

Wednesdays 2:30 - 5:00

Analysis of games, television, toys, movies, sports, comics, fashions, etc. This course deals with the relations between popular culture and society.

The course is open to juniors, seniors and graduate students in all departments, and allows you to examine the aspects of popular culture which interest you. Some students may wish to concentrate on a particular topic while others may strive for a more general view of popular culture.

Classes will include analysis of current events, discussion of students' projects, videos, and conversations with guest speakers.

This is not a regular lecture course. You must attend all classes and participate in discussions. Your grade will depend on the number of assignments you complete satisfactorily.

#### ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADES

To reduce anxiety about grades and to assist you in planning for this course, you may decide now what grade you realistically want to earn. This outlines the requirements for each grade:

To earn a D you must pass two essay

**EXAMINATIONS** Midterm exam on assigned readings from textbook\*  
Final exam on course (your evaluation and review of lectures, student reports, guest speakers...)

To earn a C (or CREDIT) requires passing the two exams plus satisfactory

**PARTICIPATION** Attendance and promptness\*\*  
Attention in class\*\*\*  
Asking questions and offering comments  
Making brief oral report (1 -2 minutes) on concept assignment

To earn a B requires satisfactory performance on the previous items plus satisfactory

**SHORT EXERCISES** Concept paper (1/2 page)  
Observation paper (2-3 pages)  
Second oral report (5-10 minutes) on any aspect of this course  
Library research (3-5 pages)

To earn an A requires satisfactory completion of the above PLUS a

**TERM PAPER** on a topic relevant to THIS course (6-10 pages)

Four **ADDITIONAL PREREQUISITES** must be met before you qualify for writing the term paper - see the next page:

1. PASS the midterm exam with a rating of GOOD\*
2. AVOID MISTAKES in your Short Observation and Library Research reports:
  - Incomplete sentences or run-on sentences
  - Subject and predicate disagreement
  - Apostrophes and commas incorrect
 More than three (3) such mistakes will disqualify you from writing the term paper.
3. INTERVIEW someone about popular culture. Include direct quotes and your own introduction and conclusion. 2 pages.
4. PROPOSAL for term paper. Submit 50 - 100 word proposal one month before the term paper is due. It must have a title, sources of your information, and a brief outline of your proposed paper, with at least four section headings.

Check your term paper carefully before you hand it in. If it has more than three mistakes it will not be accepted.

All written assignments must be typed, and pages numbered

SUBSTITUTIONS ARE NOT ACCEPTABLE. You cannot, for example, miss three classes, then do a term paper and get a B.

- - - - NOTES - - - -

\* The midterm examination will be graded GOOD, PASS, or FAIL. GOOD is needed to qualify for doing the term paper for an A in the course. With a PASS you may be eligible for a B, but NOT an A.

\*\* ATTENDANCE is essential. Activities and information in the classes are crucial to the course. The class meets only once a week. You must get here EVERY week, on time, and stay for the whole period. If you cannot do this, regardless of the reason (work, car pool, sports practice, appointments, etc.) do not take this course. More than two absences will lower your grade.

\*\*\* ATTENTION Whispering to a friend while someone is addressing the class is rude, distracts other people, and disturbs your own attention -- Don't do it; it may hurt your grade!

If your whispering or other symptoms of inattention raise doubts as to how much you are absorbing in class, it may be necessary to administer traditional written examinations to evaluate your educational progress.

FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH ANY OF THESE REQUIREMENTS MAY RESULT IN LOWERING YOUR COURSE GRADE

Competition in the Real World beyond the campus is increasingly rough. Prepare yourself NOW by developing good work habits. Practice your survival skills by reading assignment requirements carefully, planning ahead, paying attention to details, and checking your work thoroughly before handing it in.

ASSIGNMENT DUE DATES

459due08

Popular Culture                      Soc 459                      Spring 2008

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1st Oral Report (Concept)	1 - 2 minutes	January	30
Concept Exercise (written)	Half page	February	6
Practice exam on reading	20 minutes		
Short Observation	2 - 3 pages	February	13
Examination on Reading	40 minutes	February	20
Library Research	3 - 5 pages	March	5
Interview	2 pages	March	12
Term Paper Proposal	Half page	March	19
2nd Oral Report	5 - 7 minutes	April	2
Optional Term Paper	6 - 10 pages	April	23*
Last Class    May 7	Explain take-home final		
Final exam due		May	14

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS:

Number each page

Keep a copy of every paper you turn in

Place your name, date and course name on the front page

Reread your work carefully before you hand it in.

I AM TIRED OF HAVING TO WADE THROUGH SLOPPY, HASTILY DONE REPORTS

Plan ahead. Expect the unexpected. Allow for unforeseen interruptions. Accidents, illness, relationship problems, job stresses, even deaths, are part of life.

START EARLY AND COMPLETE ASSIGNMENTS BEFORE THEY ARE DUE

\* The optional term paper MUST be handed in on time. If you can't finish the term paper on time, don't even bother to start it. Instead, devote this time to some other course.

## READING ASSIGNMENTS

The midterm exam will be on these articles in  
Popular Culture - An Introductory Text  
by Nachbar and Lause, 1992

Box-Office Hits Taken Seriously  
Kevin Lause

New Legends for Old  
Jan Harold Brunvand

Four Morality Tales  
Robert Reich

Endless Love Will Keep Us Together  
Crystal Kile

The Malling of America  
William Kowinski

Yellow Devil Doctors and Opium Dens  
Gary Hoppenstand

One Size Does Not Fit All: Thin, Beautiful, Female  
Jane Caputi and Susan Nance

What Makes Superman So Darned American?  
Gary Engle

The Wretched of the Hearth: Roseanne Arnold  
Barbara Ehrenreich

Family Reunion  
Jean Fields

Halloween: Rite of Season, Rite of Passage  
Jack Santino

Television Soap Opera  
Charles Derry

Monster Movies: A Sexual Theory  
Walter Evans

Magic and Transformation in Popular Romance Novels  
Rita Hubbard

## CONCEPT EXERCISE

The purpose of this assignment is to stimulate you to think about popular culture from a sociological perspective. The three elements required for this exercise are:

1. A short, informative TITLE which tells something about the second AND third points, listed below. Thus your title must have TWO parts:
2. A DEFINITION of any sociological concept you happen to be familiar with. This definition may be copied from an introductory textbook, or from a dictionary, or you can provide a definition in your own words.
3. An ILLUSTRATION of your concept. This illustration must involve POPULAR CULTURE because this course is about POPULAR CULTURE. Your example can be imaginary or real.

One half page is all that is necessary for this report.

SHORT OBSERVATION

This observation is a miniature research project, requiring you to do the following:

1. Focus upon ONE particular aspect of social behavior involving Pop Culture and mention this in your title.
2. Define this aspect operationally, (so you are sure that you know what specific things to look for, how they will be measured, etc.)
3. Specify an appropriate time and place for observing this behavior.
4. Describe in some detail (and count, if appropriate) what you observe.
5. Summarize these observations briefly.
6. Suggest a hypothesis to explain the behavior you observed --(Why did it happen this way instead of some other way? etc.)
7. Guess what broader significance this behavior might have. (What results, effects, consequences?)
8. Suggest ways for improving possible further studies (that someone else might make on this same topic.)

Limit your paper to three pages. It could be even less. One sentence MAY be enough to fulfill some of the above requirements.

Number each of these 8 items in the left margin so you will be sure that you have done every one of the eight.

## LIBRARY RESEARCH REPORT

The purpose of this exercise is to get you acquainted with other people's ideas so you will have a broader background against which to do your own reports.

The subject of this assignment can include any aspect of THIS course you are interested in. Your report must have:

1. A short, informative title
2. A brief introductory paragraph telling what topic you are interested in and how it relates to THIS course
3. A concluding paragraph summarizing what you have found

Examine three (3) printed sources: newspaper articles, chapters in books, encyclopedia entries, computer online reports, etc. The subject should be as close as possible to the topic you are interested in, but don't be discouraged if you can't find much directly relevant to your topic. Report it anyway.

Each of the three references must have three parts:

1. Title, author, date, pages and name of journal, book, bulletin board, newspaper, etc. in which it appeared; so that someone else could quickly find the article you consulted.
2. A brief (three or four sentences) summary of the article.
3. Your response to the article.

Your entire report should be no longer than five pages.

# LIBRARY RESEARCH - SAMPLE

## THE LUST OF COMPANIONSHIP: ANONYMITY IN SOCIETY

In our fast-paced society where careers and professionalism have become the major priority for both sexes, social anonymity has become a growing ~~group~~<sup>SITUATION?</sup>. How do these socially deprived or socially retarded people find companionship in the form of a heterosexual relationship? In the following three articles, we will see some of the reasons for this anonymity, and possible options that these people have.

① "THE ROMANCE MERCHANTS"  
by Anthony Brandth, Harper's Bazaar  
August 1983 pp. 62-64, 69

In Brandth's article we are exposed to a series of dating services that are quite different in method yet are all in hopes of the same result -- a potential mate. The methods used included:

- 1) Computer services  
(Friend Finders Relationship Center)
- 2) Video Dating  
(People Resources of New York City)
- 3) Match-Making  
(The Godmother's Inc.)

These methods are pretty similar in that they all include procedures of through screening to eliminate potential hazards of Blind Dates; the main differences is that in video dating you get to see what your potential date looks like, and in match-making you have more of a personalized touch.



The number of these services has been growing due to reasons of isolation created by career roles, especially in the professional sector, where social life is kept separate from professional life.

RESPONSE

My view on this article is an agreement in cause; social isolation is part of a professional career-oriented society, and professional roles get in the way of many social relationships. As for myself, being more of a traditionalist I don't think that I would succumb to these methods, even though they do enlarge one's social network.

②

SECOND ARTICLE - SAME FORMAT

③

THIRD ARTICLE - SAME FORMAT

CONCLUSION

In overview, the three articles provide some alternatives to the establishment of normal heterosexual relationships. We find common grounds in the reasons why these businesses are frequented, and are growing in numbers. These reasons include loneliness, isolation, and lack of time for the establishment of relationships due to the state of conditions of our career-oriented society. As society develops more into an impersonal professional one, I foresee more drastic changes in morality and methods of mate selection.

TERM PAPER

Your paper can explore any aspect of this course. The range of topics includes, but is not limited to, those discussed in lectures or assigned readings.

- Type your paper.
- Number the pages.
- Keep a duplicate copy for yourself.

Your paper will be evaluated according to four criteria: (1) relevance, (2) organization, (3) clarity, and (4) polish.

1. RELEVANCE Is your paper relevant to this course? (POP CULTURE). This is a class in sociology, not in literature, American studies, music, etc. Therefore you should emphasize the sociological aspects of your topic. The surest way to do this is to construct your paper around one particular sociological concept.

2. ORGANIZATION Does your paper have a title, an introduction, a main body and a conclusion?

A. Title: Your paper must have a title which is as informative, in a few words, as you can make it. The title should indicate briefly what your paper is about. An ideal title for this course would mention both the general sociological concept and the specific context in which you are examining it. (For example: Social Stratification among Musicians in Japan)

B. Introduction: The paper must have an opening paragraph telling WHAT you will be writing about and WHERE (books, interviews, personal experience, observations, etc) you will get your information.

C. Body: Then comes the section in which you present your ideas, information, and so on. There are many possibilities. You may illustrate some sociological concept using your own experiences. Or you may do further reading, (beyond the articles, books or magazines used for your library report,) in an attempt to answer a question that intrigues you. Or, based on your own observations, you may develop a typology (e.g., "four kinds of audience response").

It is not imperative in this paper to "prove" your points by surveys, interviews, statistics, etc. However, to strengthen your argument, data which supports your statements should be included when available. A bibliography is helpful, too.

D. Conclusion: Finally you must have a concluding section which summarizes your ideas.

3. CLARITY Does your paper make its points clearly? A short paper, saying precisely what you mean, is far better than a long, rambling paper which doesn't state your points concisely. Don't make me guess what your ideas are; express them as distinctly as you can.

4. POLISH Have you eliminated misspellings, grammatical errors, mistakes in punctuation, and unnecessary repetition? Proofread your paper before you hand it in. It should not look like a rough first draft but should instead convey the impression that you have tried to smooth it out.

When you find an error in your final, typed copy, draw a line through the mistake and print the correction neatly above the proper place or, if necessary, in the margin.

\*\*\*\*\*

In conclusion, think of this paper as an examination, testing the quality rather than the quantity of your ideas. Your chances of success will be greater if you limit the scope and length of your paper. 7 to 12 pages should be enough to demonstrate that you can examine the subject matter of this course succinctly, logically and sociologically.

SELF EVALUATION

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Here are the grading criteria listed in the syllabus:

- 1. Indicate with a + each assignment you completed satisfactorily.
- 2. Explain absences, lates, etc. at bottom of this page and attach medical excuses.
- 3. Based on your assessment, indicate the grade you EARNED in this course

To earn a D you must pass two 30 minute essay

EXAMINATIONS (graded as pass or fail)

- \_\_\_ Exam on assigned readings from textbook
- \_\_\_ Final exam (your evaluation and review)

To earn a C or Credit required passing the two exams plus satisfactory

- PARTICIPATION
- \_\_\_ Attendance
  - \_\_\_ Times absent
  - \_\_\_ Times late
  - \_\_\_ Times left early
  - \_\_\_ Attention in class
  - \_\_\_ Asking questions and offering comments
  - \_\_\_ Brief oral report on concept

To earn a B required satisfactory performance on the previous items plus satisfactory completion of

- SHORT EXERCISES
- \_\_\_ Concept paper
  - \_\_\_ Observation paper
  - \_\_\_ Second oral report
  - \_\_\_ Library research

To earn an A required satisfactory completion of the above activities plus

- \_\_\_ Interview
- \_\_\_ Term paper proposal
- \_\_\_ Term paper

Based on my actual achievements I believe I EARNED the grade of \_\_\_\_\_

Popular Culture Includes:

- Tall tales
- American fools
- American mythology
- Black humor
- Jewish humor
- Dirty jokes
- Children's humor
- The cowboy as culture hero
- The detective as culture hero
- The secret agent as culture hero
- New American art forms
- Vernacular art forms
- Teen culture
- Posters
- Billboards
- Package labels
- Package design: bottles, etc.
- Dance styles: evolution of . . .
- Franchises and fast foods
- Cinema
- Sports: football, baseball, hockey, etc.
- Games: *Monopoly*, *Sorry*, etc.
- Body decoration
- Hair styles
- Greeting cards
- Political ads: selling candidates
- Medicines, beauty aids, etc.
- Columnists in papers
- Uniforms
- Images in media: of the businessman, the professor, etc.
- Bathroom design
- Popular children's literature: Nancy Drew, etc.
- Female comedians: problems, etc.
- Formulas* in TV programs, movies, etc.
- Science fiction
- Drinks: popularity of Scotch
- Common objects: telephone, can opener, electric knife, etc.
- Motorcycle styles
- Views of the good life in media, ads, etc.
- Musical comedy and theatre
- Comedians:
  - ETHNIC humorists
  - Graffiti
  - Joke cycles: elephant, grape, Polish, etc.
- Pop art
- Fashions: clothing, shoes
- Appeals and themes in advertising
- Pulp magazines
- Comics (strips, books)
- Radio programs and heroes
- Television programs and heroes
- Situation comedies
- Specific TV programs
- Kitchen utensils
- Fads, crazes, etc.
- Supermarkets, department stores
- Status symbols
- Popular music, rock, etc.
- Popular literature: best sellers
- Gossip columns
- Advice columns
- Classified ads
- Underground papers, etc.
- Radio talk shows
- The rhetoric of menus, ads, etc.
- Foods, snacks, etc.
- Eating patterns
- Kitchen design
- Electrical appliances
- Creation of stars:
  - Fan magazines
- New religions and collective behavior
- The ten-speed bicycle
- Toys
- Signs
- Popular logic
- Circuses
- Rodeos
- Topless, bottomless and strip-tease
- Organic food
- Pop, wine