

Bellevue College

SOC310 Popular Culture

Fully Online Course | Fall Quarter | September 17-December 6, 2018

Sara Sutler-Cohen, Ph.D.

Office Hours: Online Only. Email me for an appointment.

[Email](#) | [Website](#)

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 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 interdisciplinary academics examine just about every aspect of the social world, we talk about the provocative material. When we explore controversial topics, I frame them within an academic context. Keep in mind that when we find ourselves in a space outside of our comfort zone, it's an opportunity for learning, no matter the difficulty of the subject matter. Please note that you are responsible for any course material you miss if you choose not to participate. If you have questions or concerns about content or climate, feel free to speak with me about it right away.



READING REQUIREMENTS:

- Course reader, available on our Canvas classroom site. There is no textbook to purchase for this class.

STRONGLY RECOMMENDED READINGS:

- Any current Sociology Dictionary
- Any writing guide to help you in your quest for mastering college-level writing.
- Purdue College's [resources for college students](#).

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: If you have medical information to share with me in the event of an emergency, please contact me via email. Emergency preparedness is important! If you need course modifications, adaptations, or accommodations because of a disability, please see me immediately so I can also 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](#).

- [LMC Research Guide](#)
- [Main Library Media Center](#)
- [For article databases](#)



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 popular culture and cultural studies.
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 & global 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 a historical lens.

GENERAL RULES & EXPECTATIONS:

- Check in to our online classroom no less than *four times per week* (yes – I do keep track!). This means you log on and surf the site. No need to check in with me on this one. Make this class work for you on your own time.
- Complete readings and homework assignments *on time*. I do not check whether you complete your readings; this is on the honor system. You do need to read your required material to complete homework assignments.
- Late homework assignments *are accepted*, but *late exams are not*. Understand that this is *set in stone*. Take it seriously.
 1. Late homework is docked 10% for every day the work is late, including Saturdays and Sundays.
 2. Special note on Discussion Boards:
 1. Initial Posts are due on Thursdays by midnight.
 2. You are required to respond to the Initial Posts of at least two colleagues in your Main DBs. These responses are due Sundays by midnight (you may respond to people anytime between Thursdays and Sundays).
 3. To have an opportunity to receive full credit for Main DBs, you must complete the Initial Post *and* Responses. Initial Posts only receive half-credit. Responses-only receive zero credit. Take care to note this.
 4. If you are late on your DBs, I deduct based on your Initial Posts.
- I expect that your behavior in our virtual classroom is respectful. Continued disrespectful behavior in my class will result in your grade lowering. Please keep your postings on 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. Be wary of soapboxing in this class; you may be tempted to present your opinion and editorialize but refrain from doing this.



Remember: Falling behind can be hazardous to your health!

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: In this course you will be completing assigned readings, participating in discussion board assignments, and completing short homework assignments. The work you

do for this class will keep you critically engaged with the world around you from a sociological perspective. There are no exams for this course. Expect to be writing every week. The key to this course is your thoughtful reflection on course material. The first seven weeks of the course include your review of assigned readings and films. The remaining weeks are for you to engage in the research process, reviewing articles you've found for your research paper, sharing them with the class (and with me), and wrapping up your Incremental Assignments.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Attendance and Participation*:	100 points
Critical Reflections (4):	200 points
Main Discussion Boards (3):	150 points
Midterm Exam (1):	150 points
Final Research Paper Increments (4):	100 points
Final Research Paper (1):	350 points
TOTAL:	1050c points

The Fine Print:

*Participation points accrue with various short assignments in the Discussion Area, such as your Introductory DB. These are labeled **PARTICIPATION DBs**. The Main DB assignments are labeled **MAIN DBs**.*

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/read/comprehend 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. Make use of the Q&A Board as well as our Internet Café. These are not scored, but even if there.

Critical Reflections: You will be investigating Race and Ethnic Relations through a wide variety of mediums, including film, music, art, recorded lectures, and critical writing/essays. The intention of the Critical Reflections is to engage you deeply with the course content, some of which might be very new to you regarding how you understand race and racism. We engage a variety of experiences from multiple perspectives, so you should expect to be often challenged. Stay open to learning new things and different ways of thinking about the world. Critical Reflections *are not editorials, opinion pieces, or space for you to soap box*. Please keep that in mind as you prepare thoughtful pieces of writing throughout the course material. Critical Reflections are either 1-2 paragraph answers to questions I pose to you or short free-form essays.

Main 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 to generate critical discussion amongst one another. Be aware that some of these require a few days, or even a week, of preparatory work. Make sure you look ahead at your homework! This method of learning gets you going socially! These assignments are always due on Thursdays and Sundays (your initial post goes up Thursday, and your responses to one another are due Sundays). I grade DBs based 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 are required; the grades get folded into your overall Participation Grade.

Midterm Examination: Your midterm is film-based. You will submit a film request to me via Canvas email based on a course announcement the week before your exam. The Exam mixes course concepts with the film (I will provide a list of films to choose from in the announcement), and the Exam is set up as a series of short answer questions. You will get the announcement two weeks before the Exam is due, and as soon as you send me your request, you will receive the exam from me, also via Canvas email. So, the sooner you get your request in, the more time you'll have to work on the Exam. If you have questions, post to Q&A anytime. I do not accept late exams for any reason, which is why you have so much time allotted to complete the task at hand.

Final Research Paper + Incremental Assignments: Throughout the course of the quarter, you will be working on a research paper to do with popular culture (globally or focusing on the U.S.). You may make this about anything you want. You will submit five assignments for this:

1. Topic
2. Proposal + Annotated Bibliography
3. First Draft + Annotated Bibliography
4. Peer Review
5. Final Submission

More information about this project is in the course handouts area.

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 @ BC](#)

Required Writing Guidelines (emphasis on *required*):

- *You must follow the required writing guidelines in the syllabus. Not doing so may result in your grade lowering by 5 points per item.*
- Twelve-point sized Times font, *double-spaced*. Single spaced assignments will be docked points.
- 1" margins all around
- APA Citations where appropriate – credit must be given even where any *ideas* presented in the paper are not your own (see notes below about avoiding plagiarism)
- Title pages and bibliographies *are not counted* as pages due
- 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.’
- Avoid the universal “we,” “our,” “us” – ask yourself: Can I speak for everyone? If you cannot, do not write it. Also, avoid phrasing such as “nowadays...” and “since the beginning of time.” Be accurate. Know what you’re writing and why.
- *Do not ever use* Wikipedia, CliffNotes, or other such encyclopedic references or online dictionaries. Wikipedia is not peer-reviewed and therefore unreliable. Do your research. If you’re going to research online (which is encouraged and legit), make sure you understand what you’re looking for. Do a deep dive into the internet to find your stuff.
- Be sure that no more than 20% of your papers are outside sources. You must be providing your analysis while you draw from material presented to you in class.

Your written work is evaluated on:

1) Content

- a. Fulfilling the entire assignment. Doing the minimum amount of work expected will likely get you a passing grade, but not an outstanding one. You’re expected to go the extra mile.
- b. Fully developing your argument(s) and making use of examples and evidence to support your argument(s).
- 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. Read it out loud to yourself, too! It helps.
- g. Dude, like totally don’t write **colloquially**. A conversation is a conversation. A paper is an entirely different way of presenting your research and ideas. ☺

Preventing Plagiarism: Plagiarism is a form of academic dishonesty occurring when students use information or material from outside sources and do not properly cite those sources. This 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 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 doesn’t document his/her source.
- d. You turn in work created by another person.
- e. You submit or use your 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. I offer comments on all of your written work and general comments on the Discussion Boards – sometimes more, sometimes less. Please read my comments and 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.

90-100 = A. “A” work shows me you’re engaged with all course material by utilizing quotes and ideas. It is writing *completely free* from grammar and spelling errors, demonstrating 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 work 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 media and 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. “C” work 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. You write the bare minimum of the length requirement. 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.” I will work closely with each of you as much as time allows, getting you up to speed in class. Your struggles should not be with writing so much at this point, but if they are, please see me immediately. “D” work 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 little-to-no integration of material, and you’re not responding to the questions raised in the assignment. Demonstrated an 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.)

A: 94-100

A-: 90-93

B+: 87-89

B: 84-86

B-: 80-83

C+: 77-79
C: 74-76
C-: 70-73
D+: 67-69
D: 64-66
D-: 60-63
F: 59 and below

COURSE OUTLINE AND SCHEDULE:

Week One: September 17

Readings:

- [Pop Culture Definitions](#)
- [The Public Imagination & Pop Culture](#)

Assignments:

- Participation DB I: Introductions & Practice Discussion. Due Sunday, 9/23
- Participation DB 2 – The Public Imagination & Popular Culture. Due Sunday, 9/23

Week Two: September 24

Readings:

- “What Is Popular Culture?” by John Storey

Assignments:

- Main DB I: What is Pop Culture? Due Thursday, 9/27, responses by Sunday, 9/30
- Critical Reflection 1: Defining Popular Culture. Due Sunday, 9/30
- Incremental Research Assignment 1: Topic Submission. Due Sunday 9/30

Week Three: October 1

Readings:

- [NPR Pop Culture Archives](#)
 - Choose any three articles from three different years (get there by clicking on “[+] more years” on three different topics embedded in popular culture. You’ll use this work in our Discussion Board this week.
- “Language Ideology in the Discourse of Popular Culture” by Andrew Moody

Assignments:

- Main DB 2: Initial Submission Due Thursday, 10/4; Responses Due Sunday, 10/7
- Critical Reflection 2: The Span of Popular Culture. Due Sunday 10/7

Week Four: October 8

Requests for Midterm Film due. I will send out the announcement this week.

Readings:

- “The Mississippi of the North: Trailer Park Boys and race in Contemporary Nova Scotia” by Peter Thompson

Film:

- [“SwearNet: The Movie”](#)—Strong language, nudity, adult situations, drug use, explicit sexuality.

Assignments:

- Critical Reflection 3: Trailer Park Boys and Subverting the Dominant Paradigm due Sunday 10/14
- Incremental Research Assignment 2: Draft Proposal, Two Annotated Bibliographies, Working Bibliography due Sunday 10/14

Week Five: October 15

Midterm Week

Assignments:

- Your exam is due on 10/21, by 11:59pm, PST. Late Exams *are not accepted*. As you can request your exam via email in the beginning of Week Four, you have nearly two weeks to complete it. Do not wait until the last minute.
- This exam is open note and open “book.” You are held to the same standards in the syllabus for writing guidelines and plagiarism.
- Post your questions to the Q&A Board.

Week Six: October 22

Readings:

- [“Why Popular Culture Matters in Politics”](#) by Jennifer Rubin
- (Video) [“The Pop Culture Politics of 2016”](#) on *WSJ Video*
- [“Is Popular Culture Influencing our Perception of Justice?”](#) in *Culture Decanted*
- (Film) [Operation Hollywood](#)

Assignments:

- Critical Reflection 4: War and the Popular Imagination. Due Sunday 10/28
- Participation DB 3: Sharing Topics. Due Sunday, 10/28

Week Seven: October 29

Readings:

- [“\(Chapter 1\) Introduction to Gender & Pop Culture”](#) in *Gender & Popular Culture* by Patricia Leavy & Adrienne Trier-Bieniek

Film:

- [This Film Is Not Yet Rated](#). This film is on YouTube as parts. Watch all of them (there are seven). *Please note there is explicit violence, sex, and language in this film.*

Assignments:

- Main DB 3: Initial Post due Thursday, 11/1. Responses to at least two colleagues’ Initial Posts due Sunday, 11/4.

Week Eight: November 5

Readings:

- Your research
- Peer Evaluation Form
 - You will use this for your Week 9 submission.

Assignments:

- Incremental Research Assignment 3: PART A: First Draft due to your Assigned Reading Partners Sunday, 11/11 (*no rough drafts, please*). Submit to your partner via email and copy me in the email. I will give you credit only after I've seen you've submitted your paper to your partner. This is the only step you need to take for Part A (see Week Nine).

Week Nine: November 12

Readings:

- Your research

Assignments:

- Incremental Research Assignment 3: PART B: Peer Review Form due via email to your Assigned Reading Partners *and me*, Sunday 11/18. Do not send me *your draft*, just the Form.

Week Ten: November 19

Campus closed November 22nd & 23rd

Readings:

- Your research

Assignments:

- Incremental Research Assignment 4: First Draft to Professor, Two Additional Annotated Bibliographies, and Working Bibliography. Due Sunday, 11/25

Week Eleven: November 26

Research and Writing Week

Readings:

- Your research

Assignments:

- Participation DB 4: Outro. Due Sunday, 12/2.

Final Exams Week: December 4-6

December 3rd is the last day of classes.

Please use it as a “free” day to continue working on your Final Projects.

There is no Final Exam for this class

Assignments:

- Final Research Paper due Thursday, 12/6. *No late assignments accepted. No exceptions.*

Let's have a wonderful term!