

SYP 4630: The Sociology of Popular Culture
Florida Atlantic University Boca Raton Campus, Spring 2014
T R 2-3:20pm in GS103
Sec 002, CRN 26122
3.0 units No Prerequisites

Professor: Marissa Jordan

Email: mjorda19@fau.edu

Phone: 561-297-3270 (Sociology Department)

Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 3:30-4:30pm (and by appointment) in CU 259

REQUIRED BOOKS

Grazian, David. *Mix It Up: Popular Culture, Mass Media, and Society*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2010.

Lafeber, Walter. *Michael Jordan and the New Global Capitalism* (new and expanded edition). W.W. Norton and Company, 2002.

Levy, Ariel. *Female Chauvinist Pigs: Women and the Rise of Raunch Culture*. New York: Free Press, 2006.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course we will examine how popular culture is becoming increasingly central to social life in the United States and around the world. We define popular culture as an expanding network of leisure activities, commercial entertainment, media technologies, and subcultural practices. Our class will consider the following forms of media and entertainment as popular culture:

- Television
- Film
- Music
- Gaming
- Social media
- Advertising
- Fashion
- Sports / Fitness
- Cuisine
- Travel / Recreation

Our class begins by looking at how popular culture is defined by distinguishing it from “folk culture” and “high culture.” These concerns take us from the critique of “mass culture” and “the culture industry” that emerged in the 1930s and 40s to contemporary concerns about media mergers and the hyper-commercialization of popular culture.

We then consider how audiences make sense of and use the popular culture they consume. Under what conditions does popular culture serve to reproduce the “hegemony” of dominant society, and when can it be a tool of resistance? We examine how popular culture has become a site of social struggle over representation and identity in matters of race, gender, class, and sexuality.

Finally, we consider the consequences of the globalization of media and American-style consumerism for local cultures and national identities in the rest of the world. Is cultural homogenization an inevitable consequence of globalization, or is it possible for local cultures to absorb and appropriate global media into new forms of hybridization?

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of the course is to provide students with the tools to critically analyze these various forms of popular culture and understand them within a broader social context. Toward this end, students will be challenged to complete the following objectives:

- Read and review the various social theories that sociologists have employed in an attempt to make sense of popular culture.
- Write essays of varying length that summarize or synthesize sociological concepts for the study of popular culture.
- Apply the theories and insights of sociologists in the analysis of some aspect of contemporary popular culture of the student's choosing.
- Conduct a sociological interview with another person about their tastes in popular culture or their activities in creating music, film, blogs, etc.
- Participate in class discussions focused on sociological questions raised by the assigned readings or documentaries screened in class.

EXAMS, PAPERS, AND EVALUATION

Interview assignment=10%

Mid-term exam=35%

Analysis assignment=15%

Final paper=30%

Attendance=10%

The Interview assignment (10 points) is due hardcopy in class on Jan 23rd. Students will conduct a brief sociological interview with someone of their choosing about his/her contemporary popular culture tastes and activities.

The in-class Mid-term exam (35 points) is scheduled for Feb 25th. It will consist of a mixture of multiple-choice, true/false, and matching questions along with one essay. It will draw equally from lectures and assigned readings.

The Analysis assignment (15 points) is due hardcopy in class on March 25th. Students will be challenged to write a 2-3 page paper that synthesizes sociological concepts and applies sociological theories in the analysis of some aspect of contemporary popular culture of the student's choosing.

The in-class Final (30 points) is scheduled for April 29th at 1:15pm. Students will complete a 3-4 page paper based on the arguments presented in the final two books as well as the sociological theories and concepts discussed throughout the course. This exam is open book and open notes.

Attendance (10 points): see Attendance Policy below

Grades are assigned strictly based on the number of points earned during the semester to be fair and objective to all students. It is the student's responsibility to achieve the grade they "need" and the instructor's responsibility to assign the grade they deserve.

I will notify you when grades are posted on the Gradebook section of Blackboard. Please check your grades often and notify me if there are any mistakes or discrepancies.

Make-ups will be scheduled only if the student has arranged one with the professor before exam day or after presenting documentation for an excused absence on exam day.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Sign-in sheets for attendance will be distributed often during the course. The first missed class does not affect the student's attendance grade, with points deducted for each class missed thereafter. Students are expected to come to class prepared and be present both physically and mentally. Therefore, a large portion of the attendance grade is based on the student's completion of the reading and homework assignments and participation in class discussions and reflections. Absences are excused if documentation is provided by the student in accordance with university policy as stated in the Provost memoranda:

and <http://www.fau.edu/provost/files/studentabsences.pdf>

<http://fau.edu/provost/files/religious2011.pdf>

GRADING SCALE

A	93-100 points
A-	90-92.5
B+	87-89.5
B	83-86.5
B-	80-82.5
C+	77-79.5
C	73-76.5
C-	70-72.5
D+	67-69.5
D	63-66.5
D-	60-62.5
F	is 59.5 or below

CODE OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Students at Florida Atlantic University are expected to maintain the highest ethical standards. Academic dishonesty is considered a serious breach of these ethical standards, because it interferes with the University mission to provide a high quality education in which no student enjoys an unfair advantage over any other. Academic dishonesty is also destructive of the University community, which is grounded in a system of mutual trust and places high value on personal integrity and individual responsibility. Harsh penalties are associated with academic dishonesty. For more information, see the Code of Academic Integrity in the University Regulations at http://www.fau.edu/regulations/chapter4/4.001_Code_of_Academic_Integrity.pdf

DISABILITY POLICY STATEMENT

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), students who require reasonable accommodations due to a disability to properly execute coursework must register with the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD)—in Davie, LA 240 (954-236-1222); in Boca Raton, SU 133 (561-297-3880); in Jupiter, SR 110 (561-799-8010); or at the Treasure Coast, CO 117 (772-873-3382)—and follow all OSD procedures.

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE

University policy on the use of electronic devices states: “In order to enhance and maintain a productive atmosphere for education, **personal communication devices, such as cellular telephones and pagers, are to be disabled in class sessions.**” **Laptop and handheld computer use is also prohibited in the class unless special considerations are granted to the student based on need upon request.**

PLAGIARISM AND CITATION

Plagiarism is considered an extremely serious case of academic dishonesty and will be reported immediately to the appropriate university authorities. Plagiarism is defined as the use of other people's words or ideas without acknowledgement. The most egregious cases of plagiarism involve copying a portion of another author's book or article or a paper written by another student or retrieved from an internet site. To avoid plagiarism, you must cite a source when you quote an author's exact words, but also when you discuss their general ideas in your own words.

Here are some examples of how sources should be cited in your work, using in-text citations (author, year of publication, page number):

Direct quote: "To be a good student, you must cite your sources" (Moore 2010, page number).

Indirect reference, with author named in text: Moore (2010) has said that to be a good student you must cite your sources.

Indirect reference, with no author named in text: To be a good student you must cite your sources (Moore 2010).

You then need to include a bibliography at the end of your paper, including author, name of text, publisher, year and place of publication, such as:

Moore, Ryan. *Sells Like Teen Spirit: Music, Youth Culture, and Social Crisis*. New York: NYU Press, 2010.

When in doubt about how to cite a source or format your bibliography, use MLA methods of citation.

INTELLECTUAL DIVERSITY

The best classes are ones where a diversity of viewpoints is represented and articulated. I encourage students to be critical thinkers and form their own questions about sociological issues after investigating the evidence available and considering a variety of theoretical perspectives. Students are free to voice their views on the material presented, and in fact will be rewarded for doing so, as long as they are respectful to others in the class.

Please note that students' grades are based on their mastery of sociological concepts, theories, and research, not their opinions about particular issues. In other words, students need not agree with the professor or the authors of assigned readings; they simply need to understand their arguments.

SCHEDULE OF LECTURES, READINGS*, PAPERS/EXAMS**

*Book chapters listed below should be read before the corresponding lecture date

Please note that the standard amount of time students should be devoting to out-of-class assignments for a three credit class is six hours per week.

- I. Jan 7: Introduction to the sociology of popular culture - Grazian, *Mix It Up*, chapter 1
Jan 9: Interview assignment to be discussed
- II. Jan 14: Functionalist theories of popular culture - Grazian, *Mix It Up*, chapter 2
Jan 16: Critical theories of popular culture - Grazian, *Mix It Up*, chapter 3
- III. Jan 21: Interaction theories of popular culture - Grazian, *Mix It Up*, chapter 4

- Jan 23: ****Interview assignment due in class****
- IV. Jan 28: The production of culture - Grazian, *Mix It Up*, chapter 5
Jan 30: The media and culture industries - Grazian, *Mix It Up*, chapter 6
- V. Feb 4: The production of culture - Grazian, *Mix It Up*, chapter 7
Feb 6: Audiences and meaning in popular culture - Grazian, *Mix It Up*, chapter 8
- VI. Feb 11: Style in everyday life - Grazian, *Mix It Up*, chapter 9
Feb 13: The digital age - Grazian, *Mix It Up*, chapter 10
- VII. Feb 18, 20: "Digital Nation: Life on the Virtual Frontier"
- VII. Feb 25: ****Mid-term exam taken in class****
Feb 27: Analysis paper to be discussed
- VIII. March 4, 6: Spring Break – NO CLASS
- IX. March 11: Raunch culture - Levy, *Female Chauvinist Pigs*, pp. 1-45
March 13: The Feminist Movement and Sexual Revolution - Levy, *Female Chauvinist Pigs*, pp. 46-117
- X. March 18: Equal representation of raunch - Levy, *Female Chauvinist Pigs*, pp. 118-169
March 20: Consequences of raunch - Levy, *Female Chauvinist Pigs*, pp. 170-212
- XI. March 25: ****Analysis paper due in class****
March 27: Final paper to be discussed
- XII. April 1: From athlete to endorser - LaFeber, *Michael Jordan and the New Global Capitalism*, pp. 13-74
April 3: The darker side of celebrity - LaFeber, *Michael Jordan and the New Global Capitalism*, pp. 75-129
- XIII. April 8: Cultural imperialism - LaFeber, *Michael Jordan and the New Global Capitalism*, pp. 130-164
April 10: Consequences of cultural imperialism - LaFeber, *Michael Jordan and the New Global Capitalism*, pp. 165-188
- IVX. April 15, 17: "The Power Principle"
- VX. April 22: Review for Final
April 24: Exam week – NO CLASS

Tuesday, April 29th 1:15-3:45pm **In-class Final**