

**SOCIOLOGY 163: POPULAR CULTURE**  
**Fall 2018**

**INSTRUCTOR**

Jill Bakehorn, PhD (Pronouns: she/her or they/them)

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Office: 479 Barrows

**Sign-up Office Hours:** Mondays 12:30-2:00pm

Sign-up: <http://www.wejoinin.com/sheets/xjanb>

**Drop-in Office Hours:** Wednesdays 12:30-2:00pm

**CLASS MEETING**

Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 11:00-11:59am

100 Lewis

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Some may view popular culture as unworthy of academic study; indeed, popular cultural texts are often described as trashy, lowbrow, lacking merit, and even harmful. In this course, however, we will be examining the importance and impact of popular culture on our lives.

Questions we will consider in this course:

- What does "popular" mean?
- What makes something "popular"?
- Why should we study popular culture?
- What is the sociological approach to studying popular culture?
- What lessons about our social world does a study of popular culture provide?
- How are power and inequality reproduced through popular culture?
- How can popular culture be a force for resistance?

This course will focus on the idea that popular culture is a site of dominance and contestation between those who have power and those with relatively little power. Sociologist Laura Grindstaff argues: "what we call *popular culture* involves a continuous and unequal struggle between forces of domination, points of resistance, and everything in between. This struggle is particularly complicated (and particularly unequal) in highly mass-mediated, postindustrial societies like the United States..." (2002:33).

We will explore this theme through a wide range of popular cultural forms including Sci-fi, Filipino taxi dancers, Morrissey and his Latinx fans, romance novels, Elvis, fandom, Beatlemania, symbolic representations of African-Americans, slash fiction, and the challenging of racism by Black and non-Black Muslim youth through hip-hop and the performance of "Blackness."

By focusing on a wide range of topics, we can see how thoroughly saturated our daily lives are with popular culture, how it impacts our identity and our social relationships, and how culture can be used to both reinforce and challenge social inequality.

Keep in mind this is a sociology course. Just to refresh your memory, sociology is the study of human social activity, organization, and interaction. Sociology is about the search for patterned behavior and social, rather than individual, explanations for this behavior. Sociologists look beyond the taken-for-granted notions of our social environment to examine the many layers of social meaning in the human experience. Thus, we will be examining popular culture sociologically.

This course challenges many taken-for-granted assumptions about the social world. Keep in mind that your personal experiences may not match the general sociological insights discussed in the course. This does not negate the insights. Ask yourself why this might be the case. You may not agree with everything we read and discuss, but I expect you to have an open mind and demonstrate your knowledge of the sociological perspective. Disagreements and debates are expected and welcome in this class; however, I will not tolerate personal attacks.

### **COURSE GOALS**

By the end of the semester you should be able to:

- ❖ Discuss sociological theories of popular culture
- ❖ Connect sociological theories to the social world and your experiences
- ❖ Use an intersectional approach
- ❖ Articulate how popular culture can be used as a force for domination and resistance
- ❖ Write succinct papers that effectively synthesize course materials and apply theory

### **REQUIRED TEXTS**

Jenkins, Henry. 2013. *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture*. Twentieth Anniversary Ed. New York: Routledge.

Khabeer, Su'ad Abdul. 2016. *Muslim Cool: Race, Religion, and Hip Hop in the United States*. New York: New York University Press.

Course Reader: Available at Central Copy (2411 Telegraph) and on bCourses. Books are on reserve at Moffitt Library and may be available online—check the library website.

## ASSIGNMENTS

**Reading Responses:** Two 2-page response papers. Each is worth 20% of your final grade. Due dates are listed in the course outline. I will upload response paper prompts to bCourses. No late responses are accepted without prior approval.

These reading responses will test your comprehension of course readings as well as your ability to explain, synthesize, and make connections between the readings **in your own words**. Because you will not be able to rely on direct quotations of the material, you must focus on your own understanding and articulation of the texts. You will be asked to make connections between the course materials and your experience of the social world.

**Exams:** Take-home midterm and final exam--both are in essay format. Each is worth 30% of your final grade. You will be responsible for course readings, lectures, and any media presented in the class. No late exams are accepted without prior approval.

### GRADE BREAKDOWN:

Reading Responses (40%)

Exams (60%)

### GRADE SCALE

Grade Range		Grade
100%	97%	A+
96%	93%	A
92%	90%	A-
89%	87%	B+
86%	83%	B
82%	80%	B-
79%	77%	C+
76%	73%	C
72%	70%	C-
69%	67%	D+
66%	63%	D
62%	60%	D-
59%	0%	F

## **COURSE FORMAT AND POLICIES**

**Readings:** Readings should be completed prior to class. You must keep up with the readings to participate in class discussions and complete assignments. Bring your reading materials to every class; you will likely need to refer to them in class discussions.

All of your assigned readings (aside from the required books) are available on bCourses and as a reader at Copy Central on Telegraph.

**Participation:** This class will incorporate the use of lecture, films, music, visuals, and group discussions. I expect you to be an active participant in the course. Bring your questions and comments to class and don't be shy about bringing them up.

You can also participate by posting links to news stories or videos, as well as any relevant thoughts on issues related to gender in the chatroom or discussion board on bCourses. Be sure to contextualize any posts by connecting them to issues in the class. Provide **trigger warnings** where appropriate.

If you have a question about the readings, lecture, etc., please post your question to the chatroom or discussion board on bCourses where both your questions and my answers will be visible to other students, rather than e-mailing me. Feel free to answer each other's questions as well.

**Missing Class:** If you miss a class, do not ask me if you missed anything. Of course you did!--but don't expect me to fill you in. I suggest sharing contact information with a classmate early on in the semester and getting the notes you missed.

**Course Slides:** I use course slides which often incorporate media. I will post course slides, but they will only contain the text. Keep in mind that these slides are meant to be a guide during lecture and are therefore not exhaustive or a substitute for attending class.

**Course Notes and Recordings:** Course notes should not be disseminated. That means you are forbidden from posting them online on forums like Course Hero. You must obtain permission from me to record lectures.

**Course Etiquette:** Do not read, listen to music, browse the Internet, text, or sleep during class. If you want to do these things, don't bother coming to class. All **phones** must be silenced and put away during class.

**Laptop Policy:** I strongly encourage you to take notes without a computer if you are able. If you need to use a computer during class, I ask that you **sit in the back four rows of the classroom** so that you do not distract and disturb other students.

**Email:** Clearly indicate to which class you are referring in your emails to me. I endeavor to respond to emails within 24 hours, but this is not always possible; please be patient.

## GRADING POLICIES

No **late assignments** will be accepted without prior approval.

**Turnitin:** All of your assignments will be checked by TurnItIn for plagiarism. Keep in mind, this program keeps a database of previously turned in papers as well.

Be sure to carefully consider assignment feedback; it is provided to help you improve on future assignments. For in-text feedback, **click on the link “View Feedback”** which may not be visible if you are not in full-screen mode.

If you would like to request a re-grade or re-evaluation of an assignment, you must first, wait 24 hours after the assignment was returned and second, write up a statement detailing why you believe you deserve a higher grade. This statement should be about the substance of your work, not about effort. Be sure to make specific reference to your work, don't simply say that you responded to the questions asked. Demonstrate how you did so.

**You must request a re-grade within 7 days of the assignment being returned.** My assessment and grade of your work will be used, even if that means you get a lower score than originally given for that work.

## ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

The University defines academic misconduct as “any action or attempted action that may result in creating an unfair academic advantage for oneself or an unfair academic advantage or disadvantage for any other member or members of the academic community” (UC Berkeley Code of Student Conduct).

Academic dishonesty includes cheating and plagiarism. Cheating is collaboration with other students on response papers and exams. Plagiarism includes turning in any work that is not your own as well as improper or missing citations of others' works. As a student of the University of California, you are bound by the Code of Academic Conduct. Any cases of cheating or plagiarism will result in a referral to The Center for Student Conduct and a zero for that assignment.

Plagiarism is most likely to occur because students are unaware of how to cite their sources or because they feel desperate. If you get to this point in your writing, contact me ASAP rather than doing something you'll very likely regret.

## OFFICE HOURS

**Sign-up** office hours: from 12:30-2:00pm on **Mondays**. Sign-up: <http://www.wejoinin.com/sheets/xjanb>

**Drop-in** office hours: 12:30-2:00pm on **Wednesdays** —no appointment necessary.

If you are having any difficulties with the material or assignments for the course or if you are having any personal problems that are affecting your ability to complete assignments on time, you should take advantage of office hours early in the semester. I will be much more amenable to granting extensions when I have been made aware of problems early on rather than at the last minute.

Remember that office hours are an important resource if for no other reason than getting to know your instructors could help you in the future when you may need letters of recommendation.

## **STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES**

### **Disability Accommodations**

Please let me know early in the semester if you qualify for any disability accommodations.

### **Student Learning Center**

“The primary academic support service for students at Berkeley, the SLC helps students transition to Cal; navigate the academic terrain; create networks of resources; and achieve academic, personal and professional goals.” Located in The Cesar Chavez Student Center on Lower Sproul Plaza. Front desk phone: 510 642 7332

### **Sexual Harassment and Violence Support Services**

To learn more about these issues, how to support survivors, or how to file a report and receive support services, start here: <http://survivorsupport.berkeley.edu>. **Please note that I am not a confidential advocate.** To speak to a confidential care advocate: <http://sa.berkeley.edu/dean/confidential-care-advocate/>

### **Economic, Food, and Housing Support**

If you are in need of economic, food, or housing support, you can find help at [basicneeds.berkeley.edu](http://basicneeds.berkeley.edu). You may be eligible for money to buy groceries via [calfresh.berkeley.edu](http://calfresh.berkeley.edu) or our [Food Assistance Program](#). If you are in need of food immediately, please visit our UC Berkeley Food Pantry at [pantry.berkeley.edu/](http://pantry.berkeley.edu/).

**COURSE OUTLINE** Readings are to be **completed** on the day listed below. Schedule is subject to change.

### **WEEK ONE: DEFINING POPULAR CULTURE**

**Wednesday, 8/22**            **Introductions**

**Friday, 8/24**                **The Sociology of Popular Culture**

Storey, John. 2009. "Chapter 1: What is Popular Culture?" Pp 1-15 in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction*. 5th Edition. New York: Pearson.

### **WEEK TWO: CRITIQUES OF MASS CULTURE**

**Monday, 8/27**                **Mass Culture Critiques**

**Wednesday, 8/29**

Gans, Herbert J. 1999. "Chapter One: The Critique of Mass Culture." Pp 29-88 in *Popular Culture & High Culture: An Analysis and Evaluation of Taste*. New York: Basic Books.

**Friday, 8/31**                **The Critical Approach to Popular Culture**

Grazian, David. 2017. "Chapter 3: Welcome to the Machine: A Critical Approach to Popular Culture." Pp 48-71 in *Mix It Up: Popular Culture, Mass Media, and Society*, 2nd ed. New York: W.W. Norton.

### **WEEKS THREE-SIX: DOMINANCE AND RESISTANCE**

**Monday, 9/3**                **HOLIDAY: NO CLASS**

**Wednesday, 9/5**            **Applying the Critical Approach**

Dubin, Steven C. 1987. "Symbolic Slavery: Black Representations in Popular Culture." *Social Problems* 34 (2):122-140.

**Friday, 9/7**                **The Body and Social Control**

Kasson, John. 1990. "Venturing Forth: Bodily Management in Public." Pp. 112-136 in *Rudeness and Civility: Manners in 19th-Century Urban America*. New York: Hill and Wang.

**Monday, 9/10                      The Body and Social Control**

Fiske, John. 1989. Excerpt from "Offensive Bodies and Carnival Pleasures." Pp. 69-81 in *Understanding Popular Culture*. Boston: Unwin/Hyman.

**Wednesday, 9/12                Bodies Out of Control**  
**Friday, 9/14**

Fiske, John. 1993. Excerpt from "Elvis: A Body of Controversy." Pp. 94-107 in *Power Plays, Power Works*. New York: Verso.

Ehrenreich, Barbara, Elizabeth Hess, and Gloria Jacobs. 1997. "Beatlemania: A Sexually Defiant Consumer Subculture?" Pp. 523-536 in *The Subcultures Reader*. Edited by Ken Gelder and Sarah Thornton. New York: Routledge.

**Monday, 9/17                      (Re)Producing Racial Inequality : Controlling Images**

Collins, Patricia Hill. 1991. "Mammies, Matriarchs, and Other Controlling Images." Pp 76-106 in *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. New York: Routledge.

**Wednesday, 9/19                (Re)Producing Racial Inequality: Model Minority Myth in Popular Culture**

Lee, Robert G. 1999. "The Cold War Origins of the Model Minority Myth." Pp 145-179 in *Orientalism: Asian Americans in Popular Culture*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

**Friday, 9/21                      Controlling Images of LGBTQ Folks**  
**\*\*RESPONSE 1 DUE\*\***

McInroy, Lauren B. and Shelley L. Craig. 2017. "Perspectives of LGBTQ Emerging Adults on the Depiction and Impact of LGBTQ Media Representation." *Journal of Youth Studies* 20 (1):32-46.

**Monday, 9/24                      Film Screening and Discussion**

**Wednesday, 9/26                Body as Resistance?**

Macías, Stacy I. 2016. "Claiming Style, Consuming Culture: The Politics of Latina Self-Styling and Fashion Lines." In *The Routledge Companion to Latina/o Popular Culture*, edited by Frederick Luis Aldama. New York: Taylor & Francis.



**Friday, 9/28                      Taking Back the Body**

España-Maram. Linda M. 1998. "Brown 'Hordes' in McIntosh Suits: Filipinos, Taxi Dance Halls, and Performing the Immigrant Body in Los Angeles, 1930s-1940s." Pp 118-135 in *Generations of Youth: Youth Cultures and History in Twentieth-Century America* edited by Joe Austin and Michael Nevin Willard. New York: New York University Press.

**WEEK SEVEN: MAKING MEANING**

**Monday, 10/1                      Catch-up/Review**

**Wednesday, 10/3                Interpretive Communities and Meaning**

Grazian, David. 2017. "Chapter 8: Don't Stop Believing: Audiences and the Quest for Meaning in Popular Culture." Pp 162-181 in *Mix It Up: Popular Culture, Mass Media, and Society, 2nd Ed.* New York: W.W. Norton.

Klosterman, Chuck. 2006. "Viva Morrissey!" Pp 47-56 in *A Decade of Curious People and Dangerous Ideas.* New York: Scribner.

**Friday, 10/5                      Symbolic Creativity**

Willis, Paul. 1990. "Symbolic Creativity." Pp 1-29 in *Common Culture.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

**WEEKS EIGHT-ELEVEN: FANDOMS AND QUEER READING**

**Monday, 10/8                      Symbolic Creativity in Action**

Radway, Janice. 1983. "Women Read the Romance: The Interaction of Text and Context." *Feminist Studies* 9 (1):53-78.

**Wednesday, 10/10                Fans as Poachers**

**Friday, 10/12**

Henry Jenkins: "Introduction" in *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture*

Henry Jenkins: "Chapter 1: 'Get a Life!': Fans, Poachers, Nomads" in *Textual Poachers*

**Monday, 10/15                      Understanding Reception**

Henry Jenkins: "Chapter 2: How Texts Become Real" in *Textual Poachers*

**Wednesday, 10/17**      **FILM SCREENING**

**Friday, 10/19**                      **\*\*TAKE HOME EXAM DUE\*\***  
**NO CLASS**

**Monday, 10/22**                      **Fans as Critics**  
**Wednesday, 10/24**

Henry Jenkins: "Chapter 3: Fan Critics" in *Textual Poachers*

**Friday, 10/26**                      **Beginnings of Shipping**

Henry Jenkins: "Chapter 4: 'It's Not a Fairy Tale Anymore': Gender, Genre, *Beauty and the Beast*" in *Textual Poachers*

**Monday, 10/29**                      **Slash Fiction**

Henry Jenkins: "Chapter 6: 'Welcome to Bisexuality, Captain Kirk': Slash and the Fan-Writing Community" in *Textual Poachers*

**Wednesday, 10/31**                      **Queer Reading**

Doty, Alexander. 1997. "Chapter One: There's Something Queer Here." Pp 1-16 in *Making Things Perfectly Queer: Interpreting Mass Culture*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

**Friday, 11/2**                              **Bronies**

Roberston, Venetia Laura Delano. 2013. "Of ponies and men: *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic* and the Brony Fandom." *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 17 (1): 21-37.

Jones, Bethan. 2015. "*My Little Pony*, Tolerance is Magic: Gender Policing and Brony Anti-Fandom." *Journal of Popular Television* 3 (1):119-125.

## **WEEKS TWELVE-FIFTEEN: MUSLIM COOL**

**Monday, 11/5**                              **Whose Popular Culture Is This?**

Hall, Stuart. 1993. "What Is This 'Black' in Black Popular Culture?" *Social Justice* 20 (1/2):104-114.

Su'ad Abdul Khabeer: "Introduction" in *Muslim Cool: Race, Religion, and Hip Hop in the United States*

**Wednesday, 11/7**                      **The Loop Connecting Muslims, Hip Hop and Black Americans**  
**Friday, 11/9**

Su'ad Abdul Khabeer: "Chapter 1: The Loop of Muslim Cool: Black Islam, Hip Hop, and Knowledge of Self" in *Muslim Cool*

**Monday, 11/12**                      **HOLIDAY: NO CLASS**

**Wednesday, 11/14**                      **Music and US Islam**

Su'ad Abdul Khabeer: "Chapter 2: Policing Music and the Facts of Blackness" in *Muslim Cool*

**Friday, 11/16**                      **Blackness and the Muslim Self**

**\*\*RESPONSE 2 DUE\*\***

Su'ad Abdul Khabeer: "Chapter 3: Blackness as a Blueprint for the Muslim Self" in *Muslim Cool*

**Monday, 11/19**                      **Masculinity, Race, and Religion**

Su'ad Abdul Khabeer: "Chapter 4: Cool Muslim Dandies: Signifyin' Race, Religion, Masculinity, and Nation" in *Muslim Cool*

**Wednesday, 11/21**                      **HOLIDAY: NO CLASS**

**Friday, 11/23**                      **HOLIDAY: NO CLASS**

**Monday, 11/26**                      **The Limits of Muslim Cool**

Su'ad Abdul Khabeer: "Chapter 5: The Limits of Muslim Cool" in *Muslim Cool*

**Wednesday, 11/28**                      **Muslim Cool Conclusions**

Su'ad Abdul Khabeer: "Conclusion #BlackLivesMatter" in *Muslim Cool*

**Friday, 11/30**                      **Sum Up and Review**

## **WEEK SIXTEEN: READING, REVIEW, AND RECITATION**

MONDAY, 12/3- FRIDAY, 12/7

**TAKE HOME FINAL EXAM DUE: MONDAY, DECEMBER 10 at 2:30PM**