

Bellevue College

SOC 210, Sociology of Popular Culture, 5 Credits

Spring 2010: April 5th – June 18th L219

Final Exam: Friday, June 18th 11:30 – 1:20pm

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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, 2nd Ed., 2009.
- Handouts and articles
 - **ALL** handouts are available on the course website through MyBC (www.mybcc.net). Due to budgetary constraints, I do not make paper handouts. You have the option of printing them out or reading them online; please use whatever method best suits your learning style.

RECOMMENDED READINGS:

- Oxford Dictionary of the English Language
- Any current Sociology Dictionary
- *A Writer's Reference, 6th 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.

GENERAL RULES & EXPECTATIONS:

- Attend class every day and *on time*. Please be responsible for your own attendance. Important announcements are at the beginning of class and are not repeated – coming to class late is disruptive to other students so do your best to avoid this.
- Complete readings and homework assignments *on time*.
- Emailed assignments **are not accepted**.
- Deadlines are non-negotiable. Late homework assignments **are accepted**, but make-up exams and in-class work **are not**.
 1. Late homework is docked 10% for every day the work is late, including Saturdays and Sundays.
- I expect that your behavior in our classroom be respectful. So think before you speak! ☺ Continued disrespectful behavior in my class may result in your being asked to leave class and will result in your grade lowering. **Electronic devices are not allowed without permission.**
- **There are no extra credit assignments for this class.**
- Please consider this course a learning community, and one that everyone takes responsibility for and brings to it a certain modicum of respect.

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 as soon as possible. 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 at <http://bellevuecollege.edu/drc/>

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: reference@bellevuecollege.edu.

- **Main Library Media Center:** <http://bellevuecollege.edu/lmc/>
- **For the LMC online catalog:** <http://bellevuecollege.edu/lmc/catalogs.html>
- **For article databases:** <http://bellevuecollege.edu/lmc/periodicals.html>

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

For this course, you will be writing short critical response papers to popular culture texts, using the handouts provided to you. There is one Midterm Examination this term. You will also be doing a research assignment resulting in either a creative presentation or a research paper. Directions are explained below.

**ASSESSMENT, EVALUATION, AND ASSIGNMENT DETAILS:****COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

Attendance and Participation:	250 points
Critical Response Papers (3):	300 points
Final Project (1):	250 points
Midterm Exam (1):	200 points
TOTAL:	1000 points

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

Participation:

Come to class, be on time, provoke energetic discussion, speak out, listen actively, work diligently and respectfully in groups, bring readings to class with copious notes of your scribble in the margins, look up words you don't understand or know, ask questions, etc. Oh yes and lest I forget: Think critically about the world around you. A lot.

Midterm and Final:

Your Exams will cover everything up through the week they're scheduled and will usually include multiple choice and short-answer questions (either or both). Your responses should be clear and concise. Your short-answer responses must range from no less than one full (four-sentence) paragraph, to three full paragraphs. If you're up on your reading and do not miss class, you should have no problem. Study guides will be made available to you on the MyBC site. You will *never* be asked a question out of "left field". Questions will be based on readings, in-class discussion, and lecture material. Information about point distribution for each question will be on the exams.

Critical Response Papers:

For these assignments, you will be asked to write about your ideas based a topic or issue raised in lecture and/or from the readings, and drawing from the various media we "read" in class. You are encouraged to learn from one another for these assignments, and there will be plenty of class time dedicated to this. Concern yourself less with the "right" answers and use these assignments as a space to create your own critically sound argument/s, based on your own interpretation of the texts.

Final Project:

This is a free-flowing and creative project for which you come up with the idea(s) on your own. You may work on this independently or pairs. You must choose a topic that intersects popular culture and sociology. You will spend some time researching your topic and then choose whether you want to generate a creative way of presenting your research or produce an *exploratory* research paper. For the creative project, you must do *original art work*, but you *do not* have to be an “artist!” Students have done paintings, skits, or documentary films in the past. I will bring examples of past student work into the classroom. What the project ends up looking like is also up to you (I will help you stay on track to make certain it remains sociologically relevant). Really, there is no limit to applying your sociological imagination to a project and getting something educational out of it! We’ll talk about this over the first couple of weeks of class. *All creative projects have a final writing component.* If you want to do a research *paper*, that’s fine, too. Guidelines for both types of research projects will be posted online. Choose a method and stick with it.

For all of your written work:

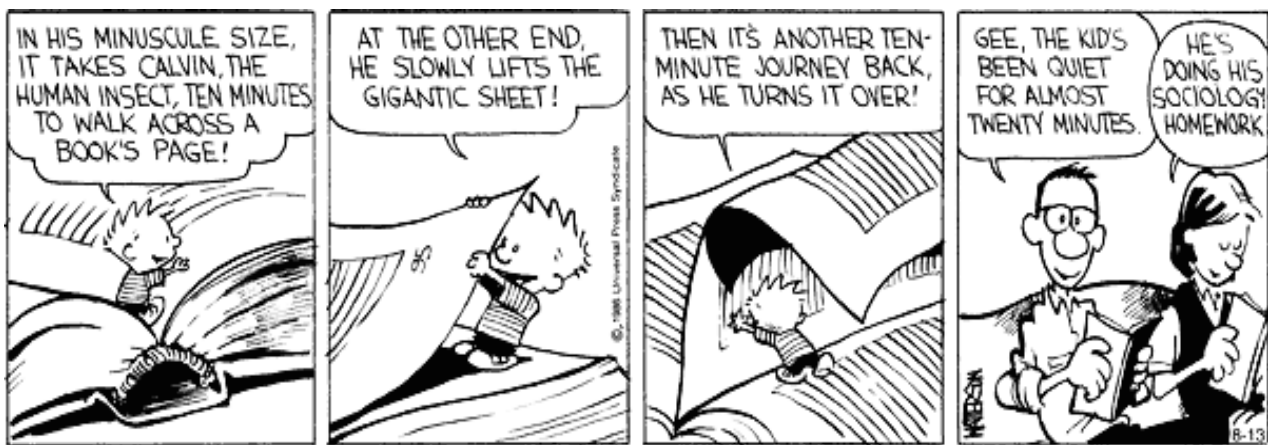
Please submit proofread work **only**. Sloppy writing will be returned for a rewrite, expected to be handed in within 48 hours. Below is a checklist you’ll want to go over before each written assignment is turned in. Discussion Board Entries count as written work and must also adhere to these guidelines.

- Twelve-point sized Times font, double-spaced.
- 1” margins all around.
- PAPERS ARE STAPLED.
- MLA Citations where appropriate – credit is given 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.




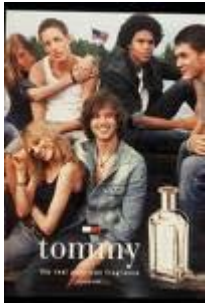
70-79 = C. The C paper means that you're not as invested in the material as I would like to see. Your writing is relatively weaker than it could be and you're not thinking as critically as I would like you to. Some of what you point out I may not follow logically, and your use of the course materials 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.)


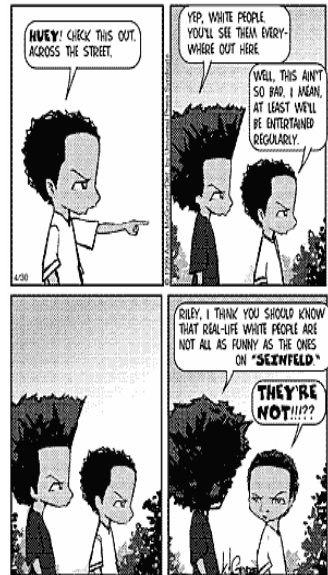
When you don't see your own images through the media or in books, you start thinking you're weird, and your self-esteem gets bruised.




- Francisco Alarcón, poet and dir. of Spanish for Native Speakers, UC Davis


COURSE OUTLINE AND SCHEDULE (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

<u>DATES, READINGS, THEMATIC OVERVIEWS:</u> READINGS DUE WEDNESDAYS READINGS NOT PART OF YOUR BOOK ARE UPLOADED TO MYBC	<u>ASSIGNMENTS:</u> ASSIGNMENTS DUE FRIDAYS <u>IN-CLASS</u> ASSIGNMENTS OCCUR OFTEN AND UNSCHEDULED AND ARE <u>ALWAYS</u> WORTH PARTICIPATION POINTS!
<p>Week One: April 5th – 9th</p> <p><u>Thematic Overview:</u> The Sociological Imagination Introduction to the course</p> <p><u>Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The Sociological Imagination” by C. Wright Mills • Your Syllabus! 	<p><u>Assignments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intro Warm-Ups • In-class game: Scene It!  <p>*Please consider joining a sociology listserv! http://www.sociolog.com/links/listservs.html*</p>
<p>Week Two: April 12th – 16th</p> <p><u>Thematic Overview:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is Popular Culture?  <p><u>Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pop Culture PPT 	<p><u>Assignments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-Class Discussion and Group Work • Research Paper Topic due
<p>Week Three: April 19th – 23rd</p> <p><u>Thematic Overview:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The influx of American Pop culture into the global village • Intersectionality <p><u>Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crothers Ch. 1: “American Popular Culture and Globalization” 	<p><u>Assignments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical Response Paper #1 Due 
<p>Week Four: April 26th – 30th</p> <p><u>Thematic Overview:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What makes it <i>American</i>, anyway? <p><u>Readings:</u> Crothers Ch. 2: “American’ Popular Culture”</p>	<p><u>Assignments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring in three pieces of text to share related to your Final Project • Research Project Outline (use directions for either Creative Research or Research Paper Projects) 

<u>DATES, READINGS, THEMATIC OVERVIEWS:</u> READINGS DUE WEDNESDAYS READINGS NOT PART OF YOUR BOOK ARE UPLOADED TO MyBC	<u>ASSIGNMENTS:</u> ASSIGNMENTS DUE FRIDAYS <i>IN-CLASS</i> ASSIGNMENTS OCCUR OFTEN AND UNSCHEDULED AND ARE <u>ALWAYS</u> WORTH PARTICIPATION POINTS!
<p>Week Five: May 3rd – 7th</p> <p><u>Thematic Overview:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mediated U.S. Pop Culture...and the rest of the world. <p><u>Readings:</u> Crothers Ch. 3: "The Global Scope of American Movies, Music, and Television"</p> 	<p><u>Assignments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Critical Response Paper #2 Due
<p>Week Six: May 10th – 14th</p> <p><u>Thematic Overview:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> U.S. Culture for sale! <p><u>Readings:</u> Crothers Ch. 4: "The American Global Cultural Franchise"</p>	<p><u>Assignments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Midterm Review Monday Midterm Exam Friday 

<p><u>DATES, READINGS, THEMATIC OVERVIEWS:</u></p> <p>READINGS DUE WEDNESDAYS</p> <p>READINGS NOT PART OF YOUR BOOK ARE UPLOADED TO MyBC</p>	<p><u>ASSIGNMENTS:</u></p> <p>ASSIGNMENTS DUE FRIDAYS</p> <p><u>IN-CLASS</u> ASSIGNMENTS OCCUR OFTEN AND UNSCHEDULED AND ARE <u>ALWAYS</u> WORTH PARTICIPATION POINTS!</p>
<p>Week Seven: May 17th – 21st</p> <p><u>Thematic Overview:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Terror and U.S. Popular/Political Culture  <p><u>Readings:</u> Crothers Ch. 5: “Global Trade and the Fear of American Popular Culture”</p>	<p><u>Assignments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Critical Response Paper #3 Due
<p>Week Eight: May 24th – 28th</p> <p><u>Thematic Overview:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The future is.... <p><u>Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crothers Ch. 6: “American Popular Culture and the Future of Globalization” 	<p><u>Assignments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research Paper Projects First Draft Due (see handout) Creative Research Projects Detailed Plan Due (see handout) 

<p><u>DATES, READINGS, THEMATIC OVERVIEWS:</u></p> <p>READINGS DUE WEDNESDAYS</p> <p>READINGS NOT PART OF YOUR BOOK ARE UPLOADED TO MyBC</p>	<p><u>ASSIGNMENTS:</u></p> <p>ASSIGNMENTS DUE FRIDAYS</p> <p><u>IN-CLASS</u> ASSIGNMENTS OCCUR OFTEN AND UNSCHEDULED AND ARE <u>ALWAYS</u> WORTH PARTICIPATION POINTS!</p>
<p>Week Nine: June 1st – June 4th No class May 31st – Memorial Day</p> <p><u>Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No readings – quarterly catch up and Crothers discussion • Work on your final projects/papers  <p><small>Repligator's Pop Art Filter</small></p>	<p><u>Assignments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-Class meetings with Dr. Sara • Group work in-class: Peer Review of Drafts (Participation Credit) Due Friday, June 4th. Swap material on Monday, June 1st
<p>Week Ten: June 7th – 11th Dr. Sara out of town this week for an NEH Workshop on Landmark Preservation in Brooklyn, NY!</p> <p><u>Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No readings – STUDY and PRACTICE for your presentations! 	 <p><u>Assignments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignments TBA • Work on your final projects/papers
<p>Week Eleven: June 14th, 15th</p> 	<p><u>Assignments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Presentations Mon, Tues • Final Research Project + Final Bibliography & Annotations • NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS THIS WEEK • Turn in all graded Research Paper assignments, including Peer Review handout, with comments to me via Blackboard email. Send them as attachments.

<u>DATES, READINGS, THEMATIC OVERVIEWS:</u> READINGS DUE WEDNESDAYS READINGS NOT PART OF YOUR BOOK ARE UPLOADED TO MyBC	<u>ASSIGNMENTS:</u> ASSIGNMENTS DUE FRIDAYS <u>IN-CLASS</u> ASSIGNMENTS OCCUR OFTEN AND UNSCHEDULED AND ARE <u>ALWAYS</u> WORTH PARTICIPATION POINTS!
Week Eleven: Finals Week	Final Presentations: Friday, June 18th 11:30 – 1:20pm 

EMAILING ME:

When you email me, ALWAYS put in the SUBJECT LINE the following, in this order:

SOC 210 – YOUR NAME – SUBJECT

For example: **SOC 210 – Jane Doe – Question about Midterm Question #2.**

Your emails will be answered much faster this way. For ease of communication, it is ESSENTIAL that you stick to this mode of emailing me.

ABOUT THE INSTRUCTOR:

When I'm not teaching, I'm usually whipping up some sort of baked goodness in my kitchen, doing collage art, taking photos of the world around me, hanging out with my kid, watching horror movies, or going out to listen to live music. Mostly, I go to hear metal, bluegrass, punk, or local hip-hop shows. I received my Ph.D. in Sociology (with an emphasis in American Studies) from UC Santa Cruz. I received my first MA in Sociology from Humboldt State University and my second MA in Sociology from UCSC, my BA in Sociology and Journalism from Mills College, and my AA in English and Creative Writing from Vista Community College. This is my fourth year as Instructor of Sociology at BCC, and my first year as Chair of the Social Science Division. I am the Programmer for BC's Annual American Indian Film Festival. I love to write and am currently working on a memoir and a collection of poetry. More at: <http://sara.sutlercohen.com>, or you can add me as a friend on Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/docsara>.

Thank you for a wonderful term!