

**AMS 01:050:487**  
**Advanced Seminar in Popular Culture Theory**  
**Professor Nicole Fleetwood**  
**Spring 2007**  
**RAB 305**  
Mon 12:35-3:35 PM

**Course Description**

This advanced seminar provides students with an opportunity to engage with various theoretical approaches to popular culture. In analyzing a range of cultural forms, the course will expose students to foundational texts in the study of popular culture. Additionally, the seminar will expose students to historical events that have shaped contemporary popular culture, while focusing on ways of approaching U.S. popular culture in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

We will spend some time considering how dominant popular culture attempts to address diverse American audiences. For example, we will look at advertising campaigns targeted at niche markets and the cultivation of minoritarian audiences. Other issues that we will consider are the ways in which American race relations and racial stratification impact commercial popular culture and cultural production, media spectacles, the music industry, fashion culture, and the impact that users/consumers have on popular culture such as online blogging, lo-fi music, and internet video.

**Required Texts**

Haggard, Jessica. The Gangster of Love. New York: Penguin, 1996.

Leland, John. Hip: The History New York: Harper Perennial, 2005.

Reed, Ishmael. Mumbo Jumbo. New York: Scribner Paperback, 1972.

Electronic articles  
handouts

**Course Policies**

**Absences**

Regular class attendance is required by Rutgers and is essential to this class. You will be allowed one unexcused absence without grade penalty. The consequences of unexcused absences are as follows:

- 1 unexcused absence = No penalty
- 2 unexcused absences = 10% grade penalty = final grade no higher than a B
- 3 unexcused absences = 20% grade penalty = final grade no higher than a C
- 4 unexcused absences = failure in the course

Excused absences are those that result from documented family emergencies, illness, religious observance, court dates, jury service, etc., that is, situations over which you have no individual control. Please inform me as soon as possible if you are unable to attend class on a regular basis.

**Academic Integrity**

Except for collaborative assignments officially approved by the instructor in advance, all work a student submits must be his/her own independent effort. Students must cite properly all outside sources consulted in preparing written assignments. Students should review the university policy on Academic Integrity (see the website for the Teaching Excellence Center: <http://teachx.rutgers.edu/integrity/policy.html>). The Writing Program maintains a website that defines and discusses plagiarism: [http://wp.rutgers.edu/courses/201/plagiarism\\_policy/](http://wp.rutgers.edu/courses/201/plagiarism_policy/). This site clarifies many issues regarding the University's policy on academic integrity. Failure to comply with this policy can result in failure of the course.

### **Assignments and Grading**

In-class participation	30% (10% for 3 response papers, 10% moderation; 10% class participation)
Short Analytical Paper (4-6 pages)	20%
Research Paper Draft (5-8 pages)	20%
Research Paper Presentation	5%
Final Research Paper (15-20 pages)	25%

#### **Short Analytical Paper**

Students will write a short paper that will ask them to apply the theoretical concepts and keywords of the course to specific cultural product or form. More details will be given in class. The paper is due on Feb. 19 at the beginning of class.

**Research Paper:** Students will write an original research paper dealing with an issue involving citizenship on topic to be approved by instructor. As components of this assignment, students will turn in a short topic proposal, a thesis statement and a preliminary bibliography (see course schedule for dates). The final paper is due with stamped, self-addressed envelope by noon on Mon, May 7, 2006 in the American Studies office, RAB 024.

#### **Discussion and Classroom Decorum**

Every student must participate on a regular basis in order to successfully complete this course. The first 30 minutes of each course will be an opportunity for students to share relevant materials or examples related to class discussion.

In-class participation will consist of the following:

Each student must **contribute to in-class discussion every week**. Therefore, **attendance is required at every class**.

Each student will serve as part of a team of **moderators for class discussion**. These students should collaborate with each other in advance and will present a **short oral introduction** to their topic of the week and **prepare questions to stimulate class discussion**.

In order to facilitate discussion all students will submit to the professor **three one-page e-mail response papers** that relate to the reading/film of the week. These responses will

**be due by 7:00 P.M. the night prior to the class meeting and must include a question suitable for in-class discussion.**

**NOTE:** The response paper is not a summary of the contents of the reading. Instead, the response paper should comment on significant issues raised by the material and should use concrete textual evidence to support a clear argument.

### **Class Schedule**

#### **SECTION: THEORIES AND FRAMEWORKS**

22 Jan: Introduction, overview, keywords

Short reading assignment: Raymond Williams: "'Culture' and 'Masses'"

Case study: VH1 and 21<sup>st</sup> century popular culture as the recycling of past cultural products

29 Jan: Commodity theories and "the popular"

Karl Marx. "The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof"

Guy Debord. "The Commodity as Spectacle"

Stuart Hall. "Notes on Deconstructing the Popular"

5 Feb: Hipness and the Commodity Fetish

John Leland. Hip: The History, Intro, Ch. 1, 3, 5, 6, 9, 12, 13

#### **Group 1 Response 1**

#### **SECTION: POPULAR MUSIC, THE CULTURE INDUSTRY AND U.S. RACE RELATIONS**

12 Feb: Cultural Difference and National Ideologies

Ishmael Reed, Mumbo Jumbo, Intro- Ch. 29

#### **Group 2 Response 1**

19 Feb: Commodification and the Culture Industry

Ishmael Reed, Mumbo Jumbo, Ch. 30-conclusion

#### **Short Paper Due**

26 Feb: Hip Hop and Dominant Ideologies

Craig Watkins. "Fear of a White Planet"

Joan Morgan. excerpts from When Chickenheads come Home to Roost

Mark Anthony Neal. excerpts from Soul Babies

Christopher Holmes Smith. "'I Don't Like to Dream about Getting Paid': Representations of Social Mobility and the Emergence of the Hip-Hop Mogul"

#### **Research Topic Due**

5 Mar: Jessica Hagedorn, The Gangster of Love,

#### **Group 1 Response 2**

#### **SPRING BREAK: MARCH 10-18**

19 Mar: Jessica Hagedorn, The Gangster of Love,

#### **Group 2 Response 2**

SECTION: NO BROW CULTURE AND THE MEDIA SPECTACLE

26 Mar: Trash TV

Laura Grindstaff. Chapters 2 and 8 of The Money Shot: Trash, Class, and the Making of TV Talk Shows

SECTION: ADVERTISING, FASHION CULTURE, AND THE PRODUCTION OF DESIRE

2 Apr: Paul Smith. "Tommy Hilfiger in the Age of Mass Customization"

Marshall Sahlins. "Notes on the American Clothing System"

**Research Paper and Bibliography Draft Due**

SECTION: QUEER THEORY AND THE QUOTIDIAN

9 Apr: Judith Halberstam. "Dude, Where's My Gender?"

Cathy Cohen. "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?"

Anna McCarthy. "Ellen: Making Queer Television History"

Recommended: Judith Halberstam. "Drag Kings"

**Group 1 Response 3**

SECTION: HEGEMONIC MULTICULTURALISM

16 Apr: Henry Yu. "How Tiger Woods Lost His Stripes"

Mary Beltran. "The New Hollywood Racelessness"

Arlene Davila. "'Don't Panic, I'm Hispanic': The Trends and Economy of Cultural Flows"

**Group 2 Response 3**

SECTION: DIGITAL CULTURE AND USER-PRODUCED MEDIA

23 Apr: Lisa Nakamura. "Head-Hunting on the Internet: Identity Tourism, Avatars, and Racial Passing in Textual and Graphic Chat Spaces"

"You. Time Person of the Year"

youtube.com

blogs

30 Apr: Final Research Paper Presentations

**FINAL RESEARCH PAPER DUE MON, MAY 7 BY NOON IN RAB 024!!**