
RACE AND POPULAR CULTURE

History 221
Asian American Studies 240

Spring Semester 2006
1651 Humanities; TR 9:30-10:45 am

Professor: Cindy I-Fen Cheng

Office: 5106 Humanities
Office Hours: T 12-12:45pm; R 11-12:45pm;
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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Popular culture entertains us with visions of how we see ourselves and the world we live in. It creates pleasure in consuming certain ways of being in the world while trivializing others. Because of its powerful ability to shape our sense of self and community, this course critically analyzes not only the definitions that are promoted within popular culture but also how these ideas become “popular” and socially desirable. Throughout this semester, we will explore how certain ways of being in the world are encoded in the various mediums of popular culture such as advertisements, television, film, music, sports, internet, and video games and how these understandings become commodified, produced, distributed, and consumed.

For example, we will explore how in our profit driven economy the World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) has commodified and distributed the sport of wrestling through the price of an admissions ticket or a pay per view fee. Moreover, we will consider how technological devices such as the video camera dictate how we are to see the stunts, what to look for, and which ideas or performances get replayed. As these processes also shape the types of personalities, images, and social interactions to be promoted and repackaged in order to secure a returning consumer base, we will decode the complex and often contradictory meanings behind what it means to be a “normal” man and woman in WWE and how they are to interact with each other and among themselves. It is a vision that elicit ideas about race, class, and sexuality to create the socially desirable man and woman.

The kinds of questions explored in this course along with the analysis they produce are indeed subversive; they break the cardinal rule that entertainment is “fun” and thus a guarded time to “not think” and “not to read too much into things.” This course interrogates this line of thinking by asking who or what social and economic systems profit from our tuning out? It teaches that the *study* of popular culture is indeed “fun” and critical to understanding how meanings of who we are become constructed and distributed in society.

This course consists of unannounced quizzes, two examinations, two short critical analysis papers, and lecture and discussion attendance.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING:

Quizzes	5%	50 points
Discussion Attendance and Participation	20%	200 points
Critical Analysis Paper 1 (5-7 pages)	15%	150 points
Exam 1	15%	150 points
Critical Analysis Paper 2 (7 pages)	20%	200 points
Exam 2 (Comprehensive)	25%	250 points

TOTAL:	100%	1000 points
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COURSE POLICIES:

Attendance: Regular and prompt attendance, active participation, and mature attentiveness during lecture meetings are mandatory. The professor will not distribute lecture notes via e-mail for students who miss lecture nor will lecture notes be posted on the course webpage. There are no excused absences for lecture.

Readings: Students are expected to complete each week's required readings before that Tuesday's lecture. You need to bring your books, readers, and lecture notes to each discussion section.

Discussion Sections: You will fail the course even if you do all the written work but do not attend weekly discussion sections. Your discussion leader has full authority to assign homework, administer quizzes, and require drafts of papers. She will provide you with additional guidelines and policies for the discussion section.

Quizzes, Writing Assignments, and Examinations: There will be unannounced quizzes on course materials in lecture. Quizzes will always be administered during the first ten to fifteen minutes of class. There will be no make-up quizzes given, without exception. Assignments are always due during the first ten minutes of lecture. Any assignment received after the first ten minutes of lecture on the due date is considered late and will not be evaluated or credited. No late work will be accepted, without exception. E-mailed submissions of papers are not permitted and will not be credited or graded, without exception. Exam 1 and Exam 2 will be given according to the schedule indicated in the course syllabus and according to university schedule, without exception. No incompletes will be granted for the course except in cases of personal emergencies, subject to the prompt notification of the professor, valid documentation of the particular emergency, and the discretion of the professor. Students are responsible for retaining a copy of all exams, quizzes, and assignments.

Honesty: Please read the university policy on plagiarism. All information borrowed from print sources or the internet must be clearly identified and properly credited. Any instance of plagiarism or cheating on exams, quizzes, and written assignments will result in an "F" grade for the assignment and the course.

Abilities: Any student who feels that he or she may need special accommodation due to a disability should contact me privately. Please also contact the Mcburney Disability Resource Center (<http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu/>) at 608-263-2741 (phone); 263-6393 (TTY); 263-2998 (FAX); FrontDesk@mcb.wisc.edu to ensure that accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.

Ground Rules: This course is open to a variety of ways of interpreting popular culture and students are encouraged to share their questions and ideas in lecture and discussion sections. Since there will be differences and disagreements, students are expected to show respect to the comments and positions of fellow students, the graduate instructor, as well as the professor.

Each student is warmly encouraged to meet with the professor and the graduate instructor during office hours and by appointment.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- COURSE READER ® is available at the Humanities Copy Center located at 1650 Humanities; Hours: 7:45 - 11:45am, 12:30 - 4:10pm; Phone: 263-3718 or 263-1803
- FULL LENGTH TEXT is available at the Rainbow Bookstore Cooperative located at 426 West Gilman Street; Hours: MWF 10-6 pm, TR 10-8 pm, Sat. 10- 6 pm, Sun 12-5 pm; Phone: 257-6050
1. Gail Dines and Jean Humez, eds. *Gender, Race and Class in Media*, 2nd edition (Sage Publications 2003). (DH)

A copy of the COURSE READER and the FULL LENGTH TEXT are available on reserve at the College Library.

FILMS:

- Merchants of Cool
- The Ad and the Ego

- The Love Goddesses
- Slaying the Dragon
- Celluloid Closet
- Money for Nothing
- Nobody Knows My Name
- Wrestling with Manhood
- Game Over
- Various Film; Video; TV clips

COURSE SCHEDULE:

WEEK 1: Introduction

Tu 1.17
R 1.19

Readings:

- Douglas Kellner, "Cultural Studies, Multiculturalism, and Media Culture," DH 9-20
- David Croteau and William Hoynes, "The New Media Giants," DH 21- 39
- James Lull, "Hegemony," DH 60-65
- Stuart Hall, "The Whites of Their Eyes," DH 89-93
- Elaine H. Kim, "Asian Americans and Popular Culture" in *Dictionary of Asian Americans*, ed. Hyung Chan Kim (New York: Greenwood Publishing Group Inc., 1989), 99-114 ®

WEEK 2: Critical Vocabulary

Tu 1.24
R 1.26 Film: Merchants of Cool

Readings:

- Susan G. Davis, "Space Jam," DH 159-170
- Juliet Schor, "The New Politics of Consumption," DH 183-195
- Carol A. Stabile, "Nike, Social Responsibility, and the Hidden Adobe of Production," DH 196-203
- Kenon Breazeale, "In Spite of Women," DH 230-243
- Marcelo Ballve, "The Battle for Latino Media" in *NACLA Report on the Americas*, 37:4 (2004):20-25 ®

WEEK 3: Advertising and Consumer Culture

T 1.31
R 2.2

Readings:

- Sut Jhally, "Image-Based Culture: Advertising and Popular Culture," DH 249-257
- John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (New York: The Viking Press, 1972), 45-64; 129-155 ®
- Fred Fejes, "Advertising and the Political Economy of Lesbian/Gay Identity," DH 212-222
- Jean Kilbourne, "'The More you Subtract, The More You Add'," DH 258-267
- Sanjukta Ghosh, "'Con-fusing' Exotica," DH 274-282

WEEK 4: Advertising

T 2.7
R 2.9 Film: The Ad and the Ego

Readings:

- Clint C. Wilson II and Felix Gutierrez, "Advertising and People of Color," DH 283-292
- Jackson Katz, "Advertising and the Construction of Violent White Masculinity," DH 349-358
- George Lipsitz, "The Meaning of Memory," DH 40-47
- Richard Butsch, "Ralph, Fred, Archie, and Homer," DH 575-585
- George Gerbner, "Television Violence," DH 339-348

WEEK 5: Television

T 2.14
R 2.16

Readings:

- Jennifer Hayward, "Consuming Pleasures," DH 507-521
- Diane Raymond, "Popular Culture and Queer Representation," DH 98-110
- Kristal Brent Zook, "The Fox Network and the Revolution in Black Television," DH 586-595
- Jackie Byars and Eileen R. Meehan, "Once in a Lifetime," DH 613-624
- Sujata Moorti, "Cathartic Confessions or Emancipatory Texts?," DH 522-533
- Janice Peck, "The Mediated Talking Cure," DH 534-547

WEEK 6: Television and Reality-Based Programming

T 2.21 **CRITICAL ANALYSIS PAPER #1 DUE**
R 2.23

Readings:

- Lynn Spiegel, "Entertainment Wars: Television Culture after 9/11" in *American Quarterly* 56:2 (June 2004):235-270 ®
- Derek Kompare, "Extraordinarily Ordinary: *The Osbournes* as 'An American Family'" in *Reality TV*, eds. Susan Murray and Laurie Ouellette (New York: New York University Press, 2004), 97-116 ®
- Jon Kraszewski, "Country Hicks and Urban Cliques: Mediating Race, Reality and Liberalism on MTV's *The Real World*" in *Reality TV*, eds. Susan Murray and Laurie Ouellette (New York: New York University Press, 2004), 179-196 ®
- Kathleen Le Besco, "Got to Be Real: Mediating Gayness on *Survivor*" in *Reality TV*, eds. Susan Murray and Laurie Ouellette (New York: New York University Press, 2004), 271-287 ®
- W. Lance Bennett, "Beyond Pseudoevents: Election News as Reality TV" in *American Behavioral Scientist* 49:3 (November 2005):364-378 ®

WEEK 7: Film

T 2.28
R 3.2 Film Clips: The Love Goddesses; Slaying the Dragon; Celluloid Closet

Readings:

- Thomas Sobchack and Vivian Sobchack, *An Introduction to Film* (Boston: Scott, Foreman and Co., 1987), 3-21;54-63; 112-115; 222-235 ®
- Carol J. Clover, "Her Body, Himself: Gender in Slasher Film" in *Gender, Race and Class in Media* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1995), 169-183 ®

WEEK 8: Wu Xia: Bruce Lee and the Chinese Martial Arts Films

T 3.7
R 3.9 **EXAM I**

Readings:

- Vijay Prashad, "Bruce Lee and the Anti-Imperialism of Kung Fu: A Polycultural Adventure" in *positions* 11:1 (2003):51-90 ®
- Amy Abugo Ongiri, "'He Wanted to be Just Like Bruce Lee': African Americans, Kung Fu Theater and Cultural Exchange at the Margins" in *JAAS* (February 2002):31-40 ®
- Christina Klein, "*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*: A Diasporic Reading" in *Cinema Journal* 43:4 (Summer 2004):18-42 ®

WEEK 9: Spring Break

T 3.14 No Lecture Meeting ☺
R 3.16 No Lecture Meeting ☺

WEEK 10: Music

T 3.21
R 3.23 Film: Money for Nothing

Readings:

- George Lipsitz, "Working People's Music" in *American Media and Mass Culture: Left Perspectives*, ed. Donald Lazere (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 293-308 ®
- Reebee Garofalo, "I Want My MP3: Who Owns Internet Music?" in *Policing Pop*, eds. Martin Cloonan and Reebee Garofalo (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), 30-45 ®
- Tricia Rose, "Hidden Politics," DH 396-405

WEEK 11: Hip Hop

T 3.28
R 3.30 Film: Nobody Knows My Name

Readings:

- Imani Perry, "Who(se) Am I?," DH 136-148
- Rana A. Emerson, "'Where My Girls At?' Negotiating Black Womanhood in Music Videos" in *Gender and Society* 2002 16(1):115-123 ®
- Kembrew McLeod, "Authenticity Within Hip Hop and Other Cultures Threatened with Assimilation" in *Journal of Communication* Fall 1999:134-150 ®
- Josh Kun, "What Is an MC If He Can't Rap to Banda?: Making Music in Nuevo L.A." in *American Quarterly*:741-758 ®

WEEK 12: Sports

T 4.4
R 4.6

Readings:

- Sut Jhally, "Cultural Studies and the Sports/Media Complex" in *Media, Sports and Society*, ed. Lawrence A. Wenner (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1989), 70-93 ®
- Alan Bairner, "Isolation of Expansion: Nationalism and Sport in the United States" in *Sport, Nationalism, and Globalization* (New York: State University Press, 2001), 91-113 ®
- Mariah B. Nelson, "Feminism and Football: Then and Now" in *The Stronger Women Get, the More Men Love Football* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Co., 1994), 10-25 ®

- Jennifer Hargreaves, "Femininity or 'Musculinity'?": Changing Images of Female Sports" in *Sporting Females* (London: Routledge, 1994), 145-173 ®

WEEK 13: World Wrestling Entertainment

T 4.11 **CRITICAL ANALYSIS PAPER #2 – PART I DUE**
 R 4.13 Film: Wrestling with Manhood

Readings:

- Don Sabo, "The Politics of Homophobia in Sport" in *Sex, Violence, and Power in Sports* (The Crossing Press, 1994), 101-112 ®
- Darcy C. Plymire and Pamela J. Forman, "Speaking of Cheryl Miller: Interrogating the Lesbian Taboo on a Women's Basketball Newsgroup" in *NWSA Journal* 13:1 (2001):1-21 ®
- C. Richard King, "Borrowing Power: Racial Metaphors and Pseudo-Indian Mascots" in *CR: The New Centennial Review* 14:1 (Spring 2004):189-209 ®
- Gary A. Sailes, "The Myth of Black Sports Supremacy" in *Journal of Black Studies* 21:4 (June 1991):480-487 ®
- Sharon Mazer, "The Doggie Doggie World of Professional Wrestling" in *TDR* 34:4 (Winter 1990):96-122®

WEEK 14: Internet

T 4.18 **CRITICAL ANALYSIS PAPER #2 – PART II DUE**
 R 4.20

Readings:

- Robert McChesney, "The *Titanic* Sails on," DH 677-683
- Ellen Seiter, "Television and the Internet," DH 688-695
- Laura Miller, "Women and Children First: Gender and the Settling of the Electronic Frontier" in *Resisting the Virtual Life: The Culture and Politics of Information*, ed. James Brook and Iain Boal (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1995), 49-58 ®
- Lynn Schofield Clark, "Dating on the Net," DH 696-707

WEEK 15: Gaming

T 4.25
 R 4.27

Readings:

- Tim Lenoir, "All but War Is Simulation: The Military-Entertainment Complex" in *Configurations* 8 (200);289-335 ®
- Paul Budra, "American Justice and the First-Person Shooter" in *Canadian Review of American Studies* 34:1 (2004):1-12 ®
- Children Now, "Fair Play?: Violence, Gender, and Race in Video Games" 2001 ®

WEEK 16: Gaming; Course Summary

T 5.2 Film: Game Over
 R 5.4 Final Review Session

Final Examination: Tuesday, May 9, 2006