South Central College

AMST 120  Introduction to Popular Culture

Common Course Outline

Course Information

Description  This course is designed to introduce students to a variety of critical approaches used in the study of popular culture. Students will move beyond simply consuming popular culture to explore how it reflects and constructs widely shared (and fiercely contested) beliefs, ideologies and social realities. They will examine a wide range of subjects (such as film, television, video games, advertising, and the internet) using a variety of critical approaches (including genre theory, audience reception theory, and cultural hegemony theory) to better understand how contemporary American culture shapes our lives. (Prerequisite: Must have a score of 78 or higher on the Reading Comprehension portion of the Accuplacer test or completion of READ 0090.) (MNTC 5, 7: History and the Social and Behavioral Sciences, Human Diversity.)

Total Credits  4.00
Total Hours   64.00

Types of Instruction

Instruction Type  Credits/Hours
Lecture           4.0/64

Pre/Corequisites

Prerequisite  Must have a score of 78 or higher on the Reading portion of the Accuplacer test or completion of READ 0090.

Institutional Core Competencies

Analysis and inquiry: Students will demonstrate an ability to analyze information from multiple sources and to raise pertinent questions regarding that information.

Critical and creative thinking: Students will develop the disposition and skills to strategize, gather, organize, create, refine, analyze, and evaluate the credibility of relevant information and ideas.

Foundations and skills for lifelong learning: Students will display an understanding of learning as a lifelong process through demonstration of a desire to learn, the willingness to apply learning to other areas of their lives, the ability to think and act independently, be willing to take the initiative to get projects done, and demonstrate the ability to reflect upon what has occurred and how it impacts the student and others.

Intercultural knowledge and competence: Students will recognize and understand the rich and complex ways that group and individual inequalities and interactions impact self and society.

Written and oral communication: Students will communicate effectively in a range of social, academic, and professional contexts using a variety of means, including written, oral, numeric/quantitative, graphic, and
visual modes of communication.

External Standards

Title MN Transfer Goals

Target Standards
Goal 5: History and the Social and Behavioral Sciences - To increase students' knowledge of how historians and social and behavioral scientists discover, describe, and explain the behaviors and interactions among individuals, groups, institutions, events, and ideas. Such knowledge will better equip students to understand themselves and the roles they play in addressing the issues facing humanity.

5a - Employ the methods and data that historians and social and behavioral scientists use to investigate the human condition.

5b - Examine social institutions and processes across a range of historical periods and cultures.

5c - Use and critique alternative explanatory systems or theories.

5d - Develop and communicate alternative explanations or solutions for contemporary social issues.

Goal 7: Human Diversity - To increase students' understanding of individual and group differences (e.g. race, gender, class) and their knowledge of the traditions and values of various groups in the United States. Students should be able to evaluate the United States' historical and contemporary responses to group differences.

7a - Understand the development of and the changing meanings of group identities in the United States' history and culture.

7b - Demonstrate an awareness of the individual and institutional dynamics of unequal power relations between groups in contemporary society.

7c - Analyze their own attitudes, behaviors, concepts and beliefs regarding diversity, racism, and bigotry.

7d - Describe and discuss the experience and contributions (political, social, economic, etc.) of the many groups that shape American society and culture, in particular those groups that have suffered discrimination and exclusion.

7e - Demonstrate communication skills necessary for living and working effectively in a society with great population diversity.

Course Competencies

1 Define "Popular Culture" and identify reasons for its study.

   Learning Objectives
   Differentiate between "High" and "Popular" (low and middlebrow) culture.
   Summarize the history of popular culture in the Western tradition.
   Recognize the role of popular culture in enabling the expression of marginalized voices in society.
   Identify ways in which popular culture reflects and shapes societal views and values.

2 Chart the historical development of mass media in America.

   Learning Objectives
   Identify ways in which media technologies and forms of popular culture develop in tandem.
   Summarize the emergence and impact of successive media technologies: the printing press, newspapers, radio, film, television, the Internet, and social media.
   Distinguish between "broadcasting" and "narrowcasting".
   Evaluate the changing media landscape, including the globalization of culture and the increasing importance of user-created content.

3 Evaluate the American culture industry.

   Learning Objectives
Summarize the contours of the contemporary culture industry in the U.S. Identify the impacts of media consolidation on the production of popular culture, including the marginalization of critical perspectives. Evaluate claims of political and ideological bias in the mass media. Examine ways in which popular culture and political campaigns intersect in the U.S.

4 **Explore the cultural impact of advertising and its contribution to consumerism.**

**Learning Objectives**
- Summarize the historical development of advertising and identify techniques used by advertisers to promote their products.
- Define "consumerism" and describe its role in American society.
- Evaluate ways in which popular culture contributes to consumerism.
- Analyze the intersection of consumerism with racial, gender, and class-based differences.

5 **Apply critical approaches to the study of popular culture.**

**Learning Objectives**
- Apply the "dismissive" view of Matthew Arnold and F.R. Leavis.
- Apply the "cultural dupe" view of the Frankfurt School.
- Apply the "encode and decode" view of Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall.
- Apply Antonio Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony.
- Identify ways in which marginalized members of society contest and reinterpret popular culture.

6 **Apply the basic concepts of Genre Theory.**

**Learning Objectives**
- Identify the four main stages of genre development: Primitive, Classic, Parodic, and Revisionist.
- Describe ways in which particular film and television genres have progressed through the phases.
- Evaluate the function of parody and satire as counterhegemonic cultural forces.
- Summarize stereotypical genre elements in a particular genre of film or television.

7 **Evaluate the role of popular culture in constructing social realities.**

**Learning Objectives**
- Explain the concept of Social Constructivism using examples from popular culture.
- Explore the contribution of popular culture to "common sense" elements of the American worldview.
- Analyze ways in which popular culture helps to establish and perpetuate ethnic, racial, sexual and class-based stereotypes.
- Evaluate examples of popular culture which challenge and undermine cultural conventions.

8 **Present an analysis of a specific pop cultural artifact.**

**Learning Objectives**
- Describe the creator, content and intended audience of the artifact.
- Identify the genre to which the artifact belongs and the stage it represents.
- Summarize common dominant and counterhegemonic interpretations of the artifact.
- Explain ways in which fans have understood and responded to the artifact.

9 **Distinguish between quantitative and qualitative approaches to cultural studies.**

**Learning Objectives**
- Identify the key features of quantitative research design.
- Identify the key features of qualitative research design.
- Recognize examples of qualitative and quantitative research designs.

10 **Recognize the difference between correlation and causation in determining the causes of social phenomena.**

**Learning Objectives**
- Explain the distinction between correlation and causation in efforts to understand cultural phenomena.
- Apply this distinction between correlation and causation to the relationship between violent media (television, movies, video games) and violent behavior.
- Identify another area in cultural studies in which correlation is confused with causation.

11 **Conduct a survey to measure attitudes regarding a topic in popular culture.**
Learning Objectives
Formulate a thesis which relates to an issue in popular culture.
Select an appropriate population to be surveyed.
Construct a survey which measures respondents' views on the issue.
Analyze the results and implications of the survey.
Identify the limitations of the survey and its relation to broader, more representative survey data.

12 Collect data about a specific group using the method of participant observation.

Learning Objectives
Identify a fan community in which you're interested or to which you belong.
Analyze your reasons for being a fan and your interaction with other fans.
Conduct informal interviews to explore the views and motivations of members of the fan community.
Conduct observations of the fan community.
Construct a narrative analysis based on your research.

13 Analyze the representation of gender, race or sexuality in an area of popular culture.

Learning Objectives
Formulate a hypothesis about the representation of gender, race or sexuality in an area of popular culture.
Select criteria which will be used for evaluation.
Conduct a content analysis based on relevant criteria.
Summarize the results of the content analysis.
Interpret the results in relation to the original thesis.

SCC Accessibility Statement
If you have a disability and need accommodations to participate in the course activities, please contact your instructor as soon as possible. This information will be made available in an alternative format, such as Braille, large print, or cassette tape, upon request. If you wish to contact the college ADA Coordinator, call that office at 507-389-7222.

Disabilities page http://southcentral.edu/academic-policies/disability-rights.html