Course Description
This course is a philosophical exploration of popular culture. What is popular culture? How does it function in contemporary life? What relation does it have to our experiences? These are some of the questions with which we will begin the course. In the middle portion of the course, we will look at a variety of examples of popular culture: photography (including “selfies”), music, sports, online relationships, etc. In each case, we will both use the philosophical approaches developed earlier in the course and develop new approaches in order to make sense of these cultural phenomena. Finally, we will end the course by asking ethical questions: what are the various ways we might interact with, immerse ourselves in, and resist popular culture, and which ones should we choose?

Unlike some philosophy courses, we will not be spending much time reading about what philosophers have done. Instead, we will spend most of our time doing what philosophers do: thinking carefully about our lives and the world in which they unfold. Since this type of thinking involves dialogue with others, I will not be spending much time lecturing. Instead, class time will largely consist in small and large group discussion.

Learning Outcomes
By participating in this course, students will

- Acquire knowledge of philosophical issues related to popular culture,
- Develop the ability to carry out philosophical analysis of a wide variety of aspects of popular culture, reflecting critically on their own and others’ experiences,
- Strengthen skills in writing and communication, drawing on both textual and experiential resources to give expression to complex ideas, and
- Discover an appreciation of philosophy and its role in a well-lived life, experiencing the pleasure of thinking philosophically.

Office Hours:
My office hours will be held in Susan Campbell Hall, which is behind the museum. My office is in room 158A. I am more than happy to discuss any issues with you at any time, so please send me an email or see me after class to make an appointment if my regularly scheduled hours do not work for you.
Required Texts

- Course Reader (available on Canvas)

You are expected to do the assigned readings before class and to bring the texts with you to class each day.

Course Requirements

- **Attendance and Participation** (30%). Participation in large and small group discussions is central to the course. You are expected to do the reading before class, come to class with your texts, participate in class discussions, and turn in assignments promptly. Periodic reading quizzes will help assess your preparation and will factor into your participation grade.

- **“Living Philosophy” Papers** (50% total). These will be a series of short papers (1.5 to 2 pages each) assigned throughout the term in which you will explain a philosophical concept or issue we are covering in the course and show how it plays out in your own life and experience. There are six such assignments listed on the syllabus; you will turn in four (of your choosing).

- **Final Project** (20%). Your work in this course will culminate in a final project in which you will spend a week (the last week of classes) reflecting on the role that some aspect of popular culture plays in your life. You will keep a daily journal of your reflections and turn them in on Tuesday of finals week. A detailed description of the project and will be given ahead of time in class.

All written work should be typed in a standard, 12pt font with 1” margins. Letter grades will be assigned in the typical way (100-90% = A, 80-89% = B, etc.) on a +/- scale.

Writing Assistance

This class involves a considerable amount of writing. If you find academic writing difficult or would like to sharpen your skills, I encourage you to take advantage of the following resources.

- The University of Oregon has a Writing Lab available for students. They offer drop-in tutoring services on weekdays from 9am-4pm in 72 PLC. You can also make appointments. See http://tlc.uoregon.edu/subjects/writing/.

- Purdue OWL (Online Writing Lab) is an excellent resource for writing. It includes information about the writing process, grammar, using citations, and many other subjects. See http://owl.english.purdue.edu/.

Procedures and Guidelines

- **Late Work**: Late work will be accepted and evaluated (excluding the final project), but it will receive a full grade letter penalty for each class period past the due date.

- **Professionalism**: Due to the nature of this course, sensitive situations may arise and people may disagree. While debate and argument belong within the University, yelling, name-calling, or heated/aggressive behavior has no place in our classroom. I expect each of us to display a high level of respect toward other members of the class. Also, please turn off your cell phones before you come inside the classroom. **Text messaging during**
class is unacceptable and will reflect negatively on your participation grade. If you need to make an important phone call or use the restroom, feel free to do so, but please exit the room quietly and try not to be disruptive as you re-enter.

- **Plagiarism:** Students, in submitting work, certify that the work is their own original work and that all information garnered from others whether quoted, summarized, or paraphrased has been appropriately cited. Failure to acknowledge the work of others constitutes plagiarism and is a serious offense. **Normally, the penalty for plagiarism is failure in the course.** More serious penalties may also be invoked. For more information, see [http://library.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/](http://library.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/). For official policies, see [http://uodos.uoregon.edu/StudentConductandCommunityStandards/AcademicMisconduct/](http://uodos.uoregon.edu/StudentConductandCommunityStandards/AcademicMisconduct/). Read these policies; they are considered part of the syllabus.

- **Accommodation:** The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify me if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation. You are also encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Center in 164 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or uoaec@uoregon.edu.

- **Resources:** The Teaching and Learning Center provides numerous resources, including tutoring, to help UO students succeed (located in 68 PLC, tlc.uoregon.edu). The University Counseling and Testing Center provides comprehensive mental health care and testing services (located on the second floor of the University Health, Counseling, and Testing Center Building, counseling.uoregon.edu).

- **Discrimination and Sexual Harassment:** The UO is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence and gender-based stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or experiences gender-based violence (intimate partner violence, attempted or completed sexual assault, harassment, coercion, stalking, etc.), know that you are not alone. UO has staff members trained to support survivors in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more. Please be aware that all UO employees are required reporters. This means that if you tell me about a situation, I may have to report the information to my supervisor or the Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity. Although I have to report the situation, you will still have options about how your case will be handled, including whether or not you wish to pursue a formal complaint. Our goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available to you and have access to the resources you need. If you wish to speak to someone confidentially, you can call 541-346-SAFE, UO’s 24-hour hotline, to be connected to a confidential counselor to discuss your options. You can also visit the SAFE website at safe.uoregon.edu.

- **Note:** Syllabus, assignments, and due dates subject to change at instructor's discretion.
Schedule of Assignments

Introduction to Popular Culture
Week 1: Introduction to the Course; What is Popular Culture?
Readings: Adorno, “The Culture Industry”
Calvino, “Continuous Cities 2”

Week 2: Popular Culture and the Production of Experience
Readings: Percy, “The Loss of the Creature”
Calvino, “Cities & Names 1”

Visibility, Spectacle, Identity
Week 3: Image and Imagination
Readings: Sontag, “In Plato's Cave”
Calvino, “Cities & Memory 5,” “Cities & Eyes 1”, “Trading Cities 1”
Assignments: Living Philosophy Paper #1 due Thursday (week 3)

Week 4: Authenticity and Invention
Readings: Horning, “Google Alert for the Soul”
Wandel & Beavers, “Playing Around with Identity”
Assignments: Living Philosophy Paper #2 due Thursday (week 4)

Week 5: Thinking about “Selfies”
Readings: Cep, “In Praise of Selfies”
Murphy, “Putting Selfies Under a Feminist Lens”
Warfield, “An Open Letter to Mass Media”
Assignments: Living Philosophy Paper #3 due Thursday (week 5)

Case Studies
Week 6: Popularizing Music
Blanchard, “The Social Significance of Rap and Hip Hop Culture”
Assignments: Living Philosophy Paper #4 due Thursday (week 6)

Week 7: Popularizing Gender
Readings: Young, “Throwing Like a Girl”
Whitefield-Madrano, “Watching Women Want”
Assignments: Living Philosophy Paper #5 due Thursday (week 7)
Week 8: Popularizing Friendship

*Readings:* Marche, “Is Facebook Making Us Lonely?”
Condella, “Why Can't We Be Virtual Friends?”
Hamington, “Care Ethics, Friendship, and Facebook”

*Assignments: Living Philosophy Paper #6 due Thursday (week 8)*

Living with Popular Culture: Meaning, Ethics, and Enjoyment

Week 9: Spaces of Resistance

*Readings:* Lasn, “The Ecology of Mind”
Barnes, “Social Media and the Ability to 'Be’”
Winner, “Luddism as Epistemology”

Week 10: Spaces of Meaning

*Readings:* Thoreau, “The Village”
Borges, “The Library of Babel”
Calvino, “Cities & Eyes 4”, “Cities & The Sky 2”, “Hidden Cities 2”,
“The Great Khan's atlas…”

FINAL PROJECT DUE TUESDAY OF FINALS WEEK (AT MIDNIGHT)