they do time in front of a page/screen.

**Sept. 14—What is Cultural Studies?**

Course introduction: key thinkers and the development of cultural studies  
Raymond Williams’ “Culture” (OWL)  
Stuart Hall’s “Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies” (OWL)

**Sept. 21—Economy and Ideology**

Louis Althusser’s “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” (OWL)  
Theodor Adorno & Max Horkheimer’s “The Culture Industry” (OWL)

Case study: Sports fandoms (see: <http://www.theguardian.com/sport/2015/jun/19/we-want-to-believe-the-creation-of-sports-fan-as-brand-identity>, and *The New York Times*’ profile of the Toronto Raptors Superfan Nav Bhatia: [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/21/sports/basketball/a-die-hard-fan-is-loving-the-raptors-success.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/21/sports/basketball/a-die-hard-fan-is-loving-the-raptors-success.html?_r=0))

**Sept. 28—Words: Signs and Representation**

from Stuart Hall’s “The Work of Representation” (OWL)

Case study: Visit âpihtawikosisân’s (Chelsea Vowel’s) “Headdress Hall of Shame” (see: <http://apihtawikosisan.com/hall-of-shame/>)

### **Oct. 5—Cultures of Space and Mobility**

Michel Foucault's "Space, Power and Knowledge" (OWL)

Michel de Certeau "Walking in the City" (OWL)

Case study: International & participatory walking tour "hear you are --- [murmur]" (see: <http://murmurtoronto.ca/about.php>)

### **Oct. 12—Feminism**

from Susan Bordo's *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (OWL)

Sarah Ahmed's "Feminist Killjoys" from *The Promise of Happiness* (OWL)

Case study: Pro-Eating Disorder Communities (see:

<https://theoproanalifestyleforever.wordpress.com/>) & Instagram-aesthetic food in eating disorder recovery (see users: <https://www.instagram.com/balancednotclean/>; & <https://www.instagram.com/recoveringdana/>)

### **Oct. 19—Queer Theory & Sexuality**

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's "Axiomatic" (OWL)

from Lee Edelman's *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (OWL)

Case study: David France's *How to Survive a Plague* (available on Netflix & will be screened on campus prior to class).

### **Oct. 26—Race & Identity Politics\***

Frantz Fanon's "The Fact of Blackness" (OWL)

Ta Nehisi-Coates' "Chapter 1" of *Between the World and Me* (OWL)

Case study: Listen to Lupe Fiasco's "American Terrorist" ft. Matthew Santos (see: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P7Y\\_rJhjCLM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P7Y_rJhjCLM))

### **\*Midterm test (second half of class)**

### **Nov. 2—Colonialism & Postcolonialism**

Achille Mbembe's "Provisional Notes on the Postcolony" (OWL)

from Frantz Fanon's *Concerning Violence* (OWL)

Case study: Göran Olsson's *Concerning Violence* (will be screened on campus prior to class)

### **Nov. 9—Globalization and the "Global Citizen"**

Benedict Anderson's "Imagined Communities: Nationalism's Cultural Roots" (OWL)

Kwame Appiah's keynote address "Global Citizenship" (OWL)

Case study: UWO's Alternative Spring Break Program & Voluntourism; See "barbiesaviour" (<https://www.instagram.com/barbiesavior/?hl=en> & <http://asb.uwo.ca/about/>)

### **Nov. 16—Agency & Activism**

Taiiaki Alfred & Jeff Corntassel's "Being Indigenous: Resurgences Against Contemporary Colonialism" (OWL)

Case study: A Tribe Called Red's "Nation to Nation," and "Burn Your Village to the Ground" (available on YouTube).

If you are unfamiliar with the #IdleNoMore movement, you can read Glen Coulthard's "#IdleNoMore in Historical Context" for a brief overview (see: <https://decolonization.wordpress.com/2012/12/24/idlenomore-in-historical-context/>).

**Nov. 23— Cultural Studies and Intersectionality\***

Patricia Hill Collins' "Toward a New Vision: Race, Class, and Gender as Categories of Analysis and Connection" (OWL)

Judith Butler's "What's Wrong with 'All Lives Matter'?"

([http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/01/12/whats-wrong-with-all-lives-matter/?\\_r=0](http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/01/12/whats-wrong-with-all-lives-matter/?_r=0))

Case study: Black feminism & Black Lives Matter (see: <http://blacklivesmatter.com/herstory/>, & "Women and Black Lives Matter: An Interview with Marcia Chatelain," at: <https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/women-black-lives-matter-interview-marcia-chatelain>)

**\*Last day to submit response paper**

**Nov. 30—Cultural Studies and Interdisciplinarity**

Imre Szeman's "How to Know About Oil: Energy Epistemologies and Political Futures" (OWL)

Case study: Karen Solie's "Bitumen" (available online at:

<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/detail/58088>) and Warren Cariou's "Petrography" project (browse photos at: <http://www.warrencariou.com/petrography/>)

**Dec. 7—Review!**

Final essays due; bring any queries you have about the final exam and/or course material to class, and we will go over them as a group after summarizing the course materials (feel free to submit these queries to me through email prior to class).

Accommodation

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling 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 UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and further information regarding this policy can be found at [http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/accommodation\\_medical.pdf](http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf).

**Downloadable Student Medical Certificate (SMC):**

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf)

### Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

### **Plagiarism:**

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence.

### **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 for such checking 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 The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

### Support Services

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Centre <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

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