

Sociology 163: Popular Culture (Spring 2018)
Tuesdays, 16:10-19:00 / 56 Barrows
John Lie, 486 Barrows, johnlie@berkeley.edu
Office Hours: Tuesdays 14:15-15:45 and by appointments

Popular culture is culture *tout court* for most people. Yet it's largely a twentieth-century phenomenon and something that's rarely studied – at least until very recently. This course attempts to make sense of the significant slice of the way we live by reviewing briefly the history and theory of popular culture and then by engaging in extended case studies of a series of screens: the Big Screen of movies, the Small Screen of television, and the yet smaller screens of laptops and smartphones.

Caveat Emptor

Three things you should note at the outset. First, please note that class participation is 20% of your final grade. Repeated absences will mean 0 (F) for the fifth of your final grade. Class participation means, at the very least, paying attention to what happens in the classroom. Secondly, plagiarism is not a good career move. It is true that the Internet has made plagiarism much easier, but you should also know that it has also facilitated the task of verifying the crime. Finally, and paradoxically, you may NOT use laptops, tablets, smartphones, or other electronic devices when you are in the classroom. The reasons for this ostensibly retrogressive rule will become clear towards the end of this course.

Evaluation

Class participation: 20%
Examination: 30%
Final project and presentation: 50%

Reading Assignments

The reading assignments are available online.

Schedule

16 January: Introduction

Raymond Williams, “Art,” “Culture,” “Media,” “Popular,” and “Taste” in Keywords, rev. ed., Oxford University Press, 1983, available at:

<https://tavaana.org/sites/default/files/raymond-williams-keywords.pdf>

23 January: The Birth of Culture and Popular Culture

Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, “The Culture Industry,” in Dialectic of Enlightenment, ed. G.S. Noerr, tr. E. Jephcott, Stanford University Press, 2007, available at:

https://web.stanford.edu/dept/DLCL/files/pdf/adorno_culture_industry.pdf

Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility," in Benjamin, The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, ed. M.W. Jennings, B. Doherty, and T.Y. Levin. Harvard University Press, 2008, available at:

https://monoskop.org/images/6/6d/Benjamin_Walter_1936_2008_The_Work_of_Art_in_the_Age_of_Its_Technological_Reproducibility_Second_Version.pdf

30 January: From Daguerreotypes to Moving Images

Guy Debord, The Society of the Spectacle, trans. Ken Knabb, Rebel Press, 2002 (orig. published 1967), available at: <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/guy-debord-the-society-of-the-spectacle.pdf>

6 February: The Golden Age of Cinema

Stanley Cavell, The World Viewed, New York: Viking Press, 1971, chapter 1, available at: <http://static1.1.sqspcdn.com/static/f/525114/10825215/1298111720423/Sesso+2+-+Leitura+I.pdf?token=gSkXH2uFqR91ZHzI0H0AYiY7yXk%3D>

13 February: The Emergence of Television

Gary Edgerton, ed., The Columbia History of American Television, New York: Columbia University Press, 2010, chapter 4, available at: http://media.library.ku.edu.tr/reserve/resspring17/Mava459_AHestroni/week2/week2.pdf

20 February: The (First) Golden Age of Television

Jerry Mander, Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television, New York: William Morrow, 1978, chapters 1, 2, 17; available at: http://nook.cs.ucdavis.edu/~koehl/Teaching/ECS188/Reprints/Mander_TV_78.pdf

27 February: The (Second) Golden Age of Television

William Deresiewicz, "Ready for Prime Time," Harper's Magazine, November 2016; available at: <https://harpers.org/archive/2016/11/ready-for-prime-time/>

6 March: The Emergence of the Digital Age

Katie Hafner and Matthew Lyon, Where Wizards Stay Up Late, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996, chapters 7 and 8, available at:

https://monoskop.org/images/e/ee/Hafner_Katie_Lyon_Matthew_Where_Wizards_Stay_Up_Late_The_Origins_Of_The_Internet.pdf

13 March: Video Games

Jane McGonigal, Reality Is Broken, New York: Penguin Books, 2011, Intro, chapter 1, and Conclusion, available at: <http://dutchlarppplatform.subcultures.nl/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Reality-Is-Broken-Why-Games-Make-Us-Better-and-How-They-Can-Change-the-World-2011.pdf>

Derek Gregory, “From a View to Kill,” Theory, Culture & Society 28, 2011, available at: <https://geographicalimagination.files.wordpress.com/2012/07/gregory-from-a-view-to-a-kill-tcs.pdf>

20 March: Digital Society?

Jonathan Crary, 24/7, Verso, 2014, available at: <https://twenty-four-seven.wikispaces.com/file/view/Late-Capitalism-and-the-Ends-of-Sleep-Jonathan-Crary.pdf>

27 March: Spring Vacation

3 April: The Age of Social Media

Sherry Turkle, Alone Together, New York: Basic Books, 2011, Introduction and Conclusion, available at: <https://oreducativa.wikispaces.com/file/view/Alone+Together+-+Why+We+Expect+More+from+Technology+and+Less+from+Each+Other+-+Sherry+Turkle.pdf>

Jiayang Fan, “China’s Selfie Obsession,” The New Yorker, Dec. 18/25 2017, available at: <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/12/18/chinas-selfie-obsession>

Final Project Prospectus Due

10 April: **EXAMINATION**

17 April: Final Project Presentations

24 April: Final Project Presentations

27 APRIL: FINAL PROJECT DUE