

Phil. 130: Philosophy & Popular Culture

Summer 2014

Session 2 (7/21-8/13)

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Course Description:

Philosophy at its best should help us think through problems we face in our daily lives. Given the influence of pop culture on our lives and our understanding of the problems we face, it seems to be a necessity that philosophy engage popular culture. This course will offer students a variety of opportunities to critically examine popular (or mass) culture. We will examine music, television, film, social media, sports, and graphic novels for insights into the values reflected and enforced by mass culture.

A central theme of the course will be an examination of the definition and critical possibilities of popular culture. We will attend to philosophical perspectives which argue that popular culture is merely manufactured by/for special, consumerist interests, and, alternatively, that popular culture is a tool for democratic expression in a diverse society. This central tension will then frame our engagement first with hip hop, and then with the notion of authenticity (both for the individual and relationships) through the conditions created by social media, and messages enforced by film, television, and sports.

Overall, this course aims to provide students with critical tools they might use to be more actively philosophical about their lives, and the forces that shape them.

Course Requirements:

Attendance & Participation: Students are required to attend class. Due to the shortened time-frame of the course, students will only be permitted **two** excused absences, but will still be responsible for the material they missed (and thus responsible for getting the lecture/discussion notes from a fellow classmate). Anything more than two absences, and the student's grade will lose 20% of their attendance and participation grade for each additional day missed. In addition to attendance, students are required to carefully complete all reading assigned for that day, in addition to any other tasks assigned. Given the brevity of the course, this means that students will be responsible for **a lot of reading** everyday, and should be prepared to do this. Students are also expected to participate regularly and fruitfully in class discussions, and will be graded based on the quality of their engagement in the classroom. If this presents a problem (shyness, anxiety, etc.), affected students should talk to me as soon as possible to make arrangements.

Papers: Students will be asked to complete three papers throughout the course of the session. The first paper will be 3-4 pages in length and will be an argumentative essay on the student's position regarding the different definitions of and perspectives on popular culture discussed in the first week of class. The second paper will build upon this initial position (allowing students to revise their first response) and will critically assess hip hop as an expression of pop culture's potential for critical reflection. The third essay will take up the initial position once more, but will apply it to the possibility of and challenges for authentic selves and relationships in a society influenced by social media and messages about sex, gender, and race in pop culture. Each of these papers will be 5-6 pages in length.

Short Assignments: Students will be asked to write a brief reflection piece on two of the three units (3-5). These reflections will be 2 pages in length, and will serve as an entryway into the third paper.

Journals: Journals will be kept for each student and will be house in-class writing responses, and responses to reading questions or discussion questions. Journals will be another way for me to engage with students' thinking and writing in a more personal, on-going way and may be used to help generate ideas and perspectives for the three major papers.

Grading:

Attendance & Participation:	20%
Paper 1:	15%
Paper 2:	20%
Paper 3:	25%
2 Short Assignments:	10% (5% each)
Journals:	10%

For paper grades, the following rubric reflecting the general standards of the Philosophy Department at the University of Oregon will be followed.

- 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** = OK. 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.

Additional Policies:

Electronics in the classroom: To Be Discussed

Academic Honesty: Anyone found cheating on quizzes or papers will be given an "F" for the course.

The following offers examples of academic dishonesty.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the inclusion of someone else's product, words, ideas, or data as one's own work. When a student submits work for credit that includes the product, words, ideas, or data of others, the source must be acknowledged by the use of complete, accurate, and specific references, such as footnotes. Expectations may vary slightly among disciplines. By placing one's name on work submitted for credit, the student certifies the originality of all work not otherwise identified by appropriate acknowledgements. On written assignments, if verbatim statements are included, the statements must be enclosed by quotation marks or set off from regular text as indented extracts. Unauthorized collaboration with others on papers or projects can inadvertently lead to a charge of plagiarism. If in doubt, consult the instructor or seek assistance from the staff of Academic Learning Services (68 PLC, 346-3226). In addition, it is plagiarism to submit as your own any academic exercise prepared totally or in part by another. Plagiarism also includes submitting work in which portions were substantially produced by someone acting as a tutor or editor.

Cheating: Cheating is an act of deception by which a student misrepresents or misleadingly demonstrates that he or she has mastered information on an academic exercise that he or she has not mastered, including the giving or receiving of unauthorized help in an academic exercise. Examples include, but are not limited to: copying from another student's quiz or paper assignment, using the course textbook or other material not authorized for use during a quiz, resubmitting substantially the same work that was produced for another assignment without the knowledge and permission of the instructor, and collaborating without authority or allowing another student to copy one's work on a quiz or papers.

Schedule (Subject to Revision):

Day/Date	Unit	Readings / Required Viewings
M. 7.21	Introduction	
T. 7.22	(1) Defining and Evaluating Pop Culture	"The Cultural Industry Reconsidered" - Adorno
W. 7.23		Watch: <i>Detour</i> "Film Noir and the Frankfurt School: America as Wasteland in Edgar Ulmer's Detour" - Cantor
T. 7.24		<u>The Art of Democracy</u> : Introduction (& selections) - Cullen
F. 7.25		<u>Pragmatist Aesthetics</u> : Chapter 6 & 7 - Shusterman "Hit by the Street: Dewey and Popular Culture" - Pope
M. 7.28	(2) Evaluating Hip-Hop as Cultural Movement	The Art of Democracy: Chapter 5 (pp. 283-284) "What's Beef?" - Dyson *Paper 1 Due
T. 7.29		"Knowwhatumsayin? How Hip Hop Lyrics Mean" - Thompson "This Dark Diction has become America's Addiction" - Dyson
W. 7.30		"Microphone Commandos: Rap Music and Political Philosophy"- Lawson "It's Trendy to be the Conscious MC" - Dyson
T. 7.31	(3) Friendship in a Digital Age?	<i>New Girl, Parks and Recreation</i> <u>Nicomachean Ethics, Book VIII</u> – Aristotle
F. 8.1		The Art of Democracy: Chapter 6 "Why Can't We Be Virtual Friends?" - Condella "Why I Am Not a Friend" - Thalos
M. 8.4	(4) Love, Gender, and Femininity	<i>Sex and the City</i> "The Woman in Love" "Idolatrous Love" - Beauvoir *Paper 2 Due
T. 8.5		<i>Twilight, Hunger Games</i> "Postfeminist Fantasies: Sexuality and Femininity in Stephenie Meyer's Twilight Series" - Moruzi "Discourses of Masculinity and Femininity in The Hunger Games: 'Scarred,' 'Bloody,' and 'Stunning'" – Woloshyn, Taber, Lane
W. 8.6	(5) Masculinity and Race in Sports	"Sport, Men, and Gender" - Messner Short Assignment Due*
T. 8.7		"The Embodiment of Masculinity" - Messner "Pigskin, Patriarchy, and Pain" - Sabo
F. 8.8		<i>Remember the Titans</i> "Racism in Sports: A Question in Ethics" - Anderson

M. 8.11	(5) Authenticity	<i>Ghost World (film)</i> Thus Spake Zarathustra (selections) - Nietzsche "Bad Faith" - Sartre Short Assignment Due*
T. 8.12		"Ghost World" - Clowes "Jean-Paul Sartre Meets Enid Coleslaw: Existential Themes in Ghost World" - Canis & Canis
W. 8.13		Final Discussion Paper 3 Due*