

Sociology 163: Popular Culture Spring 2020

INSTRUCTOR

Jill Bakehorn, Ph.D. (Pronouns: she/her or they/them)

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Drop-in Office Hours: Tuesdays 9:45-10:45am
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479 Barrows

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

CLASS MEETING

Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:00-3:29pm
160 Kroeber

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"?
- 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 pay particular attention to the role of the body in this struggle.

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 and Beatlemania; the intersection class, country music and queerness; fandoms and 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
- ❖ Critically engage with popular culture identifying how it can be used as a force for domination and resistance
- ❖ Write succinct papers that effectively synthesize course materials and apply theory

REQUIRED TEXTS

Hubbs, Nadine. 2014. *Rednecks, Queers, and Country Music*. Berkeley, CA: University of California, Press.

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 are available online—check the library website.

ASSIGNMENTS

Reading Responses: Two 2-3 page response papers, each worth 15% of final grade.

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.

Due dates are listed in the course outline. **All work must be original (you cannot recycle work from other courses).**

Participation: Participation is 10% of your final grade. You can earn full participation points by asking and answering questions in class, completing random, unannounced writing assignments in class, completing short reflections, and posting questions/comments/content on bCourses in the Discussion board. **If you post a link, be sure to contextualize it and make a connection to issues related to the course.**

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

GRADE BREAKDOWN:

Reading Responses (30%)
Exams (60%)
Participation (10%)

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.

I will give unannounced writing assignments to be completed in class. These are an important component of your participation grade.

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 discussion board on bCourses. Be sure to contextualize any posts by connecting them to issues in the class. Provide **content warnings** where appropriate.

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

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: I expect you to be engaged and focused during class time. That means you should avoid distractions—the biggest is typically our phones. All phones must be silenced and put away during class. Email me your favorite animal gif by 2/11/20 for an extra participation point.

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 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.

Names and Pronouns: You have the right to be referred to by the name you prefer and the correct gender pronouns. Because the name listed in University records may not correspond to your preferred name, please inform me of your name (and pronunciation) and your pronouns so that I can ensure you are properly recognized and respected.

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

Please see Page 1 for information about my office hours.

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, please take advantage of office hours—I am here to help!

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

Course Accessibility

This course is intended for all UC Berkeley students, including those with mental, emotional, physical, or cognitive disabilities, illnesses, injuries, impairments, or any other condition that can negatively impact equal access to education. If, at any point in the semester, you find yourself not able to fully access the space, content, and experience of this course, you are welcome (but not required) to contact me by email or during office hours to discuss your specific needs.

I also encourage you to contact the [Disabled Students' Program](#). If you have a diagnosis, DSP can help you document your needs and create an accommodation plan. By making a plan through DSP, you can ensure appropriate accommodations without disclosing your condition or diagnosis to course instructors.

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.” The [SLC](#) is located in The Cesar Chavez Student Center.

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; I am a mandated reporter.** You can speak to a [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. You may be eligible for money to buy groceries via [CalFresh](#) or our [Food Assistance Program](#). If you are in need of food immediately, please visit our UC Berkeley [Food Pantry](#).

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

WEEK ONE: DEFINING POPULAR CULTURE

Tuesday, 1/21 **Introductions**

Thursday, 1/23 **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

Tuesday, 1/28 **Mass Culture Critiques**

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.

Thursday, 1/30 **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-FIVE: DOMINANCE AND RESISTANCE

Tuesday, 2/4 **Applying the Critical Approach**

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

Thursday, 2/6 **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.

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

Tuesday, 2/11 Bodies Out of Control

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.

Thursday, 2/13 (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.

Tuesday, 2/18 (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.

Thursday, 2/20 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.

WEEKS SIX-SEVEN: REDNECKS, QUEERS, AND COUNTRY MUSIC

**Tuesday, 2/25 Situating Class in Country
READING RESPONSE 1 DUE**

Nadine Hubbs: Intro in *Rednecks, Queers, and Country Music*

Nadine Hubbs: Chapter 1: Anything But Country

Thursday, 2/27 Country Music as Working-Class

Nadine Hubbs: Chapter 2: Sounding the Working-Class Subject

Tuesday, 3/3 Country Music as Rebellion

Nadine Hubbs: Chapter 3: Gender Deviance and Class Rebellion in "Redneck Woman"

Thursday, 3/5 Country Music and Queer Politics

Nadine Hubbs: Chapter 4: “Fuck Aneta Briant” and the Queer Politics of Being Political

Nadine Hubbs: Outro

WEEK EIGHT-TEN: MAKING MEANING

Tuesday, 3/10 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.

Castleberry, Garret. 2016. “Understanding Stuart Hall’s ‘Encoding/Decoding’ Model through TV’s *Breaking Bad*.” Pp 84-94 in *Communication Theory and Millennial Popular Culture* edited by Kathleen Glenister Roberts. New York: Peter Lang.

Thursday, 3/12 Symbolic Creativity

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

Tuesday, 3/17 Symbolic Creativity in Action

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

**Thursday, 3/19 TAKE HOME EXAM DUE
NO CLASS**

Tuesday, 3/24— Thursday, 3/26 NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK

WEEKS ELEVEN-TWELVE: FANDOMS AND SLASH FICTION

Tuesday, 3/31 Fans as Poachers

Jenkins, Henry. 2013. “Chapter 1: ‘Get a Life!’: Fans, Poachers, Nomads” Pp 9-49 in *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture.* New York: Routledge.

Thursday, 4/2 Understanding Reception

Jenkins, Henry. 2013. "Chapter 2: How Texts Become Real" Pp 50-79 in *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture*. New York: Routledge.

Tuesday, 4/7 Slash Fiction

Jenkins, Henry. 2013. "Chapter 6: 'Welcome to Bisexuality, Captain Kirk': Slash and the Fan-Writing Community" Pp 185-222 in *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture*. New York: Routledge.

Robertson, Mary. 2019. "Chapter 4: 'Google Knows Everything': Finding Queer Media." Pp 91-116 in *Growing Up Queer: Kids and the Remaking of LGBTQ Identity*. New York: New York University Press.

WEEKS THIRTEEN-FIFTEEN: MUSLIM COOL

Thursday, 4/9 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*

Tuesday, 4/14 The Loop Connecting Muslims, Hip Hop and Black Americans

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

Thursday, 4/16 Music and US Islam

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

Tuesday, 4/21 Blackness and the Muslim Self
READING RESPONSE 2 DUE

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

Thursday, 4/23 Masculinity, Race, and Religion

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

Tuesday, 4/28 The Limits of Muslim Cool

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

Thursday, 4/30 Muslim Cool Conclusions

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

WEEK SIXTEEN: READING, REVIEW, AND RECITATION

MONDAY, MAY 4-FRIDAY, MAY 8

TAKE HOME FINAL EXAM DUE: MONDAY, MAY 11 at 2:30PM

What is a Lecturer?

You may not know it, but this class is taught by a Lecturer. Currently, there are over 6,500 Lecturers across the UC system who teach over 30% of student credit hours. Lecturers are faculty dedicated to teaching and student success. Right now, our union is negotiating with the university for livable wages, reasonable workload, and fair and transparent hiring and reappointment practices so that we can better serve our students.

How you can support us: **1.** Invite us to talk to your student group. **2.** Sign this petition in support of better job security for lecturers **and** share it with friends and groups you're involved with: <http://chnng.it/7ncnMZ6YVp>. **3.** Join us at our rally on February 3 @ 12pm [LOCATION TBA] to demand a fair contract for #FacultyEquity and #StudentSuccess. **4.** Follow our campaign on social media: @ucaft (Facebook), @uc_aft (Instagram), and @UCAFT (Twitter).