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**INTRODUCTION TO CULTURAL STUDIES**  
**ANTH 310—Spring 2007**  
**MW 10-11, UTC 3.134 & Discussion Sections on Friday**

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**TEACHING**

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**I. COURSE OVERVIEW**

This course treats culture as a generative force lodged in sensibilities, dreams, styles, and forms of power. It asks, for instance, how culture is shaped by institutions, laws, forms of publicity, social movements, physical and social spaces, and expressive forms such as music, films, magazines, clothes, and ideologies. It asks how it is made material in objects and on bodies. How it operates through difference and the specificity of events and scenes. What makes it both vital and volatile. How it is practiced in everyday life. The impact of “media saturation” and the proliferation of styles, lifestyles and little worlds and possibilities and threats. How media (which includes everything from TV, music, internet, or cell phones, to styles of talking, dressing, or modes of attention and attachment) form the basis of social and cultural life. How Americans imagine and build community (or fail to). What the “American dream” is and what do people do with it.

This course will be a “hands on” course. You will have regular assignments to observe, think, write, and report on media influences, cultural styles, and various forms of “little worlds” or structures people find themselves in the middle of. Class time will be devoted to inspiring, encouraging, discussing, building on and displaying the work you do. You should be as creative and experimental as you like. Find topics you care about and figure out something you want to do with them.

The course material will be focused on 3 issues: subculture, media influences, and the proliferation of little worlds.

**II. REQUIREMENTS**

1. *Class attendance*: (10% of grade). Attendance will be taken 20 times, including in Friday sections. Each attendance check is worth half a point for your grade.
2. *Journal of observations and ideas*: (30% of the grade: 3 points for each check). It should include points about the readings for the week and the lectures and clips we watch in class. It

should then end with three questions for discussion. **Be creative and experimental, if you like.**

This journal will be checked 10 times, always during Friday discussion. The weekly entry will be quickly graded each week (or, a total of 10 times) in discussion section for its thoroughness and originality (is there any really thought in it?) The standards are: *A*=adequately thorough and original (and you'll work with your TA to establish the actual quality of these standards). *B*=OK, not great, lots of room for improvement. *C*=shamelessly pitiful. *D*=really insulting, *F*=failure to turn assignment in. Please try to get to class five minutes early or stay five minutes late if you can early so the TA can grade the journals.

3. *One three-page paper:* (20% of the grade). Typed, double-spaced, 12 point, based on Hebdige's *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. Apply his theories to something you consider a "subculture" now (or refute the idea, if you like, but make detailed observations about some kind of little world as well as detailed discussion of the book's main points). **Be creative and experimental, if you like. DUE: Monday, February 19<sup>th</sup>.**

4. *One two-page paper:* (10% of the grade). Typed, double-spaced, 12 point, modeled on the Dave Marsh reading about how music, or a media form or style or moment, affected you personally. This can be autobiographical in style or descriptive/observational. **Be creative and experimental, if you like. Due: Friday, March 9<sup>th</sup>.**

5. *One two-page paper* on a "little world". (10% of the grade). Typed, double-spaced, 12-point. See articles by Orlean, Berkhard, Brooks (or others) for a model. **Be creative and experimental, if you like. Due: Monday, April 11<sup>th</sup>.**

6. *One class presentation* based on your work (20% of the grade). This will be a very brief (5-10 minute) discussion, or show-and-tell, of some kind of media influence or style, some kind of subculture, or some kind of little world. It may include audio-visual materials. It could be a group project if you want to pair up with one or two other students. These will be scheduled throughout the semester. **Be creative and experimental, if you like.**

### **III. READINGS**

The reading will include a course pack of articles as well as selections from the required books listed below. The course pack is available through Abel's Copies, 472-5353, 715-D West 23<sup>rd</sup> St, [www.abelscopies.com](http://www.abelscopies.com)

- Dick Hebdige. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*.
- Articles (in course packet, see below for a complete list of the articles required each week)

### **IV. FILM CLIPS**

There are film clips listed each week. We will not necessarily see all of them. There' listed here so that if we see some of them you'll have a reference for what you saw.

### **VI. LECTURE AND READING SCHEDULE**

#### **Week 1 (Jan. 17<sup>th</sup>)**

##### **Introduction**

Friday section, Jan. 19<sup>th</sup>: Ethnographic exercise

#### **Week 2 (Jan 22<sup>nd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>)**

## **Culture**

Readings:

- Lars Eighner. "On Dumpster Diving"
- Pico Iyer. "Living in the Transit Lounge."
- Eric Schlosser. "Why McDonald's Fries Taste so Good."
- Tom Wolfe. "Hooking Up."

Film:

- *Devil's Playground*

Friday section, January 26<sup>th</sup>. Discussion of what "culture" is. **Journal check.**

## **Week 3 (Jan 29<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>)**

### **Cultural Studies**

Readings:

- Dick Hebdige. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (1<sup>st</sup> half).

Film:

- *Dogtown and Z Boys*

Friday section, Feb 2<sup>cd</sup>: Discussion of Cultural Studies through discussion of *Dogtown and Z Boys*. **Journal check**

## **Week 4 (Feb 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>)**

### **Subculture**

Readings:

- Dick Hebdige. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (last half).

Friday section, February 9: Discuss your Subculture papers. Do writing exercise in class.

## **Week 5 (Feb 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>)**

### **Style: Music Worlds**

Readings:

- David Brackett. *The Pop, Rock and Soul Reader*. Parts 78 - 94, pp. 406-504 from. "Hip Hop into the 1990s" through "Is Shania Twain Human?"

Film Clips:

- *Elvis 56, Mondo Elvis*

Friday section, February 16<sup>th</sup>: Discuss your Subculture papers. Do second writing exercise. **Journal Check.**

## **Week 6 (Feb 19<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>)**

**Subculture papers due Monday, Feb 19<sup>th</sup>. (20% of your grade).**

**There will be no lecture on Monday but there will be presentations on subcultures.**

**There will be a lecture on Wednesday.**

### **Mediated**

Readings:

- Thomas de Zengotita, *Mediated*: "Introduction: Method Acting" and "Learning to Love the Blob."

Film Clip:

*Heart Burn*

Friday section, February 23<sup>rd</sup> **Journal check**

## Week 7 (Feb. 26<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>)

### Identity in Public Culture

Readings:

- Dave Marsh, "Fortunate Son"
- John Edgar Wideman. "Looking at Emmett Till."
- Francine Prose. "Going Native"

Film clip:

- *Merchants of cool*

Friday section: March 2<sup>cd</sup>. Writing exercise on your second paper (media influence, 10% of your grade). **Journal check.**

## Week 8 (March 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>)

### March

### Media Saturation

Readings:

- Anne Norton. "The Signs of Shopping."
- Sonia Maasik and Jack Solomon. "Video Dreams."
- Carl Matheson. "The Simpsons."
- Steven Stark. "The Oprah Winfrey Show and the Talk-Show Furor."
- Susan Douglas. "Signs of Intelligent Life on TV."
- Mark Caldwell. "The Assault on Martha Stewart."

Film Clips:

- *Minority Report*
- *Super Size Me*

Friday section, March 9<sup>th</sup> **Second paper due (on how a media form, style or moment affects an individual. Modeled on Dave Marsh article. 10% of your grade.)**

## SPRING BREAK: MARCH 12<sup>TH</sup>-16<sup>TH</sup>

## Week 9 (March 19<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>)

### Little Worlds

Readings:

- Orlean, Susan. "Little Wing: when homing pigeons leave home" *The New Yorker*.
- Bilger, Berkhard. "Nerd Camp" July 25, 2004. *The New Yorker*.

Film Clips:

- *Trekkies*
- *Triumph the Insult Comic Dog*

Friday section, March 23<sup>rd</sup>. Writing exercise on little worlds paper. **Journal check.**

## Week 10 (March 26<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>)

### Dream Worlds

Readings:

- Tenaya Darlington. "Dream Houses"
- David Brooks, *On Paradise Drive.*: "The Great Dispersal,"
- "Shopping," and "A History of Imagination."

Film:

- *Home Economics*  
Friday section, March 30<sup>th</sup> **Journal check. Writing exercise.**

### **Week 11 (April 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>)**

#### **Class and Gender**

Readings:

- Ehrenreich, "Introduction: Getting Ready," and "Selling in Minnesota."

Film Clips:

- *People Like Us*
- *It Was a Wonderful Life*

Friday section, April 6<sup>th</sup> **Journal check.**

### **Week 12 (April 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>)**

**3<sup>rd</sup> paper due MONDAY, APRIL 11<sup>th</sup>. Little worlds. 10%.**

**There will be no lecture on Monday but there will be presentations on little worlds.  
There will be a lecture on Wednesday.**

#### **American Dream Spaces: private & public, real & imaginary**

Film Clips:

- Tom Waits. *What's He Building in There?* and *Cul de Sac*.

Friday section, April 13<sup>th</sup>

### **Week 13 (April 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>)**

#### **Built Environments and Public Spaces**

Readings:

- Gerri Hirshey. "Happy ( ) Day to You."  
Nick Hefferman, "Popular Culture."

Film Clips:

- *Barber Shop*
- *Real Women Have Curves*.

Friday section, April 20<sup>th</sup> **Journal check.**

### **Week 14 (April 23<sup>rd</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>)**

#### **The Affects of Everyday Life**

Readings:

- Gerald Calahan. "Chimera."
- Jana Richman. "Why I Ride."
- Phillip Lopate. "Delivering Lily."

Film clips:

*Big Bad Love*  
*Falling Down*  
*Home videos*

Friday section, April 27<sup>th</sup> **Journal check.**

### **Week 15 (April 30<sup>th</sup> and May 2<sup>nd</sup>)**

#### **Conclusions**

Presentations

Friday section, May 4<sup>th</sup>:

## **First Friday**

### **Ethnographic exercise**

**This is going to be very rushed to do in 50 minutes so it's essential that you get set up before class starts, have the hand outs and get the students to their sites within ten minutes of the start of class.**

**Write places for groups to go on the board before class starts. The places should be close and have things to observe.**

#### **Some examples**

group #1 the west mall

group #2 the drag

group #3 Jester

group #4 Gregory gym

group #5 eating tables at the Union (inside or out or both)

10 mins.

count off groups of 4 and get to your site.

take paper and pen (leave the rest of your things in the classroom).

As you're walking to your site, decide who will take notes continuously, who will take notes occasionally and who will not take notes at all.

15 minutes

observe (and take notes if that's your role).

5 minutes

walk back and start talking about what you observed

10 minutes

in your small group, discuss what each of you observed, note differences based on whether people were taking notes continuously, occasionally, or not at all. Designate a reporter to give a summary to the whole class.

10 minutes

report very briefly to the whole class.