

MIT 2153

Faculty of Information
& Media Studies
Western University

ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRIES AND POPULAR CULTURE



"If it's about Beethoven, the tortured artist – it's a film" *MAD* magazine once noted. "If it's about Beethoven, the dog – it's a movie."

The goal of *Entertainment Industries and Popular Culture* is to interrogate the complex interrelationship between ideas of culture and entertainment. Art and commerce have become inextricably linked, with consequences that are just as profound for audiences and fans as they are for those who make their living in the "cultural industries."

The course is divided into three major units. Part 1, "Approaches to Culture and Entertainment," takes a look at some of the conflicting terms under which culture has been categorized. It

introduces some of the key concerns of cultural studies and political economy, and how these shape the way we now look at the conditions under which popular culture is produced and circulated.

Part 2, "Entertainment Industries," looks at some of the major media sectors that comprise the cultural industries: these include film and television, music, publishing, and video games. Case studies of seminal and/or dominating companies are examined for each category.

The final part, "Popular Cultural Practices," introduces the ideas of postmodernism and convergence to look at how culture is still created outside of corporate structures. However, just as the links between traditional industries are becoming blurred, the course concludes by showing how capitalist practices still shape even the most grassroots cultural practices.

Instructor: Dr. Luke Arnott

Lecture: Tues. 3:30-5:30, Thurs.
9:30-10:30 in UCC 67

Office hours: Wed. 1-2

FNB 4134

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Official Course Description:

Popular culture is shaped by industrial complexes such as the major film studios and music labels, the video games business, comic book publishing, and radio and television networks. This course examines such cultural industries, considering the role of audiences and fans, and the myths and realities of creative cultural work.

Fall 2017

Evaluation Breakdown:

Midterm	25%
Assignment #1	10%
Assignment #2	15%
Assignment #3	15%
Final Exam	35%

1. Midterm October 17

Students will write an in-class midterm based on all course readings and lectures up to that point. The format will consist of multiple choice, short answer questions and essay questions.

2. Short Writing Assignments

Students will write three short assignments over the course of the term. The first assignment, worth 10% of the course grade, will be 500-750 words, and will be due September 26th.

The second and third assignments will both be worth 15% of the course grade, and will be 750-1000 words each. They will be due on November 7th and December 5th.

Details and guidelines for each assignment will be posted on the course's OWL site no later than one week before each assignment is due.

3. Final Exam Date TBA

This will cover all course material and take place during the official final exam period at the end of the term. The format will consist of multiple choice, short answer questions and essay questions.



Course Policies

Late policy: All assignments are due in class before the beginning of lecture; any handed in afterwards will be considered one day late. Late assignments will have 5% deducted from the grade for every calendar day they are overdue (this includes weekends). Late assignments must be handed in via the FIMS office, and be date-stamped. Assignments more than a week late will receive a mark of zero. There will be no exceptions without proper academic accommodation.

Email policy: Please e-mail me about any course-related questions you may have. Be advised, however, that I have other commitments and sometimes cannot respond right away. I regularly check and answer university emails on Mondays and Thursdays, so it might be 2 or 3 days before I can get back to you.

Please check your university email account regularly. Email/OWL will be the primary means of communication with the class, and over the course of the term I may send you reminders and supplementary materials electronically.

Electronic devices policy: Laptops and similar devices may only be used for note-taking in class, whose use (barring official accommodation) is a privilege. Students found to be using computers or phones for non-academic purposes (tweeting, checking Facebook, etc.) will have that privilege revoked. No electronic devices are permitted in exams.



Lecture Schedule:

Part 1: Approaches to Culture and Entertainment

Week 1. September 7

Introduction: Entertainment? Culture?

Readings: O'Brien & Szeman, pp. 1-34

Week 2. September 12-14

Top of the Pops: A Brief History of Studying Culture

Readings: O'Brien & Szeman, pp. 35-58

Week 3. September 19-21

Cultural Industries: The Political Economy of "Entertainment"

Readings: O'Brien & Szeman, pp. 107-147

Part 2: Entertainment Industries

Week 4. September 26-28 *Assignment #1 Due in Class Sept. 26*

Empire of Joy: Film and TV as Archetypal Industries

Readings: Hesmondhalgh; Freedman

Week 5. October 3-5

We Will Rock You: Record Labels, Popular Music, and Concerts

Readings: Homan; Meier

Week 6. Fall Reading Week (No class)

Week 7. October 17 (No class Oct. 19)

Midterm

Week 8. October 24-26

Book 'Em: Novels, Comics, and the Business of "Literature"

Readings: O'Brien & Szeman, pp. 347-351; Van Lente & Dunlavy; Brouillette & Dowdy

Week 9. October 31-November 2

Plug 'n' Play: The Video Game Industry

Readings: Keogh; Egenfeldt-Nielsen et al.

Part 3: Popular Cultural Practices

Week 9. November 7-9 *Assignment #2 Due in Class Nov. 7*

Come Together: Postmodernism and Convergence

Readings: O'Brien & Szeman, pp. 291-314; Sandvoss

Week 10. November 14-16

Slash Fiction: Fan Culture in a Commodified World

Readings: O'Brien & Szeman, pp. 257-289; Jenkins

Week 11. November 21-23

Don't Hate the Player: Pro Sports and Spectacular Entertainment

Readings: O'Brien & Szeman, pp. 58-65; Cwynar; Lupien

Week 12. November 28-30

Your Place or Mine? Conventions, Theme Parks, "Experiences"

Readings: O'Brien & Szeman, pp. 162-179; Bartkowiak

Week 13. December 5 *Assignment #3 Due in Class Dec. 5*

Review/Conclusion

Course Textbook (Available at the Western Bookstore):

O'Brien, Susie, and Imre Szeman. 2017. *Popular Culture: A User's Guide*. 4th ed. Toronto: Nelson Educational.

Additional Course Readings (Available via the course's OWL site):

Bartkowiak, Mathew J. 2012. "Behind the Behind the Scenes of Disney World: Meeting the Need for Insider Knowledge". *The Journal of Popular Culture* 45 (5): 943-59. doi:10.1111/j.1540-5931.2012.00967.x.

Brouillette, Sarah, and Christopher Doody. 2015. "The Literary as a Cultural Industry." In Oakley and O'Connor, 99-108.

Cwynar, Christopher. 2017. "On Thin Ice: Hockey Night in Canada and the Future of National Public Service Media." *International Communication Gazette* 79 (2): 135-47. doi:10.1177/1748048516689194.

Egenfeldt-Nielsen, Simon, Jonas Heide Smith, and Susana Pajares Tosca. 2016. "The Game Industry." In *Understanding Video Games: The Essential Introduction*, 3rd ed., 15-29. London; New York: Routledge.

Freedman, Des. 2015. "The Resilience of TV and Its Implications for Media Policy." In Oakley and O'Connor, 120-29.

Hesmondhalgh, David. 2013. "Cultural Industries in the Twentieth Century: The Key Features." In *The Cultural Industries*, 3rd ed., 64-85. London: Sage.

Homan, Shane. 2015. "The Popular Music Industries." In Oakley and O'Connor, 141-51.

Jenkins, Henry. 2006. "Why Heather Can Write: Media Literacy and the *Harry Potter* Wars." In *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, 169-191. New York, NY: New York University Press.

Keogh, Brendan. 2015. "Between Triple-A, Indie, Casual, and DIY: Sites of Tension in the Videogames Cultural Industries." In Oakley and O'Connor, 152-62.

Lupien, Philippe-Antoine. 2017. "Sport and Public Service in Canada: The Roots of the Inherent Bonds between the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation/Radio-Canada and the Olympic Games." *International Communication Gazette* 79 (2): 120-34. doi:10.1177/1748048516689192.

Meier, Leslie M. 2015. "Popular Music Making and Promotional Work Inside the 'New' Music Industry." In Oakley and O'Connor, 402-12.

Oakley, Kate, and Justin O'Connor, eds. 2015. *The Routledge Companion to the Cultural Industries*. London; New York: Routledge.

Sandvoss, Cornel. 2015. "Challenging Boundaries: Fans and Cultural Industries." In Oakley and O'Connor, 357-70.

Van Lente, Fred, and Ryan Dunlavey. 2012. "The God of All Comics; No More Wednesdays." In *The Comic Book History of Comics*, 187-216. San Diego, CA: IDW Publishing.

NOTES FROM THE FIMS DEAN'S OFFICE

Rights and Responsibilities

The conditions governing a student's ability to pursue their undergraduate education at Western are ratified by Senate and can be found on the Academic Policies section of the University Secretariat:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/academic_policies/rights_responsibilities.html

Statement on Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Plagiarism

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software Turnitin under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system.

Accommodation Policies

Students with disabilities work with Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_disabilities.pdf

Medical Consideration

Students seeking academic consideration on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth **10% or more of their final grade** must apply to the Academic Counselling

office of their home Faculty and provide documentation in the form of a [Student Medical Certificate](#). It will be the Dean's Office that will determine if consideration is warranted.

For work worth **less than 10% of the final grade**, the instructor will consider requests for academic consideration on medical grounds made in a timely manner in writing or by appointment in office hours. Such requests need not be accompanied by documentation. The instructor may decide to require documentation be submitted to the appropriate Academic Counselling office.

Students should also note that individual instructors are not permitted to receive documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for consideration on medical grounds, or for other reasons. **All documentation must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's home Faculty.**

For Western University policy on consideration for medical illness, see: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_illness.pdf and for the Student Medical Certificate (SMC), see:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf

Compassionate Accommodation

Academic accommodation (extensions, makeup tests and exams, additional assignments etc.) may be given to students on compassionate grounds. The situations for which compassionate accommodation can be given must be serious, including significant events such as death in the immediate family, trauma (fire, robbery, harassment, muggings, car accidents, etc.) or emergency situations. Documentation is required.

If a member of your immediate family is seriously ill, obtain a medical certificate from the family member's physician and submit the documentation to your Academic Counsellor. If you have been involved in a severe accident, fire or some other exceptional crisis, obtain a copy of the police report or be prepared to provide the necessary documentation upon request. Generally, for deaths within a student's immediate family (parents, guardians, caregivers, siblings, spouses), bereavement leave is granted, upon provision of documentation. For deaths within a student's extended family, academic accommodation is given for one to three days, upon provision of documentation. Students seeking additional bereavement leave should contact their Academic Counsellors with valid documentation.

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the [Western Academic Calendar](#).

FIMS Undergraduate Grading Policy

The MIT, MPI and MTP programs now have the following class average policy:

- Normally, first year courses required for entry into an MIT or MPI module (MIT 1020E and MIT 1025F/G) are expected to have a course average between 68-72%.
- Normally, second year required courses (MIT 2000, 2100, 2200, 2500) are expected to have a course average between 70 and 75%.
- Normally, third year required courses (MIT 3000, 3100) are expected to have a course average between 72 and 77%.

Elective courses and 4th year seminars have no recommended course averages.

Support Services

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. <http://www.uwo.ca/uwoom/mentalhealth/>

SUPPORT SERVICES – LINKS

Office of the Registrar:

www.registrar.uwo.ca

Student Development Centre:

www.sdc.uwo.ca

Psychological Services:

www.sdc.uwo.ca/psych

Services for Students with

Disabilities:

www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd

Accessibility Information:

www.accessibility.uwo.ca/

Writing Support Centre:

www.sdc.uwo.ca/writing

Learning Skills Services:

www.sdc.uwo.ca/learning

Indigenous Services:

<http://indigenous.uwo.ca/>

International and Exchange Student

Centre: www.sdc.uwo.ca/int

Career Centre at Western:

www.success.uwo.ca/careers/

Appendix A: Suggested Grade Ranges in MIT, MPI and MTP

Guidelines to the MIT Grade Range

These guidelines are benchmarks, and are not to be followed as rigid regulations. They will be adjusted as appropriate to take into account the level of the course and any specific instructions given by a professor. As well, competency in English language usage (including spelling and grammar) may be taken into account in the assignment of grades by individual instructors. Note that the 70-79 grade range is broken into two divisions, as this is the grade range into which a large number of students fall.

90-100 (Outstanding, A+)

The report shows sparkling originality and exhibits a high degree of critical analysis of the topic. Sophisticated synthesis and analysis of the theoretical and conceptual dimensions of the topic are demonstrated. Mastery of complex material and ideas is immediately evident. The topic is treated with sensitivity and subtlety of thought. The quality of the writing and background research is exemplary.

80-89 (Excellent, A)

The report shows originality and exhibits a high degree of critical analysis of the topic; it gets to the heart of the matter with comments and/or questions. It is clearly focused and logically organized. The quality of writing makes the report immediately understandable. Mastery of complex material and ideas is demonstrated. The report is of appropriate length, while preserving the priorities and emphasis of the material, so that the result is meaningful, not simplistic.

75-79 (Very Good, B+)

The report shows above average analysis, critical thinking and independent thought. Claims are supported by ample evidence and the components of the topic are well-researched and presented. The topic is addressed in reasonable depth and/or breadth and covers material appropriate to the course. The analysis is organized around focal points and the argument is easily followed. The report demonstrates an above average ability to write in an intelligible style and to condense material meaningfully and with a concern for priorities of that material.

70-74 (Good, B)

The report shows an attempt at analysis and critical thinking. Claims are supported by reasonable evidence. The topic is addressed in some depth and/or breadth, with references to the appropriate literature and course material. The analysis is organized around focal points. The report is generally well written and well argued.

60-69 (Competent, C)

The report demonstrates adequate comprehension of the topic. The report is on topic and is a reasonable summary of material covered in the course, but goes no further. Facts are stated accurately; the quality of writing is sufficiently intelligible with enough elaboration and enough connections made between ideas to permit a reader to understand the point of the report.

50-59 (Marginal, D)

The report shows less than adequate comprehension of the topic and of the material covered by the course. The report is a less than adequate summary of sources and/or is considerably off-topic. Facts are stated inaccurately or ambiguously; the writing style is difficult to follow; there is insufficient elaboration to permit reader's comprehension of relations among ideas; little judgment is shown in selecting detail for inclusion in the report.

Below 50 (Unacceptable, F)

The report demonstrates a failure to comprehend the topic. The material is disorganized and unintelligible. The report clearly does not meet the minimal requirements of the assignment.

Appendix B: Guidelines of Academic Appeals for FIMS Students

(<http://www.fims.uwo.ca/current/counselling/undergrad-counselling/appeals.htm>)

Grounds for Appeal:

The Faculty of Information and Media Studies does not view the appeals process as an opportunity for students to solicit a second opinion on a grade assigned to a particular piece of work. Appeals must pertain to the final grade in a course, and will only be entertained if sufficient grounds for appeal can be met, including: medical or compassionate circumstances, a defect in the evaluation process, bias, inaccuracy or unfairness.

Stages in the Appeals Process:

The first stage of the process is a discussion of the disputed grade with the appropriate Teaching Assistant (if applicable), and subsequently, the course Instructor. For grades assigned to individual assignments, essays, lab reports, projects and tests completed throughout the term, the student first must appeal to the Teaching Assistant or Instructor of the course, within three weeks of the date on which the Instructor or Teaching Assistant returned the assignments to the class. The Appeals Committee will not hear any further appeals about the final grade in any course unless this first step has been taken.

If completion of the first stage has not resolved the matter, the student may appeal the final grade in the course to the FIMS Appeals Committee. Appeals of final grades must be **within the time frame indicated in the Undergraduate Calendar.** It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the appeal is submitted within the deadline. The student shall submit a formal letter to the FIMS Appeals Committee outlining the grounds for the appeal, the remedy sought and relevant materials including the information about when and with whom (Teaching Assistant and/or Instructor) the student met, as described in Stage 1. If the appeal involves a request for work to be regraded, the original marked work and a clean copy (if possible) must be included. If the appeal is commenced once the deadline has passed, it will not be considered either by the Appeals Committee or by the Associate Dean.

The FIMS Appeals Committee has the discretion to determine whether the grounds for appeal have been met.

If the Committee deems that the reasons for the appeal are not legitimate, the Associate Dean will be informed. The appeal will be terminated and the student will be informed.

If the Committee decides that the grounds for appeal have been met, the following steps will be taken:

1. the course Instructor will be shown the appeal letter and offered an opportunity to make a written response;
2. if work is to be regraded, a reader will be appointed who is competent in the area in question and was not involved in the assignment of the original mark. The reader will consider the work in question and will arrive at an independent evaluation. If there is a large discrepancy between the original mark and the regraded mark, a second reader may be appointed by the Committee. **If the appointed reader(s) arrive at a grade within five marks of the original, the original grade will stand.**

The FIMS Appeals Committee will review the evidence and will make a recommendation on the case to the Associate Dean Undergraduate.

The Associate Dean Undergraduate will consider the recommendation from the Appeals Committee, and will make a decision. The student and the instructor will be notified promptly and in writing by the Associate Dean of the decision and of the change in grade, if any. Within the Faculty of Information and Media Studies, the Associate Dean's decision on the matter is final.

Further appeals are possible under certain circumstances to the Senate Review Board Academic (for Undergraduate students) or to the Faculty of Graduate Studies (for Graduate students) but the student should carefully consult the guidelines regarding such Appeals.