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American Popular Culture, Minorities, and the Canon	BTP2BR_T_52
Wed 14 – 15 .40	Rm: 55

Human beings are innately storytellers. Whether those stories are good stories or bad stories or truthful stories or lies, we understand the world through stories more easily than ... through philosophical disputation. We are all prone to argue. ... So yes, logic and reasoning and arguing are things that human beings do. And since we tell stories and philosophize, I see no reason to kick one out and prioritize the other exclusively. These are human activities. ... Why don't we teach people how to do both of those things in the best way possible?

Margaret Atwood

Course description: The aim of this course is to give an introduction to the theoretical background of Popular Culture and put theory into practice through the discussion of typical pop culture genres, such as chick lit, science fiction, the western, cyberpunk, television series or fandom studies. The position of pop culture in academia and everyday life will also be considered, as well as its changing evaluation ranging from escapist trash to serious works reflecting on the postmodern condition and pivotal questions of the 21st century, such as gender, race, ethnicity and identity construction.

Classwork, materials, and assignments will be managed via Google Classroom.

- **Students should be advised that the quality of their written and spoken linguistic performance will count significantly toward their final mark.**
- **More than 3 absences (including health-related absences!) will result in no mark, just like plagiarism!**
- **Should the suspicion of unauthorized use of AI-based aids arise, the instructor reserves the right to verify the student's knowledge of the course material as well as the student's authorship of an assignment or paper in a manner chosen by the instructor. Any violation of the University's regulations on academic conduct constitutes an ethical offense according to the provisions of the Study and Examination Regulations.**

Evaluation (all components are compulsory!): based on

- 10-12 minute oral presentation (choice of topic, visuals, delivery) (15%)
- two short home assignments to be handed in at specified times (see course schedule) (25%)
- end-term paper (25%)
- take-home essay of 2500 - 2800 words (35%) **deadline to be discussed**

Students can earn extra points for longer in-class tasks.

Grading: 60 – 69% - pass; 70 – 79% - 3; 80 – 89% - 4; 90% and above - 5

Schedule with readings and films (all available in Google Classroom) – the titles in brackets are recommended

- Sep 10 NO IN-PERSON CLASS! further info to be sent via Neptun
- Sep 17 Introduction: What is Popular Culture? And everyday culture?
- High and low culture? The mass culture debate
Romeo + Juliet. (1996) dir. Baz Luhrmann
Gnomeo and Juliet. (2011) dir. Kelly Asbury
(Strinati, Chapter 1, pp. 1-19)
- Sep 24 Mass culture and Americanization?
Strinati, Chapter 1, pp. 19-45
home assignment: classics recycled in pop culture (10%) **deadline in Google Classroom**
- Oct 1 The rise of Chick Lit
McMillan, *Waiting to Exhale*
(Guerrero, “‘Sistahs Are Doin’ It for Themselves’: Chick Lit in Black and White”)
- Oct 8 Disney, Pop Art, advertising and other iconic images
Fiske, “Chapter 1: Understanding Popular Culture”
- Oct 15 Masculinity and the Western
Crane, “The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky”
The Searchers (1956) dir. John Ford
Into the Wild (2007) dir. Sean Penn
- Oct 22 Consultation week**
- Oct 29 NO IN-PERSON CLASS
small group home assignment with an individual component: the following theoretical texts will be used for class discussion (WE’LL DISCUSS IN ADVANCE WHO WOULD LIKE TO WORK ON WHICH TEXT) (15%)
 - Klein, “Sharing Selfies”
 - Storey, “The Mediatized Everyday”
 - Muriel and Crawford, “The Emergence and Consolidation of Video Games As Culture”
- Nov 5 **Discussion class** based on the material each group prepared the previous week
- Nov 12 Fandom Studies
Palahniuk, *Fight Club*
Fight Club. (1999) dir. David Fincher

Nov 19	Sci-fi and Cyberpunk Le Guin, "Coming of Age in Karhide" Gibson, "Johnny Mnemonic" and "Burning Chrome"
Nov 26	Presentation class Revision: Definitions of Popular Culture and popular genres (Storey, "Chapter 1: What Is Popular Culture?")
Dec 3	Presentation class Discussion of take-home essay topics, outlines, and sources
Dec 10	End-term paper

Essay deadline and online evaluation in exam period

Set texts - literature

Crane, Stephen. "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky." (1898)
 Gibson, William. "Johnny Mnemonic." *Burning Chrome*. (1986) London: Grafton Books, 1988. 14-36.
 ---. "Burning Chrome." *Burning Chrome*. (1986) London: Grafton Books, 1988. 195-220.
 Le Guin, Ursula K. "Coming of Age in Karhide." *The Birthday of the World and Other Stories*. New York & London: HarperCollins, 2002.
 McMillan, Terry. *Waiting to Exhale*. New York: New American Library, 1992.
 Palahniuk, Chuck. *Fight Club*. London: Vintage Books, 2006.

Films

Fight Club. Dir. David Fincher. Perf. Edward Norton, Brad Pitt, Helena Bonham-Carter. 20th Century Fox, 1999.
Gnomeo and Juliet. Dir. Kelly Asbury. Perf. James McAvoy, Emily Blunt, Maggie Smith. Touchstone Pictures, 2011. Animation.
Into the Wild. Dir. Sean Penn. Perf. Emile Hirsch, Vince Vaughn, Catherine Keener. Paramount Vantage, 2007.
Romeo + Juliet. Dir. Baz Luhrmann. Perf. Leonardo DiCaprio, Claire Danes. 20th Century Fox, 1996.
The Searchers. Dir. John Ford. Perf. John Wayne, Jeffrey Hunter, Vera Miles. Warner Bros, 1956.

Theoretical background

Fiske, John. "Chapter 1: Understanding Popular Culture." *Reading the Popular*. 1989. London & New York: Routledge, 2003. 1-12.
 Guerrero, Lisa A. "'Sistahs Are Doin' It for Themselves': Chick Lit in Black and White." *Chick Lit: The New Woman's Fiction*. Eds. Suzanne Ferris and Mallory Young. New York & London: Routledge, 2006. 87-101.
 Klein, Uschi. "Sharing Selfies." *Popular Culture as Everyday Life*. Eds. Dennis Waskul and Phillip Vannini. Routledge, 2015. np.

- Muriel, Daniel and Garry Crawford. "The Emergence and Consolidation of Video Games As Culture." *Video Games As Culture: Considering the Role and Importance of Video Games in Contemporary Society*. Routledge, 2018. 16-30 (not the whole chapter).
- Storey, John. "Chapter 1: What Is Popular Culture?" *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction*. 5th ed. London & New York: Pearson Longman, 2009. 1-15. Storey, John. "The Mediatized Everyday." *From Popular Culture to Everyday Life*. Routledge, 2014.
- Strinati, Dominic. "Chapter 1: Mass Culture and Popular Culture." *An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture*. 2nd ed. London & New York: Routledge, 2005. 1-45.

Recommended reading

In Google Classroom you'll find the books mentioned in the theoretical background and some extras, feel free to browse them, they will also be of help when picking a home essay topic.