XIDS 2100: CELEBRITY AND MEDIA IN AMERICAN CULTURE

Fall 2017
Dr. Lisa Crafton
TLC 2228 678-839-6512
lcrafton@westga.edu
Office Hours:  T, Th 9:30-10:45, 4-5, other days online and by appointment
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? In addition, we will explore current topics in media studies, including social media censorship, fake news, and trending concerns. 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:
https://www.westga.edu/administration/vpaa/assets/docs/faculty-resources/common_language_for_course_syllabi_v2.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 coursesden 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) Short two paragraph writing assignment, description and analysis of ads.

(2) Short essay (2 pages) of critical analysis of a course topic as assigned.

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

4) One exam

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 coursesden.

Withdrawal Date: 9/29 is the last day to withdraw from a course

Evaluation Methods:

Participation: in class quizzes, workshops, online work 10%
Writing #1 / Response Writing (two paragraphs): 20%
Writing #2 / Critical Analysis (2 pages): 20%
Writing #3 / Analysis 20%
Final Exam: 20%
Final Creative Project: 10%

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

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

Th 10  Introduction to the course, syllabus, introduction to the course topic, survey, Warm-Up Writing Exercise: response to visual images on this syllabus

T 15  Introduction to unit topic: Signs, subtext, and cultural mythology: Everything means something / The Trouble with Bic

- 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/

Th 17  Discussion: De-coding advertisements: Recognizing patterns, understanding target audience / Function of celebrity in commercials: Example Pepsi ad vs. Heinekin ad

- Small group exercise: De-constructing an advertisement
- Discussion of group findings: What did you conclude and why?
- Assign student ad research

T 22  Student ad presentations / small group and then presentation

- Assign Writing One (two paragraph response)
- How to use descriptive language

Th 24  Draft due in class for workshop / Full draft of two complete paragraphs = A / Half draft of one paragraph = C / Absence or no draft = F

Assign readings on courseden and ebook and reading questions on courseden to be due next meeting: Entertainment and Culture” (courseden) / Turner, Understanding Celebrity (courseden) / Complete the reading questions on courseden

T 29  Discuss readings: what is celebrity / functions of entertainment / small group workshops

Th 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) and Womack’s mythical types of sports heroes: access this book and read pp. 17-21 here
• Small group workshops on Womack
• Assign readings on Williams

T 5 Sports, gender, and celebrity: Readings on Serena Williams (two readings and one video are available in courseden under label “Serena”)

Th 7 TBA: where are we in this course? Student input? Contemporary issues?

T 12 Introduction to Unit 3: Music, Media, and Celebrity / Lady Gaga “Paparazzi” (view before class here)
  • Small group exercise: Reading Music Videos How does Lady Gaga glamorize her own death in “Paparazzi”? What are the dominant colors and how do they function? 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?

Th 14 Popular music and cultural critique / Reading images: Kendrick Lamar album cover / student examples

T 19 Fandom: Readings “Fan/Celebrity Encounters” (courseden)
  • Eminem: “Stan” and Slim Shady: analyze lyrics, music video

Th 21 Student examples: fandom, fanzines, fan fiction / assign essay 2

T 26 Writing effective papers: bring outline and intro to class for grade

Th 28 Fake News/Media studies and censorship in social media / read here and here

T 3 Introduction to Unit 4: Film, Media and Celebrity
  • Reading film trailers (audience)
  • Star Studies (Courseden 1-11)
  • Rom-com female archetypes: read here

Th 5 FALL BREAK: No class

T 10 Interactive Film Viewing in class: mandatory attendance and notetaking

Th 12 Interactive Film Viewing in class: mandatory attendance and notetaking

T 17 Interactive Film Viewing: mandatory attendance / assign essay 3
Mandatory workshop: finding and using sources /assign research

Draft Workshop: Full draft = A, Half draft = C, Absent or no draft = F

Conferences as needed, Writing Center appointments as needed to finish draft

Assign Creative Presentations: look at samples, critique, initial topic selection/ your role as audience (credit for being a supportive listener)

Creative Presentations

At a Conference: No class

THANKSGIVING BREAK No class

EXAM PREVIEW! Mandatory attendance today / Course summary and wrap-up

EXAM