Investigate American media and celebrity, create blog discussions for “Trending Now” segments, engage in vibrant discussions of how our celebrity obsession reveals tensions of age, race, gender, and culture!

**Course Description:** This course will explore the relationship between American media/celebrity as a way of interrogating contemporary American culture. We will examine why we are obsessed with celebrity and explore definitions of celebrity in recent critical discourse. We will engage the notion of celebrity in music, film, and sports and how these different arenas construct/reflect America’s changing values. In addition, we will consider the issue of celebrity and fan experiences, especially sports fans and music fans. How are fans created? How can they “create” the artists they follow? Students will examine the defining characteristics of different media forms (i.e. television, music, photojournalism, editorials, blogs, and tweets, and other digital media students may suggest) and will examine how the construction and projection of textual, aural and visual images shape meaning and influence broader discussions of events. 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.
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 “real world” questions of social, cultural, or thematic significance.

UWG Policies, Services, and Requirements for all courses: http://www.westga.edu/assetsDept/vpaa/Common_Language_for_Course_Syllabi.pdf

Plagiarism Policy: The Department of English and Philosophy defines plagiarism as taking personal credit for the words and ideas of others as they are presented in electronic, print, and verbal sources. The Department expects that students will accurately credit sources in all assignments. An equally dishonest practice is fabricating sources or facts; it is another form of misrepresenting the truth. Plagiarism is grounds for failing the course. Any plagiarized assignment will receive a Zero. Students will be reported to the appropriate university officials.

Required Texts:

There is no required hard copy text for this class. However, there are required texts! These may be accessed on the courseeden page for our class or through web links that I offer throughout the semester. For short texts, you will be required to bring a PRINTED COPY (not on your laptop, tablet, or phone). So the tradeoff for not asking you to buy a book is that you comply agreeably to my requests for printed copies.

Assignments:

(1) Reading Journal: students respond to reading assignments (print, filmic, and visual) or cultural experiences, demonstrating

- expressive writing (personal response ), and
- analytical questions about the text or event
(2) Visual image analysis: a brief writing assignment based on an observation, description, and analysis of a photograph. This assignment fosters intellectual curiosity and analytical questioning as well as demonstration of the basic skills of paragraph development.

(3) One short essay (2 pages) of critical analysis of a course text.

(4) One substantive essay (3 pages) of thesis-driven argument, including some consideration of contexts (social, cultural, or thematic issues that the text raises in connection to the “real world”). This essay may include reference to secondary readings from the course that support analysis of primary texts and contexts.

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 and which in some way provides a contemporary analogy to ideas generated by the course. Specific guidelines for this assignment are listed on coursesen.

6) Final Exam showcasing understanding of course materials and units and the most significant benefits of the class to the individual student.

Evaluation Methods:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation: in class quizzes, workshops*</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing #1 / Response Writing (two paragraphs):</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing #2 / Critical Analysis (2 pages):</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing #3 / Analysis</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Creative Project:</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Your participation grade will be based on attendance, daily works, quizzes, and class behavior.

Tentative Syllabus (may be edited weekly as contemporary events merit)

T 25 Introduction to the course, syllabus, introduction to the course topic (EX: The Trouble with Bic), survey, Warm-Up Writing Exercise: response to visual images on this syllabus

Th 27 Introduction to unit topic: Signs, subtext, and cultural mythology: Everything means something

• **Initial Image Response**: an in-class short paragraph response to a visual, which will be handed in and not evaluated but will be returned to students on the final day of class to revise and measure what they have learned in the class.

• **Introduction to Media Unit One: Advertising / Gender and subcultures**
- **Homework/Journal assignment**: Read Twitchell’s “What We Are to Advertisers” and “Men’s Men” here: https://fontaineb1.wordpress.com/2014/02/09/what-we-are-to-advertisers-and-mens-men-and-womens-women-summary/
- consider where you fall on the VALS2 chart. To what extent do you see yourself represented by one of the categories on the chart? How do you feel about being stereotyped by marketers?

**T 1  Discussion**: De-coding advertisements: Recognizing patterns, understanding target audience

- **Small group exercise**: De-constructing an advertisement (and considering the potential ethical issues therein)
- **Discussion of group findings**: What did you conclude and why?
- **Assign student ad research**

**Th 3  TRENDING NOW**: Student ad presentations / memes?/ small group and then presentation of one or two

- **Assign Writing One (two paragraph response)**

**T 8  Draft Due in class for workshop / Full Draft A, Half draft C, absence or no draft F)/ Assign readings**

**Th 10  Readings**: “Entertainment and Culture” (courseden) / 3-19 of Ebook accessible through Ingram Library website: Understanding Celebrity by Graeme Turner / Reading questions on courseden

**T 15  Introduction to Unit 2: Sports, Media, and Celebrity**

- **Sports and Sports Fans**: discuss stereotypes about different sports fans
- **Discuss essays** “The Glorified Self” (excerpt) and “Immortalizing the Self Through Sports”
- **Small group workshops** on sports identities / ad analysis

**Th 17  Readings on Serena Williams /**

**T 22  Sports and criminal behaviors (Ray Rice, Adrian Peterson, Tom Brady)**

**Th 24  TRENDING NOW**: Student examples of sports celebrities and issues / memes

- **Students and Social Media**: Readings, “Fast Entertainment” and “Youtopian Dreams Hashtags: What Are They Good For

**T 29  Introduction to Unit 3: Music, Media, and Celebrity**
• Fans and Music Celebrities: discuss excerpts from “Very Solo: Pop Female Singers and Identity”
• Read Brittany Spears materials on courseden

Thu 1 Lady Gaga “Paparazzi”

• **Small group exercise:** Group #1: How does Lady Gaga glamorize her own death in “Paparazzi”? Group #2: What’s the point in having her lover be the one to throw her over the balcony? What might she be saying about the nature of celebrity here?
• Drake and ?
• Online Readings: “7 Drake Lyrics that Make You Want to Call your Ex” and “12 Things You Should Never Say to a Drake Fan”
• Video: Drake and Blake, ESPYS 2014

Tue 6 Fandom: Readings “Through a Glass Darkly: Fan/Celebrity Encounters

• Eminem: “Stan” and Slim Shady: analyze lyrics, music videos

Thu 8 Student examples: fandom, fanzines, fan fiction

Tue 13 **TRENDING NOW:** Student examples of music news / memes

Thu 15 Workshop: Writing #2: 2 page critical analysis from on either sports celebrity or music celebrity

Tue 20 Introduction to Unit 4: Film, Media and Celebrity

• Reading, “The Hollywood Sign”
• Reading film trailers (audience)
• Star Studies (readings tba)

Thu 22 Podcasts, interviews *Straight Outta Compton*

Tue 27 Film

Thu 29 Film

Tue 3 Draft Workshop: Writing# 3 / assign nominations: Post to the discussion list your idea for topic discussion for last week of readings /

Thu 5 **OUT OF TOWN CONFERENCE NO CLASS** Online Work Required

• Discussion List on Courseden assignment: Discuss Student nominations for extra topic for final week of discussion / I will be responding to these on courseden and will post the assignment for T the 10th by Sunday night the 8th.

Tue 10 TBA: student chosen topic
Th 12  TBA: student chosen topic
T 17  Work on Final Creative Exhibition
Th 19  Work on Final Creative Exhibition
T 24, Th 26 Thanksgiving Break
T 1  LAST DAY OF IN-CLASS WORK
Th 3  Final Creative Exhibitions Due

- Final exam preview and review
- Assign portion of final that is take home: 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.