

Philosophy of Pop Culture

Instructor: Claire Pickard

1. Course Description

This course examines the role of popular culture in our lives and its inherent connections to philosophy. By analytically engaging with topics such as social media, selfies, and reality TV, we have the opportunity to think carefully and critically about phenomena that saturate our world and are, perhaps, some of our most enjoyable escapes. This also has the potential to demonstrate the inextricability of philosophy from daily life. The course is structured to address one cultural phenomenon per week; we will start from our own experiences on the subjects and proceed from there.

Since one of the major goals of this class is to foster dialogue about our own daily experiences, much of this class will consist of large-group and small-group discussions. Since there often will not be much time spent recapping the readings in lecture form, I expect everyone to come to class having read or watched the material assigned for the day.

2. Class Meetings

Class will meet Monday-Thursday from 9:00 – 9:50 a.m. in 303 GER.

3. Office Hours and Contact Information

My office hours are Tuesday, 10am – 11:50am in Susan Campbell Hall 232. If you are unavailable during that time, please email me at cpickard@uoregon.edu and we can make other arrangements.

4. Course Requirements

Final grades will be determined as follows:

Participation/ Attendance	20 %
Short Reflection Papers (3)	30%
First Paper	25 %
Second Paper	25 %

Participation and Attendance: You are expected to participate actively in this class, which includes attending class, reading all assigned material prior to class, and participating productively and professionally in the discussion.

Short Reflection Papers: These are 200-word short reflections on your personal engagement with one of the texts. You may choose any three texts assigned for the class, and the reflection paper for each will be due on the day that reading is assigned, prior to the beginning of class. All three must be handed in by Friday of Week 9.

Two Essays: There will be two essays (4-5 pages) assigned for this course, one due at the beginning of week 5 and the other due during finals week. The prompts will be released at least two weeks prior to the due date. The goal of these essays will be to demonstrate both your knowledge of the material and your ability to evaluate and analyze philosophical arguments. Papers should be typed, in Times New Roman, double-spaced, font size 12, with one-inch margins. Late papers will be marked off one full letter grade for every day they are late, unless prior arrangements have been made. Failure to complete either of the essays will result in an automatic failure in the course (grade F). Grading rubric for essays:

A = Excellent. No mistakes, well-written, and distinctive in some way or other.

B = Good. No significant mistakes, well-written, but not distinctive in any way.

C = Okay. Some errors, but a basic grasp of the material.

D = Poor. Several errors. A tenuous grasp of the material.

F = Failing. Problematic on all fronts indicating either no real grasp of the material or a complete lack of effort.

5. Learning Outcomes

- Articulate and evaluate philosophical arguments about pop culture, media, and consumption
- Develop close-reading skills of a text
- Develop communication and discussion skills, especially in relation to a primary text

6. Course Policies

Incompletes and extensions will be given only in the event of documented emergencies.

Emergencies: In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines and grading percentages are subject to changes that may be necessitated by a revised semester calendar or other circumstances.

Sexual Violence: 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 24h hotline, to be connected to a confidential counselor to discuss your options. You can also visit the SAFE website at safe.uoregon.edu

Accessibility: If you have a documented disability, please contact me in advance. If you need accommodations in this class, I will work with the Accessible Education Center to find a solution for you.

Academic Misconduct: With the advent of the Internet, plagiarism has become an increasingly serious problem at universities around the country, particularly in classes like this one, where papers determine a substantial part of the grade. In order to avoid plagiarizing from a source, both direct quotations and paraphrases or summaries of material found in traditional print media or on the internet must be acknowledged. If you have any questions about how this definition will be interpreted, please do not hesitate to discuss the matter with me. Plagiarism and cheating on exams undermines the integrity of the academic community. When undetected, it gives the perpetrator an unfair advantage over students who are graded on the basis of their own work. In this class we will do our best to detect plagiarism and cheating. Students who are aware of violations by others should bring this to my attention. This is the right thing to do. It is also in your own self-interest. There will be zero tolerance for plagiarism in this course. Plagiarized papers will receive a 0, the student will automatically fail the course, and their name will be handed given to the university authorities. For more on the University of Oregon policy on plagiarism, see the following website: <http://libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/>

6. Assigned Text

The readings for this course will be compiled in a course reader, which can be purchased at The Copy Shop on 13th Ave.

There will also be some films, albums, and TV episodes which are required texts for the class. They may be available on Netflix or Amazon Prime Video or Spotify, but they might need to be purchased.

7. Tentative Assignment Schedule (*Subject to revision as we proceed. Specific assignments announced in class*)

Week 1: Introduction

M: Syllabus and Introductory Remarks
T: Adorno and Horkheimer, "The Culture Industry"
W: Adorno, "The Culture Industry Revisited"
R: Discussion

Week 2: Selfies, Snapchat, Instagram

M: Murphy, "Putting Selfies Under a Feminist Lens"
T: Cep, "In Praise of Selfies"
W: Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"
R: Discussion: Snapchat and Instagram

Week 3: Reality TV

M: Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* [excerpts]
T: Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* [excerpts]
W: cont.
R: Watch: *Keeping Up With the Kardashians* [episode tbd]

Week 4: Advertising and Gender Imagery

M: Bishop, "Is Self-Identity Image Advertising Ethical?"
T: Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* [excerpts]
W: Whitefield-Madrano, "Watching Women Want"
R: Watch: *Killing Us Softly 4* (on hold at Knight Library)

Week 5: Facebook

M: Condella, "Why Can't We Be Virtual Friends?" **[Paper 1 Due]**
T: Marche, "Is Facebook Making Us Lonely?"
W: Hamington, "Care Ethics, Friendship, and Facebook"
R: Discussion

Week 6: Ethical Consumption

M: Rosenberg, "Ender's Game, Chris Brown, and the Slippery Slope of Ethical Pop-Culture Consumption" [on Canvas]
T: Daniel Bell, "The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism"
W: Carrington et al., "The Ideology of the Ethical Consumption Gap"
R: Discussion

Week 7: Hip Hop

M: Taylor, "Does Hip Hop Belong To Me? The Philosophy of Race and Culture"
T: Du Bois, "Of Our Spiritual Strivings"

Listen: Kanye West, *Yeezus*

W: Gines, “Queen Bees and Big Pimps: Sex and Sexuality in Hip Hop”

R: Listen: Queen Latifah, “U.N.I.T.Y”

Salt ‘N’ Pepa, “Ain’t Nuthin’ But a She Thing”

Salt ‘N’ Pepa, “None of Your Business”

Rihanna, “S&M”

Tupac, “Keep Ya Head Up”

Watch: music video for “Anaconda” by Nicki Minaj

Week 8: Pornography

M: Sontag, “The Pornographic Imagination”

T: Ezzell, “Pornography Makes the Man”

W: MacKinnon, “Not a Moral Issue”

R: Altman, “The Right to Get Turned On”

Week 9: Sports

M: Young, “Throwing Like a Girl”

T: Boxill, “Football and Feminism”

W: Tarver, “On the Particular Racism of Native American Mascots”

R: Watch: [football game excerpt tbd]

Week 10

During Week 8, the class will discuss and vote on what contemporary topic to discuss during Week 10. Readings will be found and assigned during Week 9.

Finals Week

Tuesday: **Second Essay Due** on Canvas by 10:15am