Why are we obsessed with celebrities? How are our perceptions shaped by media? We will explore our fascination with celebrity (music, film & sports)—what it reveals about us and our changing values.
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 courseden 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 courseden.

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

Evaluation Methods:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation Method</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<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>
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<tr>
<td>Writing #2 / Critical Analysis (2 pages):</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing #3 / Analysis</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Creative Project:</td>
<td>10%</td>
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*Your participation grade will be based on attendance, daily works, quizzes, and class behavior.
Tentative Syllabus (may be edited weekly as contemporary events merit)

W 10  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

M 15  Introduction to Unit Topic 1 and Image assignment:

- **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**
- consider where you fall on the VALS2 chart. What are some other ways we could classify three types of consumers?

W 17  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**

M 22  **TRENDING NOW**: Student ad presentations / small group and then presentation of one or two

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

W 24  Draft Due in class for workshop / Full Draft A, Half draft C, absence or no draft F)/ Assign readings for next week

M 29  Readings: “Entertainment and Culture” (courseden) / 3-19 of Ebook accessible through Ingram Library website: Understanding Celebrity by Graeme Turner / Reading questions on courseden / Writing One due

W 31  Introduction to Unit 2: Sports, Media, and Celebrity

- Sports and Sports Fans: discuss stereotypes about different sports fans
- Discuss essays “The Glorified Self” (courseden excerpt) / “I Won, I’m Sorry” (courseden)
- **Small group workshops** on sports identities / sports ad analysis
M  5   LABOR DAY HOLIDAY

W  7    Readings on Serena Williams tba

M 12  Sports and criminal behaviors (Ray Rice, Tom Brady, X and Y) / Discuss reading from Womack (coursedden) / assign fan research

W 14  Introduction to Unit 3: Music, Media, and Celebrity
   Fans and Music Celebrities: discuss fandom readings on courseden “Through a Glass Darkly: Fan/Celebrity Encounters”
   • Small group share of research (fan sites, fan clubs, fanzines, fan fiction) / categorizing fan communities

M 19  Fandom: Readings Eminem: “Stan” and Slim Shady: analyze lyrics and music video before class / Intro to Beyonce, in-class viewing of satirical piece

W 21  Beyonce: lyrics and readings: positive/negative critical reaction (google if links don’t work)
   1) https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/feb/08/beyonce-formation-black-american-narrative-the-margins

   / assign writing two

M 26  Workshop: Writing #2: 2 page critical analysis from on either sports celebrity or music celebrity

W 28  Introduction to Unit 4: Film, Media and Celebrity
   • The People vs. O.J. Simpson and OJ: Made in America / compare episodes / assign readings
   • 30th is last day to withdraw with a grade of W

M  3  Discuss readings/ overview of documentary vs. drama

W  5  Online class: students present documentary examples  (Fall Break is Oct. 6-7)

M 10  Film viewing and analysis: Disconnect

W 12  Cont’d

M 17  Finish film and discussion/ themes? Links to course topic?

W 19  Assign writing three/ choose topic / outlining

M 24  Draft Workshop
W 26  **Writing #3 due**

M  31  Assign Final Creative Exhibition: Examples from the past / Grading Rubric

W    2  Work on Final Creative Exhibition

M    7  Work on Final Creative Exhibition / sign up for presentation time slot

W    9  Student Presentations

M   14  Student Presentations

W   16  Student Presentations

M  21, W  23  Thanksgiving Holiday

M  28  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 / small group “Fantasy Final Exam”: submit at the end of class

W  30  Final exam preview and review

Final Exam  M Dec. 5   11-1