

University of Hawaii at Manoa
Soc 459- Popular Culture
Summer 2012- Session II
Saunders 541 M-F 3-4:15 pm

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Course Description- This is a writing intensive, in-class and web-based course. The course is also highly participatory in that it requires each student to actively engage in classroom discussions. At least half of all classroom time will be dedicated to discussions.

Together we will examine sociological perspectives on popular culture with special emphasis on:

- **Corporations and Consumerism:** What role do global, transnational corporations play in shaping the popular culture? What are the social, psychological, political, economic, and environmental consequences of consumerism?
- **Advertising and Branding:** What influence do advertising and brands have on our sense of self? Our shared values? Our notions of community? What is the relationship between advertising and branding, consumer society, and environmental degradation? To what lengths do advertisers and corporate brands go to compete for attention? At what cost?
- **Representations:** How do popular images shape our notions of what it means to be rich or poor? Black or white? Male or female? Gay or straight? What does our popular culture tell us about who we are and who we "should" be? What about people who don't fit so neatly into "acceptable" categories?

In short, we will study the social significance of popular culture, focusing on corporations, advertising, and the commercialization of culture as well as popular representations of race, class, gender, and sexuality.

Writing Intensive- This class is designated writing intensive by the University of Hawaii. In order to meet the requirements of this designation,

- At least 18 pages of writing are required from each student.
- This class involves both formal (weekly essays) and informal (discussion board posts) writing assignments.
- Students will be given extensive feedback on writing assignments.
- The instructor will give three in-class writing instruction workshops to help students improve their writing throughout the session.

- Students may schedule conferences during the instructor's office hours to discuss writing improvement.
- It is expected that students will use constructive criticism to improve their writing throughout the session.

Learning Objectives- At the end of the class students should...

- Be able to apply a sociological perspective to think critically about consumerism and popular culture.
- Be able to read original articles and texts about the social significance of consumer society and popular culture and critically analyze the authors' arguments.
- Be able to write concise, thoughtful, and critical essays, letters, articles, and/or editorials based on articles and texts assigned in class.
- Be able to independently research a popular culture topic from a sociological perspective and present findings in class.
- Be able to engage with the larger community by bringing sociological research and analysis into the public arena.
- Improve their writing significantly through weekly writing assignments and interaction with the instructor.

Required Readings/Media-

- Klein, Naomi. (2002). *No Logo: Taking aim at the brand bullies*. NY: Picador.
- Additional weekly readings will be posted on Lulima.
- Students will view several in-class films.

Attendance policy- Attendance for this class is mandatory. Attendance will be taken ten times randomly throughout the session. Students who miss class for a legitimate reason will be given credit upon providing documentation.

Kokua/Students with Disabilities- Any student who requires accommodations because of a disability should contact the Kokua program (956-7511 or 956-7612) and discuss this with me. Any necessary arrangements will be made.

Classroom Etiquette-

- Cell phones should be turned to silent or off before class begins.
- Please do not text in class.
- Laptop computers may be used for note taking. However, the instructor reserves the right to revoke this privilege if computers become a significant distraction.
- Classroom discussions may touch on a number of sensitive topics. While students are encouraged to share their views, all views must be respected. Interruptions of or insults directed at other students will not be tolerated.

Assignments-

1. Weekly Reaction Papers- Students will write six, 3-4 page, weekly papers reflecting on class topics. Papers should synthesize material from that week's class, provide analysis of each topic's relevance to everyday life, and give the student's opinion of the readings and class topics. Be careful in giving opinion or criticizing authors. Any criticism or opinion should be substantiated with evidence; do not spout mere opinion. **Essays will be due in class each Friday.**

2. Weekly Discussion Forum Posts- Students must post one original discussion post as well as one post reacting to another student's post each week on Lulima. Discussion board posts should discuss class topics and expand upon classroom discussions. Original posts should be at least 100 words. Reaction Posts should be at least 50 words. Original Posts must be posted no later than 11:55 pm Wednesday of each week. Reaction Posts must be posted no later than 11:55 pm Sunday night of each week. A list of discussion questions will be provided on Lulima each week to provide sample topics for discussion posts. However, feel free to create your own topic as long as it is relevant to class.

3. Group Project- Students will also participate in a final group project. The final group project will consist of students doing independent research on a topic relevant to pop culture. Groups will present their findings in class at the end of the semester. Additionally, groups will turn in a short (5-6 pages) written summary of their findings. Groups will be formed approximately two weeks into the semester. The number of groups and students per group will be determined at this point. Guidelines for the project and a grading rubric will be supplied when groups are formed.

4. Extra Credit- Students who wish to do so will be given an opportunity to earn extra credit. Extra credit may be earned in two ways. First students may write a persuasive letter to a public official, company executive, political candidate, etc. on a matter relevant to criminal justice. For example, a student might choose to write a persuasive letter to a Wal-Mart executive about the use of sweatshop labor. Students who do not wish to earn extra credit this way will be given the opportunity to complete a similar alternative writing assignment that will be determined by the instructor at a later point. Extra credit may add up to 5% to a student's final grade.

5. Late Assignments- Any late assignments will be penalized 50%. Late assignments will not be accepted more than three days after the due date. Students with a legitimate excuse for missing an assignment will be given an opportunity to make up that assignment and will not be penalized.

Grading Summary-

6 Weekly Papers- 10% each

Final Project- 15%

Discussion Board Participation- 15%

Attendance- 10%

Total- 100%

Grading Scale-

94 – 100%= A	80-82%= B-	67 – 69%= D+
90-93%= A-	76 – 79%= C+	64-66%= D
86 – 89%= B+	73-75%= C	60-63%= D-
83-85%= B	70-72%= C-	59% or lower= F

Academic Dishonesty-Any form of cheating will not be tolerated. Plagiarism, in any form, will be punished severely. Not understanding plagiarism will not be an acceptable excuse. A presentation on plagiarism will be given during the first week of class. Furthermore, online references relating to plagiarism will be provided on Laulima. Students caught plagiarizing will be given one warning. Repeated plagiarism will result in the student being referred to the Office of Judicial Affairs. Please refer to the student code of conduct for further information.

Course Schedule

Week	Readings	Topics/Assignments
Week 1	<i>No Logo</i> - Intro, Chapters 1-4; “The Coolhunt” (on Laulima); Film- <i>No Logo</i>	Class Intro; Branding <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sociology’s role in studying popular culture and what perspectives are useful in such research• Brands vs. products• Advertising, consumer culture, and their consequences- political, social, economic, environmental• Youth marketing, “cool hunting,” and marketing ethics• Marketing and education
Week 2	<i>No Logo</i> - Chapters 6-8; Films- <i>The Ad and the Ego</i> , <i>Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price</i>	Corporatism, Mergers, and Synergy <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consolidation of the media industry• The Wal-Mart and Starbucks models• Branded destinations and communities• Privatization of public space

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copyright control and corporate censorship • Advertising and self-image • Writing Workshop #1 on Tuesday
Week 3	<i>No Logo</i> - Chapters 9-11, Readings for Week 3 on Laulima; Film- <i>The Yes Men</i>	<p>Globalization, Foreign and Domestic Labor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neoliberal globalization and trade liberalization • The WTO, World Bank, and other trade liberalization organizations • Sweatshops and free-trade zones • Anti-unionism in the developing world • Temporary work and the service sector
Week 4	<i>No Logo</i> - Chapters 13-14, 16, and Conclusion; Readings for Week 4 on Laulima; Films- <i>This is What Democracy Looks Like</i> ; <i>Mickey Mouse Monopoly</i>	<p>Anti-Corporatism; Case Studies- McDonald's and Disney</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The anti-globalization movement and the Battle in Seattle • The anti-sweatshop movement • The McLibel Trial, McDonald's- nutritional, labor and environmental impacts • Disney, cultural pedagogy, and the commercialization of children's culture • Writing Workshop #2 on Tuesday
Week 5	Online Readings for Week 5 on Laulima; Films- <i>Tough Guise</i> ; <i>Beyond Beats and Rhymes</i> ;	<p>Representations- Race and Gender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hip Hop culture • Violent masculinity and media • Images of women in media and advertising • Anti-feminism in pop culture • Writing Workshop #3
Week 6	Online Readings for Week 6 on Laulima; Film- <i>Further off the Straight and Narrow</i> ; <i>Class Dismissed: How TV Frames the Working Class</i>	<p>Representations- Sexuality and Class</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homosexuality in popular culture • The myth of the middle class in pop culture • Pop Culture images of the working class • Final Project Due Wednesday • Presentations Thursday and Friday

Paper Grading Rubric-

Proper Spelling and Grammar- 20%

- Proper spelling (especially proper nouns)
- Proper punctuation
- Proper verb usage
 - subject/verb agreement
 - appropriate tense used

Quality of Writing/Organization- 20%

- Clear organization
 - Paragraphs should deal with one theme at a time.
 - Information used to support/articulate ideas and themes should be relevant.
 - Logical progression of ideas
- Clear writing
 - Sentences must be formed properly.
 - Concise language should be used.
 - Write simply; don't add filler or fluff, just write as clearly as you can.
 - Proper usage of vocabulary
 - Words should be used appropriately (hint: using big or scholarly sounding words with which you are unfamiliar often results in improper vocabulary usage).

Substantive Content- 60%

- Demonstration of comprehension of class material
 - Synthesizing class material
 - Ideas from different sources should be combined in a meaningful way to form a cohesive argument.
- Expansion on class material
 - Papers should not merely regurgitate class material but build upon it.
 - Feel free to add your own critical perspective but make sure you back up any claims that you make with evidence.
- Proper documentation/support/citations
 - All points should be backed up by evidence from class material or outside sources.
 - Outside sources must be credible (scholarly research or sound journalism).
 - Be wary of internet sources; things like Wikipedia can be useful but are frequently inaccurate.
 - Wild or unsupported claims will be penalized.
 - Proper citation using ASA format should be included.
 - All class material that is incorporated into your essay should be cited properly.

- All quotes should be properly attributed and cited.
- A reference sheet must be included.
- Be extremely careful not to plagiarize. Self-monitoring for plagiarism is not a passive activity; you must be vigilant, actively examining your writing to make sure you haven't plagiarized.

Note: Merely fulfilling these criteria to a minimum level will not result in a 100. 'A' papers should be outstanding in that they meet all criteria robustly and perhaps surpass some.

Option B- Public Sociology Activism Assignment Option-

While the primary aim for any course is to facilitate students' learning and disseminate knowledge, another important goal for this course is to inspire students to try to help resolve some of the issues brought up in this class. In short, I hope the information you receive in this class will inspire you to do something about problems such as corporate abuse, manipulative advertising, etc. As you may or may not know, public sociology is an increasingly important vein in contemporary sociology. Public sociology is research that is done not merely for the pursuit of knowledge but in an effort to engage the public and use social research to help people. In this spirit, this course will offer a number of alternative, activist assignments that may be completed in lieu of the assignments outlined in the syllabus.

1. Instead of doing a traditional essay for this class you may turn your essay into a letter to a group relevant to the issues brought up in that week's class. For example if we are discussing sweatshops and labor abuses, instead of writing an essay you may write a letter to Nike or some other corporation that uses sweatshop labor. The requirements for this assignment are virtually the same as the essay requirements. Length should be similar if not the same, proper grammar is needed, class material must be incorporated, etc. However, this assignment should be in letter form, addressed to the appropriate party, and should have a brief (one or two paragraphs) explanation of why you chose to address the letter to whomever you are sending it. Additionally, I will proofread letters in the same manner as regular essays and you will receive a grade. However, you will submit a revised copy the next week so it can be mailed out.
2. Also, if the class so chooses, we can replace the final project and presentation with a class activism project. For example, the class could organize some type of campus event or recruit a guest lecturer to come to UHM. Once again, this assignment will closely resemble the assignment outlined in the syllabus. The class can think about this, discuss it, and vote on at the end of the first week of class. Students should keep in mind the limited time we have in a summer class. Any activism project will necessarily be scaled down to fit in a six week time frame. If some students feel strongly about doing an activism project instead of a traditional presentation and others feel strongly about not

doing an activism project we may be able to split the class up so each student can complete the assignment with which he/she is most comfortable.

Some ground rules are necessary for these assignments. Letters must be written in a respectful tone. Harassing, vulgar, disrespectful, or overly confrontational language is not acceptable. Strong language that expresses your views and concerns in an articulate manner is encouraged but attacking, threatening, or insulting the addressee in your letter will not be tolerated. Additionally, do not make any outrageous claims or assertions that are not supported by research or sound journalism. If you write a letter, you want to sound educated, articulate, and persuasive not unreasonable or paranoid. If we choose to do an activism project, we must also keep that within reason. Anything illegal, unsafe, or unethical is not possible. While I don't want to handcuff you or constrain your creative impulses too much I can't condone anything that would lead to harm or legal trouble. Obviously, there may be some ideas that are ambiguous in terms of legality, ethicality, etc. We can discuss these in class. However, we must err on the side of caution.

Finally, I must emphasize these assignments are **OPTIONAL**. No one will be forced to participate in activism if they are unwilling. Furthermore, no one who chooses to do these assignments will receive extra consideration. Assignments will be graded according to their quality, not the sentiment behind them. This is an opportunity for you as students to try to effect change, get creative, and even maybe have a little fun! These assignments may involve a little more work than those outlined in the syllabus but you may also derive far more satisfaction from them. Please consider the above information carefully. If you chose to participate in these assignments it should be because you truly want to, not to please faculty or peers. I hope that you will choose to participate in these assignments but will not think any differently of you if you don't.