

THE BUSINESS OF MEDIA IN A DIGITAL AGE: UNDERSTANDING HOW POPULAR CULTURE GETS MADE

COM 339

Gowen 201

Tuesday & Thursday 9:30-11:20

Sections Fridays 9:30, 10:30, 11:30

Dr. Gina Neff

355 Communications Building

gneff@u.washington.edu

Cultural and media products are often thought of in terms cultural consumption—that is, how people interact with the products of mass media and popular culture. This course examines the **production** of culture through examining how cultural goods, broadly defined, are made within changing social and economic contexts. We examine the products of “leisure, information, entertainment, media, and creativity” industries, which include traditional mass media as film, music, and publishing. But we’ll also look more broadly at how other industries use aspects of cultural production in the design, distribution, and marketing of their products. The focus of the course emphasizes how digital technologies change the market for media goods (like cds or song downloads) and media experiences (like concerts).

In this course, we focus on cultural production within a wide range industries like music, film, television and arts. We’ll learn how they are organized, how work in the industries is structured, and how products are distributed. What can we learn by comparing different kinds of media products and media production this way? How are media products unique and in what ways do they resemble other goods and services? What are the economic and social challenges of creating cultural products and how are those challenges solved in corporate media, independent media, and other non-profit institutions? How are new communication technologies changing how culture is made? These are a few of the questions that we will tackle together.

Students at the end of this course should be able to:

- Identify and describe cultural industries
- Analyze the similar dynamics facing the production of cultural products in different media
- Understand the social and economic conditions that shape the production of media products
- Analyze a particular media product using tools of cultural production approaches to media
- Describe the impact of digital technology on popular culture and media industries

READINGS

The following books are required for this course and have been ordered (late) at University Book Store. They should be available by the end of the quarter and both are widely available on Amazon.

- Kembrew McLeod. 2007. *Freedom of Expression: Resistance and Repression in the Age of Intellectual Property* (University of Minnesota Press). (“McLeod”)
- Lawrence Lessig, 2008. *Remix Making Art & Commerce Thrive in the Hybrid Economy* (Penguin paperback). (“Lessig”)

In addition, there are required readings available for download through Catalyst Commonview Workspace.

This syllabus is subject to change as circumstances warrant.

WEEKLY OUTLINE

1. WEEK ONE: HOW ARE MEDIA INDUSTRIES DIFFERENT?

TUESDAY 1/4

Lecture and in-class activity

THURSDAY 1/6

- UNESCO statement on cultural industries, questions 1-6. Available online at: http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=2461&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=-512.html
- David Hesmondhalgh, 2002. "Approaches to Culture" and "Assessing Cultural Industries" in *The Cultural Industries*.
- The Harry Potter Economy, *The Economist*

Friday

LAB: Exercises and discussion to prepare for first paper (not mandatory but strongly recommended)

2. WEEK TWO: HOW RISK DEFINES MEDIA INDUSTRIES

Tuesday 1/11:

- Douglas Kellner, "Cultural Studies, Multiculturalism, and Media Culture."
- William Goldman, "Studio Executives" from *Adventures in the Screen Trade*
- Steve Albin. 1993. "The Problem with Music," *The Baffler*, vol. 5.
- The Root, "Who Really gets Paid in the Music Industry"

Thursday 1/13:

- Richard Caves, Selection from *The Creative Industries*

Friday

LAB:

Paper 1 preparation

3. WEEK THREE: HOW "ART WORLDS" SHAPE MEDIA INDUSTRIES

Tuesday 1/18

- **Paper 1 Due in class**
- Howard S. Becker 1982. "Art Worlds and Collective Activity." *Art Worlds*, pp 1-39.
- Sharon Waxman. 2005. They're in on the Joke: Hollywood's Funniest Clique," *New York Times*, (March 27).

Thursday 1/20:

- Richard Lachmann. 1988. "Graffiti as Career and Ideology" *American Journal of Sociology* (Sep), pp 229-50.
- Alan Riding. 2006. "Conceptual Artist as Vandal: Walk Tall and Carry a Little Hammer (or Ax)" *The New York Times* (Jan 7).
- Erika Hayasaki. 2007. "On Urban Canvas, 2 Art Forms Collide," *Los Angeles Times* (June 18)

Friday:

Paper 1 review; Quiz 1 questions; Paper 2 discussion/exercise

4. WEEK FOUR: WHAT DETERMINES TASTE? GATEKEEPERS, ARBITERS, MARKETS, & CONSTRAINTS

Tuesday 1/25:

- Gary Alan Fine. 1992. "The Culture of Production: Aesthetic choices and Constraints in Culinary Work," *American Journal of Sociology*, vol 97, no 5, pp 1268-1294.
- Ross Johnson. 2005. "The Movie Midas" *New York Times* (March 7).

Thursday 1/27:

Quiz 1 in class

- Jaime Wolf. 2005. "The Star Maker of the Semipopular," *The New York Times* (June 26)
- Bob Mondello. 2006. "Selling 'Brokeback': A Tough Mountain to Climb" NPR.org, (Feb 2)
- Katharine Rosman. 2010. "The Death of the Slush Pile" *The Wall Street Journal* (Jan. 15).

Friday 1/28:

- **Paper 2 discussion and preparation**

5. WEEK FIVE: CAN AUDIENCES HAVE A ROLE?

Tuesday 2/1:

- Alisa Perren, 2004. "A Big Fat Indie Success Story? Press Discourses Surrounding the Making and Marketing of a "Hollywood" Movie" *Journal of Film and Video* 56, 2.
- Duncan Watts. 2007. "Is Justin Timberlake a Product of Cumulative Advantage?"
- Gene Weingarten. 2007. "Pearls Before Breakfast: Can one of the nation's top musicians cut through the fog of a D.C. rush hour?" *Washington Post* (April 8).

Thursday 2/3:

- **Paper 2 due in class**
- Abigail DeKosnik, "Should Fan Fiction be Free?" *Cinema Journal* 48:4, 2009. Pp 118-124.
- Grace Westcott, 2008. "Friction over Fan Fiction: Is this Burgeoning Art Form Legal?" *Literary Review of Canada* July/August.
- Deborah Netburn. 2007. "They just keep on Trekking" *Los Angeles Times*, July 7.

Friday 2/4: Sections Canceled

6. WEEK SIX: HOW DO AUDIENCES SHAPE (AND HACK) MEDIATED CULTURE?

Tuesday 2/8

- McLeod, "Introduction", "This Gene is Your Gene" "Copyright Criminals" pp 1-113
- Phil Patton, 2002. "Like the Song, Love the Car," *The New York Times* (Sept. 15).
- John Leeland. 2003. "A Chance to Carry On for 130 Million," *The New York Times* (Jan. 19).

Thursday 2/10:

- McLeod, "Illegal Art," "Culture, Inc." 114-224.
- Dennis Dutton, 2007. "Shoot the Piano Player," *New York Times* (Feb. 26)
- Joseph Menn, 2008. "Disney's rights to young Mickey Mouse may be wrong" *Los Angeles Times*. August 22.

Friday 2/11:

- **LABS: Paper 3 preparation**

7. WEEK SEVEN: LEGAL AND ECONOMIC CONTEXTS FOR MEDIA PRODUCTION?

Tuesday 2/15

- **Paper 3 due in class**
- McLeod, "Our Privatized World," "The Digital Future"
- Monisha Rajesh. 2009. "Why Indie Directors Give Movies Away Free Online." *Time*

Thursday 2/17:

- Lessig, "Section 1: Cultures" "

Friday 2/18:

- **LABS: Quiz 2 Preparation**

8. WEEK EIGHT: IS THERE HOPE FOR INDY MEDIA?

Tuesday 2/22:

- **QUIZ 2 IN CLASS**
- Lessig, "Section 2: Economies"

• **Thursday 2/24:**

- Lessig, "Section 3: Enabling the Future"
- Short articles to be determined

Friday 2/25:

- **Labs: Paper 4 prep**

9. WEEK NINE: HOW MEDIA INDUSTRIES INFLUENCE THE REST OF THE ECONOMY

Tuesday 3/1:

- **Paper 4 Due in Class**
- Richard Florida, "The Transformation of Everyday Life" from *The Rise of the Creative Class*
- Susan Dominus, "The Starbucks Aesthetic," *The New York Times*, October 22, 2006.
- Michael Barbaro, "In Aisle Three, Couch Potatoes Trying the MP3s" *New York Times* March 18, 2007

Thursday 3/3:

- Kieran Healy, "What is New for Culture in the New Economy" *Journal of Arts Management, Law and Society*, 32(2): 86-103.
- Katie Hafner, "A Photo Trove, A Mounting Challenge," *The New York Times*, April 27, 2007.
- Andrew Keen, *The Cult of the Amateur*. Selections
- Paul Krugman, "Bits, Bands, and Books" *The New York Times* June 6, 2008.

Friday 3/4:

- **LABS: Quiz three review**

10. WEEK TEN: Wrap-Up

Tuesday 3/8:

- Discussion of implications of cultural industries approaches to culture
- Articulation of tools of analysis developed within the class
- In-class exercise with student-generated examples

Thursday 3/10:

Quiz 3

Friday 3/11:

- **LABS: To be determined.**

GRADES & POLICIES

Written Assignments	4 x 15% each	60% of total grade
In-Class Quizzes		30%
Participation		10%

Written Assignments. Four written assignments are due throughout the course of the term. These are due by the beginning of class on the due dates. **LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.**

Please plan on completing these assignments early to avoid any problems.

Each of these four written assignment will be graded on a scale from 0-10. Every assignment may not receive extensive written comments, but the professor and the T.A. will review writing assignments and give feedback during a meeting with students upon request. Notice that the majority of your grade will come from these assignments. This gives us the opportunity to identify any problems with your writing early in the course and for you to obtain a good grade through consistent reading and writing. A sheet with a grading scheme follows.

Participation. Participation grades will be based on in-lab and in-class writing assignments and participation in group discussions and exercises. If a student misses more than two of these assignments, at least 5 percentage points will be deducted from the total participation grade. There are no make-ups available for participation assignments. Failure to complete those assignments will constitute a zero for that day's participation.

Plagiarism. It is expected that students will be familiar with the university's policy on plagiarism. Please be aware of "unintentional" plagiarism--recognize that failing to differentiate between your ideas and words and those of others is also plagiarism. Plagiarism and other violations of the policy will not be tolerated in this course. All students suspected of violating these policies will be referred for disciplinary action. Assignments that are plagiarized will be considered incomplete and can not be re-submitted at a later time.

Late Assignments or Missing Exams. Without a written medical excuse no make-up exam will be given. No late assignments can be accepted for any reason unless previous arrangements have been made. In the event of unusual extenuating circumstances, students should be advised that arrangements to hand in assignments must be made with the professor in advance and are not guaranteed. Arrangements for medical excuses include dropping the assignment and averaging the grade out of three instead of four assignments, and this option is at the discretion of the professor.

Problems or Complaints. If you have complaints or problems related to the course, please come and see me about them. I will try to fix them! Should you have further complaints or concerns, please see David Domke, Department Chair, in Communications 102 (domke@uw.edu).

WRITING ASSESSMENT

Grade	Explanation of Expectations
10-9	<p>Knowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high level of understanding of concepts • thoughtful or deeper understanding material • sophisticated or original argument • goes “extra mile” in presenting depth of understanding <p>Structure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strong, clear thesis and closely followed • presentation of material is inventive and original • organization of paper is strong and apparent • ideas are well supported and researched • ideas flow logically from paragraph to paragraph • has strong introduction and conclusion <p>Style:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • includes detail about readings and/or topic • writing uses appropriate tone, and word choice • presentation of paper (grammar, sentence structure) is clear and polished
8.5-7.5	<p>Knowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explains concepts well, possibly lacking depth or polish • may contain a few factual errors • addresses the material less formally without clear mastery <p>Structure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • argument may lack strength and focus but argument present • has thesis and sticks to it most of the time • organization of ideas is apparent and generally strong • ideas are sometimes supported by readings but may rely heavily on personal opinion or unsupported examples • has a conclusion and introduction, but either or both may be weak <p>Style:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • argument may lack strength and focus but argument present • has thesis and sticks to it most of the time • uses paragraphs, though transitions between paragraphs may be rough • grammatical errors detract from writing
7 and below	<p>Knowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Superficial use of course material • factual errors prevalent • does not develop or support arguments from the readings or course material <p>Structure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper lacks a clear focus • May have a topic, and wander off • organization is weak • little evidence of a clear argument • conclusion is missing or weak. <p>Style:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possibly poor grammar, word choice, and/or sentence structure • includes little descriptive detail