XIDS 2100: American Media and the Arts
Summer 2013

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Office Hours: Tu. & Th. 1:00-3:00 p.m.

Note: all email communication between the student and instructor must be conducted via my.westga.edu account.

Course Description
This course will explore how media forms and mediations of perspective shape audiences' understanding of events in modern American culture. Students will examine the defining characteristics of different media forms (i.e. television, photojournalism, short and long fiction and non-fiction works, popular music) and will examine how the construction and projection of textual, aural and visual images shape meaning and influence broader discussions of events. The course will proceed through a series of units: the examination of a particular media event, exploration of texts that examine the mechanisms of media and a discussion of a particular historical phenomenon from several mediated perspectives (i.e. a work of non-fiction, a graphic novel, a film). This trajectory will enable students to understand the relationship between form and content and will allow students to become more intellectually engaged participants in contemporary cultural debates.

Section Description
This section focuses on media forms and audience perspectives with specific emphasis on issues of identity, fame, and the nature of celebrity in America. Our three primary texts will be

- a variety of music and music videos as well as selected photographs, advertisements, and television programs, all of which we will interpret as “texts” that work to create, construct, deconstruct the culture of celebrity in America;
- the film The Truman Show, which we will examine in its entirety while paying close attention to the staged nature of reality television and celebrity in America;
- the novel The Hunger Games, in which we will pay close attention to nature of celebrity in a post-apocalyptic America.
In addition to these primary texts of analysis, we will read and analyze brief essays (available as hyperlinks below in the assignment portion of this syllabus), as well as any other media suggested by either myself or students during class discussions.

**Learning Outcomes**
- Students will demonstrate an understanding of the characteristics that define and differentiate literary, filmic and visual texts.
- Students will be able to apply this understanding to analyze the relationship between form and meaning.
- Students will be able to explain how diverse modes of humanistic and artistic endeavor contribute to an understanding of the media in America.
- Students will be able to produce written work that synthesizes evidence effectively in organized, specific, and focused paragraphs to support analytical claims.
- Students will demonstrate the ability in informal and formal writing contexts to express ideas using concise and rhetorically appropriate academic English.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to produce a thesis-driven essay that analyzes text in relation to larger “real world” questions of social, cultural, or thematic significance.

As a writing-intensive XIDS class, the writing exercises will foster both individual exploration of ideas, analytical critical questions, cultural or historical contexts, and ultimately thesis-driven argument. Writing assignments will build on each other and will engage students in discussion of the characteristics of visual media, written text and the construction of performances.

**Assignments**
1. **Reading Journal**: students respond individually in writing to daily reading assignments (print, filmic, and visual), demonstrating
   - expressive writing (personal response), and
   - analytical questioning (for example, have students use their perception of "pressure points" or parts of the text that they found confusing in order to ask critical questions and then, importantly, return to the text for deeper investigation of how to answer that question).
   Note: Both of these will help students move from response towards analysis. Journals will be collected regularly and used as prompts for class discussion.

2. **Visual image analysis**: a brief writing assignment, paragraph length at least, based on an observation, description, and analysis of a visual: a print ad or photograph or drawing/painting. This assignment fosters intellectual curiosity and analytical questioning through a medium they know well and instills confidence in “analysis” before they move on to academic writing about written texts.

3. **One short essay (2 pages)**: a shorter essay explicating an image from a course text and its function in the text as a whole. This assignment builds upon the skills learned from the visual image analysis, transfers it to a written text and moves the writer toward understanding how to build a thesis from critical analysis.
(4) Longer text and context essay (4-5 pages): an essay moving from a text itself to consider contexts: social, cultural, or thematic issues that the text raises in connection to the “real world” of individual experience.

(5) Final creative project: students will develop a creative project at the end of the semester on a topic of their choosing that is related to the course content. Students will develop a presentation related to this project at the end of the semester. Further details will be announced in class.

**Evaluation**

- Course Participation (attendance, group workshops, quizzes, daily work, in-class writing, creative project progress) 15%
- Reading and Class Notes Journal 20%
- Writing Assignment #1 (paragraph-length analysis) 10%
- Writing Assignment #2 (short essay) 15%
- Writing Assignment #3 (long essay) 25%
- Final Creative Project 15%

**Scoring and Grading**

The following chart will be used when calculating your numerical grade at the end of the semester with regard to letter grades received on out-of-class papers (and I will, at times, split grades to indicate work that falls between two categories. For example, a B+/A- on an out-of-class essay translates numerically to an 89, while an A-/B+ translates to a 91; or for in-class essay, a 3/2 translates to a 82, while a 2/3 translates to a 78).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Out-of-class Writing Grade Equivalents</th>
<th>In-class Writing Grade Equivalents</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+ = 98</td>
<td>Writing Grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A = 95</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A- = 92</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+ = 88</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B = 85</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B- = 92</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+ = 78</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C = 75</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C- = 72</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+ = 68</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D = 65</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D- = 62</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F = 55</td>
<td>0</td>
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**Communication and E-mail Policy and Etiquette**

According to university policy and federal law (FERPA), I can only accept and answer emails you send me from either your official West Georgia email account (you can access this remotely through webmail or through “MyUWG”) or your CourseDen account (if applicable to this class). Also, you should follow email etiquette and observe basic rules of politeness and formality in email messages. These rules include
- any message must include an address line (e.g. “Dear Mr. McRae”);
- use polite and appropriate language, as well as reasonably edited prose (i.e. complete sentences, correct spelling, no text-messaging lingo, etc.);
• always sign off your email your name, followed by your class and section number.

**Communication and Feedback Expectations for this Class**  
This chart outlines communication protocols for this class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Email</th>
<th>Contact me primarily via <a href="mailto:rmcrae@westga.edu">rmcrae@westga.edu</a> from your MyUWG account. This will allow us to maintain security and keep a credible record for correspondence. However, you may also email me through the CourseDen D2L email account in this course. Note: As per federal law, I cannot respond to emails from any other accounts or addresses.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My Response Time to You</td>
<td>For email: If you ask direct questions via email, I will get back with you within one business day (response times will be longer on the weekend). For graded material: All assignments, quizzes, and essay will return to you within one week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergencies</td>
<td>If you have an emergency that affects your studies, you can contact me via email. Please explain the nature of the emergency and its application to class. If the emergency is of a technical nature (i.e. can't log-in to CourseDen, etc.), please contact Distance Education's Student Support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication in General</td>
<td>Online communication takes special consideration. In a professional environment, the use of acronyms and text-message abbreviations in discussions and emails is unwise and unprofessional. Also, be careful what you say to someone on any discussion boards because everyone in the class will see it, and it cannot be retracted!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Classroom Etiquette**  
I expect everyone to be ready to work at the beginning of class. This means in particular having all reading materials assigned for that day on hand and ready to use, as well as any tools for note-taking. You may use laptops, but you may not use wireless connections to surf the Internet or email. Please turn off or silence all cell-phones or other electronic communication devices before class. If you need to leave earlier for whatever reason, you need to let me know before the beginning of class. Sleeping during class will count as an absence for that day. You may bring drinks to class, but no food. **Most importantly: Be respectful toward the opinions, ideas, and personal identity of all members of our class.**
Course Schedule

Changes or additions to the readings may occur throughout the semester. These will be announced in class or through email.

Note: All assignments, including readings, are to be completed for the date listed in the schedule.

Week One

M 07/01 – Intro to course basics: syllabus, major assignments, course theme: meaning of media in American culture; “Cult of Personality”; writing diagnostic exercise: response to visual image: iconic Iwo Jima photo; grammar diagnostic exercise; reading journal prep.

Tu. 07/03 – What is media (past and present)?; ad analysis; grammar exercise.
(Read before class: 5-Led Monster: Thesis Construction; “What We Are to Advertisers”)

W 07/02 – Discussion/in-class writing about 4th of July imagery; the makings of Dirty Pop; female pop stars in America: Katy Perry, Britney Spears, Madonna, Christina Aguilera, P!nk, Lady Gaga, etc.; grammar exercise.
(Read before class: Awesome Action Verbs.)

Th. 07/04 – No class for Independence Day

F 07/05 – Continue discussion; reality stars: Kim K., Paris, Teen Moms; grammar exercise; assign XIDS 2100 Paragraph Prompt (Writing #1); paragraph exercise, draft due on Monday.

Week Two

M 07/08 – Draft workshop; introduction to The Truman Show: analyze movie poster and trailer; introduction to film analysis; grammar exercise.

Tu 07/09 – Writing #1 due; The Truman Show; grammar exercise.
(Read before class: “The Hollywood Sign”.)

W 07/10 – Assign Writing #2 (TBA); grammar exercise.

Th 07/11 – Essay construction: types of introductions; grammar exercise.
(Read before class: Cases of Truman Show Delusions.)

F 07/12 – Work on draft; grammar exercise.
(Read before class: Writing an Introduction.)

Week Three
M 07/15 – Paragraph analysis workshop; initial discussion of *The Hunger Games*: major characters; grammar exercise.
(Read before class: Stanley Fish’s *NY Times* article.)

Tu 07/16 – Writing #2 due; *The Hunger Games*: plot design, naming, settings (small group work); grammar exercise.
(Read before class: *The Hunger Games’ REVIEW: ‘Truman Show’ meets ‘American Idol’ meets Charles Darwin.*)

W 07/17 – *The Hunger Games*: context; themes; culture; assign Writing #3 (TBA); grammar exercise.

Th 07/18 discussion of essays; grammar exercise; unpack argument: media as oppressive versus revolutionary in the novel.
(Read before class: “Fast Entertainment”)

F 07/19 – Work on Writing #3
(Read before class: “Youtopian Dream”.)

**Week Four**

M 07/22 – Writing #3 due; drafting and editing workshops; proofreading exercises; prep. for creative project.

Tu 07/23 – Creative project work

W 07/24 – Final day of class; return to visual image response (from first day): Write about how your perspective and ability to “read” this image has changed at this point of the semester. What have you learned that you did not expect to learn? In what ways has this course prepared you for college-level coursework?; final editing; proofreading; creative project work.
Film viewing of *The Hunger Games*: 8:00-10:00 p.m. during Study Hall

Th 07/25 – Creative Project presentations: Time TBA