

# Bellevue College

## **SOC 210, Sociology of Popular Culture, 5 Credits**

Fully Online Course

Spring Quarter, 2012 April 2<sup>nd</sup> – June 12<sup>th</sup>

Sara Sutler-Cohen, Ph.D.

Email: [sara.sutercohen@bellevuecollege.edu](mailto:sara.sutercohen@bellevuecollege.edu)

Phone: (425) 546-5722 (Email will always be answered first.)

Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday 12:30 – 1:30 A100C

### COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course asks us: What role does popular culture play in our lives? What role do we play in the formation and maintenance of popular culture? We will explore these questions in an attempt to understand various schools of thought in the vast field of cultural studies as we try and understand what makes the popular, popular. Of interest is also what role popular culture plays in national and international political forums. Can popular culture be subversive? Who breaks dominant traditions in cultural dynamics? What makes underground cultural acts eventual popular trends?

We will most closely examine the influence of U.S. popular culture in globalization and global settings, and will explore the formal elements of film and televisual style as well as the relationship between

popular culture texts and audiences as well as political platforms. We will pay close attention to the way in which minorities are represented in popular culture, and how marginalized groups subvert the dominant discourse that has traditionally shaped them through a variety of popular culture mediums.

Finally, we will use sociological tools to interrogate the relationship between mass culture and society, with a goal of understanding popular culture's role in strengthening (or eroding) identities based upon race, sexuality, class, gender, patterns of consumption, or other aspects of modern subjectivity. Pop Culture scholar Omayra Cruz (2005) tells us that "...the study of popular culture requires a mindset that can handle...complexity and even contradiction." It is with this *mindset* that we embark on a tour of the popular, no matter what side of it we occupy.

**"The reality is it's up to you guys to figure out how the media works and break through."**

– Claudia Dreifus

**A NOTE ABOUT COURSE CONTENT:** Since sociologists examine just about every aspect of the social world, we talk about provocative material. Please be advised that when we explore controversial topics, they will always be framed within an academic context. Keeping in mind that when we find ourselves in a space outside of our comfort zone, it's an opportunity for



learning, and you may be confronted with subject matter that is difficult to watch, see, discuss, or listen to. Please note, however, that you will be responsible for any course material you miss if you choose not to participate. If you have any questions or concerns about content or climate, feel free to speak with me about it right away.

#### **READING REQUIREMENTS:**

- Crothers, Lane. *Globalization and American Popular Culture*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., 2009.
- Handouts and articles
  - ***ALL*** handouts are available on the course website.

#### **RECOMMENDED READINGS:**

- Oxford Dictionary of the English Language
- Any current Sociology Dictionary
- *A Writer's Reference*, 6<sup>th</sup> Ed. By Diana Hacker. See the companion website here:  
<http://www.dianahacker.com/>

#### **LEARNING AND COURSE OUTCOMES:**

Upon your dedicated participation and subsequent completion of this course, you will:

1. Demonstrate a general understanding of concepts used in sociology and popular culture.
2. Show critical analyses of popular culture texts and be able to explain and discuss how the intersections of race, class, and gender are represented and maintained in popular culture texts.
3. Demonstrate a general understanding of the dominant representations and identity constructions of minority people in historical and contemporary analyses of US popular culture.
4. Demonstrate a general understanding of production analysis.
5. Demonstrate a critical understanding of textual analysis.
6. Show your understanding of popular culture through an historical lens.

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:** If you have medical information to share with me in the event of an emergency, please contact me via email or come to see me during office hours. Emergency preparedness is important! If you need course modifications, adaptations, or accommodations because of a disability, I can refer you to our Disability Resource Center (DRC). If you prefer, you may contact them directly by going to B132 or by calling 425.564.2498 or TTY 425.564.4110. Information is also available on their [website](#).

**EXPLORE THE LMC!** The Library Media Center is at your fingertips! I *strongly* encourage you to visit the LMC at least once a week, but you can also access it via the web. Talk to a Reference Librarian at the Library (D-126), by calling (425) 564-6161, or by [email](#).

- [Main Library Media Center](#)
- [For the LMC online catalog](#)
- [For article databases](#)

#### **GENERAL RULES & EXPECTATIONS:**

- Check in to our online classroom no less than *four times per week* (yes – I do keep track!).
- Complete readings and homework assignments ***on time***.
- Late homework assignments ***are accepted***, but make-up exams ***are not permitted***.
  1. Late homework is docked 10% for every day the work is late, including Saturdays and Sundays.

- I expect that your behavior in our virtual classroom be respectful. Continued disrespectful behavior in my class will result in your grade lowering. Please keep your postings to discussion boards (DBs) thoughtful and polite. One-on-one conversations should be taken off-board and onto email so our DBs don't get clogged. If you find at any point that you are uncomfortable with anything posted to a DB, please email me right away.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

<b>Attendance and Participation*:</b>	200 points
<b>Key Terms Assignments (5):</b>	100 points
<b>Your Turn Assignments (5):</b>	200 points
<b>Discussion Boards (3):</b>	300 points
<b>Course Exams, Overall:</b>	200 points
<b>TOTAL:</b>	1000 points

*\*Participation points accrue with various short assignments on the DB, such as your Introductory DB. These are labeled **PARTICIPATION DBs**. These may get added as the course goes along. It's possible your total points do not accumulate to 1000 if we don't use all of the participation points. The Graded DB assignments are labeled **GRADED DBs**. Please be aware of this difference.\**

*The Fine Print (or, what I really mean by that table above):*

**Attendance & Participation:** Check in no less than four times per week, be engaged with all of your discussion board assignments, provoke energetic and polite discussion, listen actively, work respectfully with your colleagues in class, take loads of notes from your readings, look up words you don't understand, ask questions, think critically about the world around you, etc. Additionally, several of your discussion boards also double as participation points.

**Key Terms Assignments:** You will be expected to understand certain terms used in the Sociology of Popular Culture. For these assignments, you will need to write a definition in your own words and demonstrate your understanding by explaining by a real-world example.

**Your Turn Assignments:** These short assignments are an opportunity to put your learning to use as you explore the world of popular culture around you using the Sociological Imagination.

**Discussion Board Assignments:** The work done in the Discussion Board area will have you engage course material and work closely together. You are expected to participate in these assignments in order to generate critical discussion amongst one another. This method of learning gets you going socially! These assignments are always due on Wednesdays and Fridays (your initial post goes up Wednesday and your responses to one another are due Fridays). Your DBs are graded on two things: your original post and your responses (usually two of them) to colleagues of yours in the class. You must do both to earn full credit. A submission with no responses posted earns ½ credit at most, and responses without an original submission receive zero credit.

**Participation Discussion Board Assignments:** These are meant to support you throughout the course and will include things like Introductions, Quiz Study Sessions & General Q&A. They are required and the grades get folded into your overall Participation Grade.

**Exams:** Your Exams cover everything up through the week they're given, and may include multiple choice and/or short-answer questions (either or both). Your responses should be clear and concise. Your short-answer responses will

range from no less than **one full paragraph**, to three **full paragraphs**. In lieu of study guides for our short exams, you can rely solely on the material presented in class and the Newman text.

**For all of your written work:** Submit proofread work **only**. Work not proofread will be returned **once** for a rewrite, expected to be handed in within 48 hours. If you need help with your writing, please make use of the following student support services:

- [Academic Success Center](#)
- [Academic Tutoring Center](#)
- [TRiO Student Support Services](#)
- [Writing Lab @ BCC](#)

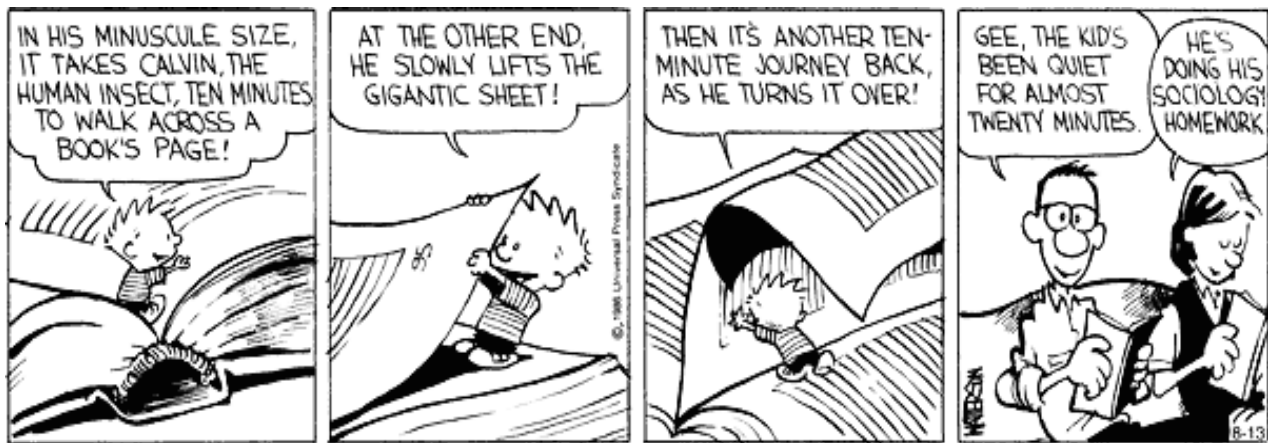
**Below is a checklist for you to go over before you hand in each written assignment.**

- Twelve-point sized Times font, double-spaced
- 1" margins all around
- MLA Citations where appropriate – you need to give credit to the author/s even where any *ideas* presented in the paper are not your own
- Title pages and bibliographies are not counted in final page count
- Student information is at the top left of the page, single spaced
- There are no extra spaces between paragraphs.
- Paragraphs contain no less than four sentences.
- Magazines, newspapers, journals, and books are *italicized*. Movie titles, article titles, song titles, etc. are “in quotation marks.” Quotes inside of a quotation use ‘single quotation marks.’

**Your written work is evaluated on:**

- 1) Content
  - a. Fulfilling the assignment.
  - b. Developing your argument and making use of examples and evidence to support your argument.
  - c. Flow of thought throughout the paper, with strong analyses and conclusions.
- 2) Writing Style
  - a. Excellent command of the written English language. In other words, most excellent grammar.  
**NOTE: If you struggle with grammar and spelling or are an ESL student, please let me know! I'm happy to work with you and point you in the right direction.**
  - b. Clarity of thought.
  - c. Good organization and attention to detail.
  - d. Persuasiveness of your argument/s.
  - e. Creativity. Make it an interesting read!
  - f. PROOFREAD your work. Please do a spell/grammar check before you hand it in.
  - g. Dude, like totally don't write **colloquially**. A conversation is a conversation. A paper is an entirely different set of discussions. ☺
- 3) Preventing Plagiarism: Plagiarism is a form of academic dishonesty that occurs when a student uses information or material from outside sources without proper citation and is grounds for disciplinary action. It is your responsibility to understand plagiarism and its consequences. Plagiarism occurs if:

- a. You do not cite quotations and/or attribute borrowed ideas.
- b. You fail to enclose borrowed language in quotation marks.
- c. You do not write summaries and paraphrases in his/her own words and/or doesn't document his/her source.
- d. You turn in work created by another person (e.g., another student, downloaded from the internet, etc.).
- e. You submit or use your own prior work for a current or past course, or work from one current course in another course *without express permission* from your professors. This may also be considered academic dishonesty.
- f. Consequences: If it is determined that you have plagiarized or engaged in other forms of academic dishonesty, you will likely fail the assignment and possibly the course, despite points earned through other work. Acts of academic dishonesty are reviewed for disciplinary action.



**Grading:** Please use the following rubric to help explain the grade you're given for a given assignment. You will receive a Numerical Grade from me, with little-to-no commentary. This is only because I've found that most students do not read written comments from their professors. Please do not hesitate to come to me with any questions you ever have on a grade you receive. There is no limit to how many times you email me! My email door is *always* open and I'm always happy to go over grades with you.

**90-100 = A.** The A paper shows me you're engaged with the readings, the media, and the lectures in class by utilizing quotes and ideas. It's a paper *completely free* from grammar and spelling errors, and demonstrates your command not only of the English language, but of the form and flow of a solid piece of written work. I also like to see/read/hear your "writing voice." That is, I want your style to come through! Your arguments should be solid and backed up with intellectual ammunition. You should demonstrate a strong understanding of our readings and the in-class media and how they intersect with one another. Your ideas should be "fleshed out" and not just a series of statements, in other words.

**80-89 = B.** The B tells me you're doing very good work. You may have a couple of grammar issues, but your paper is still tidy and the writing is still strong. You have a firm grasp on the themes in the course but you may not be as well-versed in the readings and/or media and/or lecture material as you could be. I should see that you're being challenged and that you're struggling with the course issues and themes, and what they represent to you in an interconnected way. Your understandings of some of the course materials are stronger than others.

**70-79 = C.** The C paper means that you're not as invested in the material as I would like to see. Your writing is relatively weaker than it could be and you're not thinking as critically as I would like you to. Some of what you point

out I may not follow logically, and your use of the course materials may not be as solid as it could be. You omit some of the important points raised in class.

**60-69 = D.** Ah, the D. D is for “Don’t be Discouraged.” A D paper is not proofread, nor does it deal critically with the themes in the course. It responds, perhaps, to one part of one of the readings but there is no integration of material and you’re not responding to the questions raised in class. Demonstrated understanding of the course materials is not presented clearly, or at all. (NOTE: A D and below may be rewritten **once** if you choose to do so. It must be turned in within 72 hours, and I enter the better grade.)

## **COURSE OUTLINE AND SCHEDULE (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)**

**READINGS DUE MONDAYS UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED**

### **Week One: April 2-6**

#### **Thematic Overview:**

- Introduction to this course
- Understanding Sociology and Popular Culture

#### **Readings (please have your reviews of the Power Points done by Friday this week only):**

- Pop Culture Definitions Power Point
- What is Sociology? Power Point

#### **Assignments:**

- Participation I: Personal Introduction due Friday, April 6<sup>th</sup>, midnight.

### **Week Two: April 9-13**

#### **Thematic Overview:**

- Popular Culture is Global, Global Popular Culture is...American?

#### **Readings:**

- *Globalization & American Popular Culture*: Chapter One: “American Popular Culture and Globalization”

#### **Assignments:**

- Key Terms Assignment I due Friday, April 13<sup>th</sup>, midnight

### **Week Three: April 16-20**

#### **Thematic Overview:**

- What makes American Popular Culture, “American.”

#### **Readings:**

- *Globalization & American Popular Culture*: Chapter Two: “American” Popular Culture

#### **Assignments:**

- Your Turn Assignment I: Stereotypes of Women due Friday, April 20<sup>th</sup>, midnight

### **Week Four: April 23-27**

#### **Thematic Overview:**

- The Movie, Music, and Television Machines of the World.

#### **Readings:**

- *Globalization & American Popular Culture*: Chapter Three: The Global Scope of American Movies, Music, and Television

**Assignments:**

- Key Terms II due Friday, April 27<sup>th</sup>, midnight
- Discussion Board I initial posting due Wednesday, April 25<sup>th</sup>, midnight. Respond to two people by Saturday, April 28<sup>th</sup>, midnight.

**Week Five: April 30 – May 4**

**Thematic Overview:**

- Cool, Cooler, Coolest, \$\$?

**Films:**

- [\*The Merchants of Cool\*](#) – watch the full program
- 

**Assignments:**

- Midterm Examination Friday, May 4<sup>th</sup>. Covers Weeks 1-5. The midterm will be open from Friday, 8:00am through Sunday, midnight. You may only begin/open it once so be sure you're ready to take it when you click Start! The midterm will be open for four hours to accommodate all students.
- Your Turn Assignment II – The Merchants of Cool due Friday, May 4<sup>th</sup>, midnight

**Week Six: May 7-11**

**Thematic Overview:**

- Semiotics in Action: Brands, Popular Culture, and American Globalization

**Readings:**

- *Globalization & American Popular Culture*: Chapter Four: The American Global Cultural Franchise

**Assignments:**

- Key Terms Assignment III due Friday, May 11<sup>th</sup>, midnight
- Participation II: Mid-Term Check-In due Friday, May 11<sup>th</sup>, midnight

**Week Seven: May 14-18**

**Thematic Overview:**

**Film:**

- *This Film Is Not Yet Rated*. This film can be seen on [YouTube](#) or Netflix Streaming. You can also rent the film from most video rental stores. ***Please note there is explicit violence, sex, and language in this film.***

**Assignments:**

- Your Turn Assignment III: What do you think? Due Friday, May 18<sup>th</sup>, midnight
- Discussion Board II initial posting due Wednesday, May 16<sup>th</sup>, midnight. Respond to two people by Saturday, May 19<sup>th</sup>, midnight.

**Week Eight: May 21-25**

**Thematic Overview:**

- There's nothing to fear, but..?

**Readings:**

- *Globalization & American Popular Culture*: Chapter Five: Global Trade and the Fear of American Popular Culture

**Film:**

- [Operation Hollywood](#)

**Assignments:**

- Key Terms Assignment IV due Friday, May 25<sup>th</sup>
- Your Turn Assignment IV – Operation Hollywood due Friday, May 25<sup>th</sup>

**Week Nine: May 28 – June 1**

**Thematic Overview:**

- Your Future, Our future

**Readings:**

- *Globalization & American Popular Culture*: Chapter Six: American Popular Culture & the Future of Globalization

**Assignments:**

- Key Terms Assignment V due Friday, June 1<sup>st</sup>
- Your Turn Assignment V due Friday, June 1<sup>st</sup>

**Week Ten: June 4-8**

**Thematic Overview:**

- Making sense of it all!

**Readings:**

- *No Reading This Week – prep for final exam*

**Assignments:**

- Discussion Board III initial posting due Wednesday, June 6<sup>th</sup>, midnight. Respond to two people by Saturday, June 9<sup>th</sup>, midnight.

**Week Eleven: June 11 – 12**

**June 12<sup>th</sup> is the last day of classes for all of Bellevue College**

**Finals take place June 13-15. *Your final is due the 15<sup>th</sup>, by 5:00pm***

**Assignments:**

- Final Exam Preparation – please submit questions in the Discussion Board, “Final Exam Q & A” and use this time to study for your final exam. You will need to prepare ahead of time, as your final consists of your watching a film (there will be several to choose from) and you should expect to spend some time tracking it down. I will make sure there are at least two films available to you fully online. You will be expected to incorporate theories and themes from over the course of the term into an analysis on the film.

**FINAL EXAM**

**Distributed as a handout in the ASSIGNMENTS area, where it will also be submitted.**

**Due Friday, June 15<sup>th</sup> by 5:00pm. PLEASE NOTE THE TIME!**

*Thank you for a wonderful term!*