
Politics and Popular Culture
Course Number: 205.3125
Spring Semester, Thursday 14-18, 2020-21

Instructor: Dr. Israel Waismel-Manor

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Office Hours: By appointment only

Course Credits: 4cc 4 weekly hrs.

Course Classification: Seminar/Advanced Elective

Description: This seminar/advanced elective examines the interplay between popular culture - especially cinema, television, music, social media, literature, comics and sports - and the political realm, starting from the end of World War II until today. We will examine how international and domestic struggles have been shaped by and reflected in popular culture. We will come to understand that popular culture is a battleground in which various political forces operate, such as social classes, ethnic groups, men and women, liberals and conservatives, and nations as well. We will explore how the entertainment industry reflects and shapes our political consciousness and attitudes, and see that popular culture is not only a pastime product, but a tremendous force that shapes the political reality, reflects it and is shaped by it. Finally, participants will learn to consume popular culture more critically and understand its place in the political arena.

Requirements: The seminar consists of a weekly class of four academic hours. Students are required to attend classes, read the secondary sources (articles) and watch / listen / read the primary sources (films, books, songs, etc.) before each lesson and be prepared to actively participate during class discussion. During the lessons we will also watch, read and listen together to a large number of additional sources (excerpts from films, TV shows and songs). Some of this content may be unpleasant to some of your sensibilities, but you must understand that there is no way to discuss them without dealing with them. The video materials will be distributed at the beginning and during the semester. They should be used only within our seminar framework. I ask that after the seminar you delete them or purchase those you wish to keep.

The semester will likely begin through zoom, but once we will return to regular classes, the use of cellphones and computers is prohibited¹, except for students with written approval from the learning disabilities center (Yahel). If you are an individual with a disability and require accommodations for this class, please notify me within the first two weeks of the semester and I'll be happy to assist you. Information on learning disabilities: LDA@univ.haifa.ac.il

Your grade is composed of active class participation (20%) and a research paper (80%). The research paper is open to any topic related to the seminar - with the approval of the instructor. Missing more than two classes will lead to a failing grade.

¹ Why? <https://www.newyorker.com/tech/annals-of-technology/the-case-for-banning-laptops-in-the-classroom>

Lectures and Class Materials:

	date	Topic	Materials
1	2.3	What is popular culture and what is its connection to politics?	Storey, John. 2012. <i>Cultural Theory & Popular Culture: A Reader</i> , (6th ed). Athens: University of Georgia Press, Introduction and Ch. 1.
2	9.3	Conformity, Standardization and Homogenization	Essex, Harry. 1953. <i>I the Jury</i> . Weiner, Matthew. 2007. <i>Mad Men</i> , S01E01.
3	16.3	Youth revolutionizing culture	Altschuler, Glenn C. 2003. <i>All Shook Up: how rock 'n' roll changed America</i> . Oxford: Oxford University Press, Ch. 3. Watch and listen to the 20 music videos assigned by email.
4	23.3	Wars on and off the screen	Kubrick, Stanley. 1964. <i>Dr. Strangelove</i> . Payne, R.A., 2020. Grappling with Dr. Strangelove's "Wargasm" Fantasy. <i>International Studies Review</i> , 22(3), pp.464-481.
5	6.4	Race: From Cassius Clay to Bill Cosby	Towler, Christopher C., Crawford, Nyron N., and Bennett, Robert A. 2019. Shut up and Play: Black Athletes, Protest Politics, and Black Political Action. <i>Perspectives on Politics</i> 18(1): 111-27. Cosby, Bill. <i>The Cosby Show</i> . S01E01
6	20.4	Feminism: from Norma Jean to Stephanie Germentotta	Hobson, Janell. 2016. Feminists Debate Beyoncé. In Trier-Bieniek, A. ed. <i>The Beyoncé Effect: Essays on sexuality, race and feminism</i> . McFarland, 11-26. Wilder, Billy. 1959. <i>Some Like It Hot</i> . Brooks, James, & Bruns, Alan. 1970. <i>The Mary Tyler Moore Show</i> . S01E01.
7	27.4	Politics and politicians on film and television	Gierzynski, A., 2018. <i>The Political Effects of Entertainment Media: How fictional worlds affect real world political perspectives</i> . Rowman & Littlefield. Ch. 4 (House of Cards Effects). Willimon, Beau 2014. <i>House of Cards</i> . (based on House of Cards by Michael Dobbs). S02E01.
8	4.5	Individuals and society	Wallis, R., 2021. A Good Man with a Gun: Shane and the Sanctification of American Gun Culture. <i>Quarterly Review of Film and Video</i> , pp.1-16. Stevens, George. 1953. <i>Shane</i> .
9	11.5	Marginalized groups and the struggle towards acceptance	Regev, Motia and Seroussi, Edwin, 2004. <i>Popular Music and National Culture in Israel</i> , Berkeley: University of California Press, Ch. 9. Burns, Ken. 2019. <i>Country Music</i> . PBS. Episode 5-6.
10	18.5	LGBT: from Liberace to HGTV	Battles, Kathleen & Hilton-Morrow, Wendy. 2002. Gay characters in conventional spaces: Will & Grace and the situation comedy genre. <i>Critical Studies in Media Communication</i> , 19: 1, 87-105. Will and Grace (2000) – S03E14. Queer Eye for the Straight Guy (2004) – S02E01. Queer Eye for the Straight Guy (2015) – S01E01.
11	25.5	News, entertainment and infotainment	Young, D.G., 2019. <i>Irony and outrage: The polarized landscape of rage, fear, and laughter in the United States</i> . Oxford University Press, USA. Ch. 1 & Ch. XXX. Daily Show with Trevor Noah - watch current week's programs (Monday-Friday). Last Week Tonight with John Oliver - watch latest episode
12	1.6	The future state: anarchy, utopia, or dystopia?	Jones, C.W. and Paris, C., 2018. It's the end of the world and they know it: How dystopian fiction shapes political attitudes. <i>Perspectives on Politics</i> , 16(4), pp.969-989.
13	8.6	Students' presentations	