

MACS 100 – Introduction to Popular Television and Movies

Instructor: Stephanie Brown

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Office Hours: By appointment

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Class Meeting Times: 12-2:50 PM MTWR Lincoln 1028

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The fundamental goal of this course is to learn how to watch popular movies and television shows more thoughtfully, carefully, and critically - by the end of the session we will see television and films as more than mere *entertainment*. This involves learning basic terminology to help us understand how media studies, as a field of study, performs media analysis. We will analyze three interrelated areas: theories of "the popular" and "ideology"; representations of race, class, gender and sexuality; and the media forms of film and television. We will be able to answer questions like: What does it mean to call something popular? How can I better understand the ways in which I interact with film and television? How do I make sense of the representation of difference on screen? Is it still TV or film when I watch it on the Internet? Is watching *The Daily Show* akin to watching the news? If I find myself living in a horror film, when will I die? This class fulfills General Education credit for "Literature and the Arts" and "Western Comparative Culture."

READINGS

All readings and assignments will be posted on the course Compass2G site; login page: <https://compass2g.illinois.edu/>

The course schedule and readings are subject to change.

REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Grades will be broken down as follows:

Participation And Attendance

Because this course is extremely condensed, attendance is mandatory. Absences will only be excused for emergencies; otherwise, each absence will decrease your final grade by half of a letter grade. You are also expected to be in class by noon, again, except for emergencies. Tardies will add up to absences.

You should come to class ready to thoughtfully engage in the day's assigned materials – though I understand the limitations on discussion that the size of the class will have. I won't explicitly factor in your attendance in your final grade, but it will help your final grade if you do make an effort to regularly participate.

Midterm and Final - 50%

Two in-class, hour-long, multiple-choice exams, will cover material from lectures, readings, and screenings. The final will mostly cover material from the second two weeks, but will have a few questions from the beginning of class as well.

Midterm: Monday, June 2nd

Final: Thursday, June 12th (final day of class)

Written Response Assignments (on Compass) – 25%

You will be asked to submit a 4-paragraph Screening Evaluation to Compass 6 times during the course, your highest 5 of which will count. They will be graded on a scale of 10 pts./5 pts./0 pts. Handout on how to write these will be passed-out separately.

Video Project and Paper – 25%

In groups of 4-5 students, you will create a video and write a 5-page paper due (to Compass) on Wednesday, June 11 by **Midnight**.

You'll upload your videos to YouTube and submit the link with your paper.

Your Video Project Group will create a 3-4 minute video related to television programming or movies, which could be a short narrative (like a short film, music video, etc.), a persuasive message with narrative elements (like a film trailer or commercial), a parody of a media genre, trope or representation, etc. You may use clips of other media texts, like graphics, photos, artwork, YouTube clips, film/TV critics' reviews, etc. but NOT more than 20 seconds of professionally made footage. The video projects will be introduced to and screened for the class during the Video Festival in on the last day of class after the final.

These videos are you chance to synthesize or comment on class material. You can pretty much do any type of video you'd like, as long as your paper relates the video back to some course concept.

For the second component of the project, each group will write a 5-page accompanying paper that explains the group's premise, process, content and formal choices, and the video's demonstration of class concepts. Everyone in the group will get the same grade for the project. However, if someone signs up for a group but does not contribute, the group as a whole may inform me and that person will not receive credit for the assignment.

Additionally, in class following the midterm, your group will work together to produce storyboards in order to plot your shots in advance and to make sure you don't wait until the last minute to work on the project.

MEDIA USE IN CLASS

Due to my past classes' inability to pay attention with the Internet available to them - notes for class are to be taken by hand, and not on laptops/tablets etc.

And, please turn off your phone-ringer before class. I understand that we all forget to turn them off occasionally, but if it becomes a consistent problem, I'll have to come up with some sort of creative/painful phone-ringer punishment. And I'd rather not.

ACCOMODATIONS

If you have a disability or a medical condition that requires disability- related adjustments or auxiliary aids, we are happy to work with you and the [Disability Resources and Educational Services](#) to make the course accessible.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

According to the [CODE OF POLICIES AND REGULATIONS of the UIUC](#), it is the student's responsibility to refrain from violations of academic integrity (cheating; plagiarism; fabrication and others), from behavior that may lead to suspicion of such violations, and from behavior that helps others in such violations. The code is also explicit about incivility, absences, fair grading, TA's responsibilities and obligations, and students' rights. It is expected that all UIUC students will read and abide by the code of policies.

If you ever have a question of whether something constitutes plagiarism, COME SEE ME. The easiest way to avoid plagiarism is: if you use an idea/quote from somewhere that isn't your own brain, cite where it came from. If you cite your source, it can't be plagiarism. It's better to appear unoriginal than to look like a cheater.

Schedule Overview (Subject To Change)

Week 1

May 19 – Course Overview / Media as Text

Screening: The Truman Show

May 20 – Representation And Ideology

Screening: In A World

May 21 – Form, Aesthetics, Mise-En-Scene- Go over Response Assignment Format

Screening: Mad Men

May 22 – “Quality TV” and Realism as Genre - Go Over Project / Sign Up For Groups

Screening: The Wire

Week 2

May 26 – No Class, Memorial Day

May 27 – Race and Representation on Reality TV

Screening: Inkmaster, America’s Next Top Model

May 28 – The News and “Newsy” Shows

Screening: The Daily Show, Last Week Tonight, Totally Biased

May 29 – Television Flow, Netflix and Changing Modes of Distribution

Screening: Arrested Development Season 4

Week 3

June 2 – **Midterm / Storyboard Projects in class**

June 3 – **Shoot Day!**

June 4 – Industry, The Hollywood System and The FCC

Screening: This Film is Not Yet Rated

June 5 – Racial Stereotypes and Subversion

Screening: Attack the Block

Week 4

June 9 – Gender Construction, Women in Film and The Male Gaze

Screening: Ruby Sparks

June 10 – Screening Sexuality

Screening: Looking and Glee

June 11 – Globalization and Film – **Films and Papers due by 11:59 through Compass**

Screening: A Separation

June 12 – **Film Festival / Final**