THIS IS YOUR CONTRACT; PLEASE READ IT CAREFULLY

SOCI 212: Sociology of Popular Culture
TR 2:20-3:35 p.m., Spring 2014
Professor Sarah N. Gatson
Office: 427 Academic; 845-7267; gatson@tamu.edu
Office hours: 11-1, T; 11:30-1:30 W; and by appointment

Course Description: Examination of the classic and contemporary social scientific definitions and theories of culture, and popular versus “high” or elite culture(s), various forms and arenas of popular culture, such as television, film, and music, institutions and popular culture, identity (race, class, gender, and sexuality) and popular culture.

This course focuses on the sociological understanding of popular culture (including the arguable distinction between “popular” and “mass” culture). The course will begin with an examination of the classic and contemporary social scientific definitions and theories of culture, and popular versus “high” or elite culture(s). In the remainder of the course, we will deal with 1) various forms and arenas of popular culture, such as television, film, and music; 2) Institutions and popular culture, such as the law; and 3) Identity (race, class, gender, and sexuality) and popular culture.

Learning Outcomes:
- Communicate through analytical written work (concept papers and written discussion responses)
- Communicate through analytical audiovisual media presentations (PowerPoint slides)
- Engage critically with various formats of popular culture and develop multicultural media literacy.

Pre-requisites: None

Required Readings:
Books:
Popular Culture: A Reader, eds. Raiford Guins & Omayra Zaragoza Cruz (Sage, 2005) – Selected Readings
Connecting Social Problems and Popular Culture: Why Media is Not the Answer, Karen Sternheimer (Westview, 2010).

Readings:
Course Requirements & Evaluation [200 points total; 180-200 (A), 160-179.5 (B), 140-159.5 (C), 120-139.5 (D), Below 120 (F)]; IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO MAKE SURE I HAVE ALL YOUR ASSIGNMENTS IN, AND IN ON TIME. Additionally, please note that I WILL NOT RE-GRADE assignments in order to round up to a higher grade. For example, 179 and 179.5 are Bs, and will not be rounded up to a 180/A. Grade changes will be made ONLY due to calculation errors on my part.

CLASS PARTICIPATION & ABSENCE POLICY: I do not take attendance; it is your responsibility to come to class on time and to be responsible for the material covered therein. While I am happy to answer questions pertaining to the course, I will not re-provide lectures or produce my lecture notes for you – THE POWERPOINTS USED IN CLASS AND AVAILABLE ONLINE ARE NOT FULL NOTES; THEY ARE OUTLINES. If you miss class for any reason, your best option for getting back up to speed is to communicate with other students, whom you may ask to share their notes. Please see Rule 7 under Part I (http://studentrules.tamu.edu/search/rule7.htm) for details on excused absences, which I only need to be notified of in the event of missing an assignment or exam deadline, so that make-up work may be scheduled.

ASSIGNMENTS – All assignments should be uploaded to corresponding assignment areas on eLearning. Make sure to save a copy of all assignments. ALWAYS MAKE SURE TO MAKE A BACK-UP COPY; NEVER ERASE YOUR PAPER FROM DISK UNTIL AFTER THE SEMESTER ENDS, TO AVOID “LOST” PAPERS. If you ever have trouble uploading an assignment, MAKE SURE TO EMAIL A COPY to me either through eLearning or to my regular TAMU account by the deadline – emails are automatically time-stamped, and you will not be sanctioned for missing the deadline. When the assignment is one that other students need to review and give feedback on, I will upload it for you when necessary.

CONCEPT PAPERS (CPs): 30%/60 points (2 X 30 points). These are short, 1-2 page papers used to assess your grasp of concepts and materials discussed in class. They are based on discussion prompts that I will either present in class or post online. The graded CPs should be saved and referred to when constructing other assignments. Please refer to the schedule on pages 3-4 below for due dates for each CP.

POPULAR CULTURE OBSERVATIONS (PCOs): 50%/100 points (4 X 25 points) These are 1-2 slide PowerPoint presentations explaining an example of popular culture. These are based on your understanding of the overall concept of popular culture, and of the particular examples you choose. Please refer to the schedule on pages 3-4 below for due dates for each CP.
For this assignment, you must produce one each of the following:

1) Autoethnographic/Community: Based on your own life, you will present an example of popular culture from your home community in which you have participated.

2) Audio Visual: You will present on a film or television series that you think is an example of popular culture.

3) Audio: You will present on a piece of music, musical artist, or band that you think is an example of popular culture.
4) **Textual:** You will present on a book, magazine, or other text-based format that you think is an example of popular culture.

**NOTE:** The Autoethnographic/Community presentations may cover formats outlined in the other three assignments, BUT YOU MAY NOT USE THE SAME EXAMPLES IN ANY OF THE ASSIGNMENTS. Both the assigned readings from the textbooks AND the remainder of these books should be considered your secondary source material for your papers and presentations.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:** 20%/40 points (4 X 10 points). These are online responses to discussion questions posted on eLearning. They have deadlines attached to them. They are not on the schedule, and serve as a way to make sure you are engaged with the course materials, and with one another – 7 points will be awarded for the original response you make to the question, and 3 points for a response you make TO ANOTHER STUDENT’S RESPONSE.

**Schedule (*** highlights weeks when an assignment is due):**

**Week 1:** 1/13-17:
- **T:** Introductory discussion: Course objectives and Discussion of Concept Paper and Presentation requirements.
- **R:** *What is popular culture?* Cullen, pp.1-9; Guins & Cruz, pp. 1-18

**Week 2:** 1/20-24: Marking boundaries, marking identities
- **T:** Guin & Cruz, 19-38; Sternheimer, 1-20
- **R:** Cullen, pp.57-77 (Minstrelsy & Blackface; lecture will also discuss Racebending.com)

**Week 3:** 1/27-2/3: Reading alone, reading together – the creation of mass media
- **T:** Cullen, pp. 10-29; Guin & Cruz, 449-461
- **R:** Cullen, pp. 78-94; Guin & Cruz, pp.249-262
- CP # 1 due by 5p.m., Friday, Jan. 31 – Topic: What is the difference between popular culture and mass culture?

**Week 4:** 2/3-7: Performing Identity in Public: Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality
- **T:** Cullen, 55-128; Guin & Cruz, pp. 355-371;
- **R:** Cullen, 270-294; Guin & Cruz, pp. 285-293

**Week 5:** 2/10-14: Performing Identity in Public: Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality
- **T:** Guin & Cruz, pp. 372-416
- **R:** Guin & Cruz, pp. 429-440; 462-479
- CP # 2 due by 5p.m., Friday, Feb. 14 – Topic: What is popular and cultural about identity?

**Week 6:** 2/17-21: Performing Identity in Public: Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality
- **T:** Guin & Cruz, 324-337
- **R:** Guin & Cruz, pp.479-503

**Week 7:** 2/24-2/28: Mass medias
- **T:** Cullen, pp.129-202
- **R:** Cullen, pp.234-293

**Week 8:** 3/3-7:
- **T:** Guin & Cruz, pp.504-533
- **R:** Making a PowerPoint presentation
PCO # 1 due by 5p.m., Friday, Mar. 7

3/10-14: SPRING BREAK

*Week 9: 3/17-21: “Everything bad is good for you” – moral panic and popular culture
  T: Sternheimer, pp.21-46
  R: Sternheimer, pp.47-74
  PCO # 2 due by 5p.m., Friday, Mar. 21

Week 10: 3/24-28: “Everything bad is good for you” – moral panic and popular culture
  T: Sternheimer, pp.75-122
  R: Sternheimer, pp.123-156

*Week 11: 3/31-4/4: “Everything bad is good for you” – moral panic and popular culture
  T: Sternheimer, pp.157-178
  R: Sternheimer, pp.179-210
  PCO # 3 due by 5p.m., Apr. 4

Week 12: 4/7-11: “Everything bad is good for you” – moral panic and popular culture
  T: Sternheimer, pp.211-230
  R: Sternheimer, pp. 231-256

Week 13: 4/14-18: “Everything bad is good for you” – moral panic and popular culture
  T: Sternheimer, pp.257-284
  R: Sternheimer, pp.285-300

*Week 14: 4/21-25: “Everything bad is good for you” – moral panic and popular culture
  T: Gatson readings; in-class discussion.
  R: Gatson readings; in-class discussion.
  PCO # 4 due by 5p.m., Friday, Mar. 25
Format for Papers

All papers must conform to the following guidelines:

Cover page: This page should have your name, course and section number, and any other identifying information. Do NOT repeat any of this information in the text of your paper, unless it is in a header or footer (i.e. it should not be used to take up space in the body of the paper).

Margins: All margins (top, bottom, right and left) must be 1 inch. If you are using Microsoft Word, click on File; click on Page Set up; under Margins, enter the number “1.” If you have trouble doing this, SEE ME prior to turning in the paper.

Spacing: Double-spaced, except for any lengthy (taking up more than four lines of text) quotations, which should be indented and single spaced. Do NOT put an extra space between paragraphs.

Font: You must use 12-point font. Size matters. Style (as long as it isn’t one of the fancy or symbol fonts) doesn’t. Personally, I prefer Times New Roman.

Length: Adhere to the page-length requirement in the syllabus for each paper assignment – these length requirements are meant to highlight the need for editing to make your paper more concise and clear. If, before you turn in the paper, you find that you are more than a line or two under or over the required length, this is a signal to you that you need to do some re-writing.

Grammar and Proofreading: Adhere to standard American English spelling and grammar requirements. Proofread your papers, as spell-checking with a computer program is not the same thing as using language properly, and spell-check will not alert you to typographical errors other than misspelled words. If you have concerns about your proof-reading skills, ask a classmate to proof your paper for you, as it is often easier to catch someone else’s mistakes. You may also go to the Writing Center in the Evans Library – for more information: http://writingcenter.tamu.edu/.

Sources/Works cited/Bibliography: If the paper is a research rather than a short response paper (i.e., you are required to outside research of primary and/or secondary materials), please include a full bibliographic section, in alphabetical order, of the sources you used. Within the text itself, you may use whatever citation format with which you are most comfortable. If you are unfamiliar with citation formats, you may check out the online Chicago Manual of Style for commonly used formats: http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools.html. The parenthetical method of citation within the text – (Gatson, 1997: 56) or (Gatson, 1997, p 56) is generally more concise and easy to read. Online sources are fine for general research, but must be cited as such, and you must be able to explain why they are relevant when a research article was just as available as a source. News articles may be used as sources if they are being used to illustrate the existence of a phenomenon or cultural concept, but NOT as independent research sources like law review articles or scholarly journal articles or books.
All of the above are meant to be read as requirements aside from the content requirement of critical engagement with the course materials. These requirements may seem nit-picky to you, but they are required because the various ways students have of getting around length and style requirements often make the papers vastly unequal and difficult to grade on an acceptable standard.

The papers will be graded on the following percentage system: 40% for content, and understanding and application of the material; 30% for clarity and structure of your argument; and 30% for the grammar and style/format and proofreading rules.

Making the same guidelines errors will result in more points off than that occurrence in the first paper.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Grading Rubric</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Use of sociological concepts</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Presentation</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Grammar</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Overall score</strong></td>
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The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for a reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Department of Disability Service in Room B118 of Cain Hall. Phone/TTY: 979-845-1637 • Fax: 979-458-1214 • E-mail: disability@tamu.edu, http://disability.tamu.edu/

Aggie Honor Code

“An Aggie does not lie or cheat or tolerate those who do.” http://aggiehonor.tamu.edu
Our conduct in this class should embody the spirit as well as the letter of the Aggie Honor Code. If you have any questions about the code or Honor Council and its Procedures, please consult the “Know the Code” website found at http://compliance.tamu.edu/CodeConduct.aspx.