

### Overview

An unprecedented culture of celebrity arose in the twentieth century, and it shows no signs of dissipating. Fame and notoriety seem ever more important in the realms of entertainment and everyday life, and yet we often lack the critical tools needed to understand the full significance of stars and stardom. Why do we celebrate stars? What can the analysis of celebrities tell us about ideas of self and individual identity in the new millennium? The growth of celebrity culture was driven by the expansion of mass media and consumer culture in the 20th century; the course will thus investigate those institutional and industrial processes which have been crucial in establishing stars who appear to articulate our most intimate thoughts and desires. In particular, the course will focus on the emergence and development of the Hollywood star system and on the role of celebrity within popular music cultures. The course will introduce a range of critical and theoretical approaches within celebrity studies and will present case studies of selected stars. There are complex issues underlying our apparent fascination with fame, and the study of celebrity as a cultural phenomenon can reveal a great deal about both society and self.

### Course Objectives

- 1) To survey key historical developments and cultural texts (e.g., particular stars, writings and films) relating to the culture of celebrity in the twentieth century.
- 2) To understand the industrial and institutional processes that create, maintain and disseminate stars and celebrities.
- 3) To familiarize students with some of the critical literature on celebrity and develop tools for investigating the social and cultural significance of stars and stardom.
- 4) To develop critical and analytical abilities and improve writing and argumentation skills.

### Evaluation

- 1) **A Face in the Crowd response paper:** 25% of final grade **due Feb. 11@10:30am**  
**in OWL Dropbox**

For this assignment, you first need to read Horton & Wohl's (1956) article on para-social interaction and then stream A Face in the Crowd (1957). In your paper you will address two things: 1) your own, first-person, response to the film—any aspect or aspects that made an impression on you, that struck you as interesting/inspiring/irritating, explaining your position with evidence/examples from the film—your job here is to contemplate what the film made you think and feel, and write about it; and 2) discuss how Horton & Wohl's concept of para-social interaction might have played a role in the rise of Lonesome Rhodes, illustrating your explanation with at least one example from the film (#2 should occupy roughly one double-spaced page). **Submit your paper as a Word file (.docx), NOT a .pdf with this filename: "3211 Face [insert your last name here]"**

**Length: ~4 pages double-spaced; no notes or bibliography required.**

Streaming URL:

<https://www.lib.uwo.ca/cgi-bin/ezpauthn.cgi?url=https://stream.mcintyre.ca/westernu2020/title/21714>

**2) Studio System & Star documentaries response paper: 25% of final grade **due March 11@10:30am**  
**in OWL Dropbox****

Watch the two American Cinema episodes about the Hollywood studio system and the star. Describe the parts that you found most unusual or interesting to you, explaining what made them stand out for you. Spend equal time in your paper on the studio and the star, and then think about how the system and the star relate—how each needs the other, yet how their relative power shifts over time—discuss.

**Submit your paper as a Word file (.docx), NOT a .pdf, with filename: "3211 Studio [your last name]"**

**Length: ~4 pages double-spaced; no notes or bibliography required.**

Studio System:

[uwo.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01OCUL\\_UWO/1hdoga6/alma991044592068705163](https://www.lib.uwo.ca/cgi-bin/ezpauthn.cgi?url=https://stream.mcintyre.ca/westernu2020/title/21714)

Star: <https://ocul->

[uwo.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01OCUL\\_UWO/1hdoga6/alma991044592068605163](https://www.lib.uwo.ca/cgi-bin/ezpauthn.cgi?url=https://stream.mcintyre.ca/westernu2020/title/21714)

**3) Take-Home Final Exam: 35% of final grade **due during Exam Period; date TBA****

The take-home Final Exam will cover the entirety of material presented, read, and screened during the course. It will consist of short-answer questions related to specific course concepts, readings and topics, and an essay question that asks you to integrate material from multiple lectures in discussing an aspect of the culture of celebrity (for the essay question, you will be given a choice of topics to choose from; your essay should be approximately 3 double-spaced pages). More detail about expectations and exam format will be provided in-class. We will also review key course content in our final lecture in preparation for the exam.

**4) Attendance/Participation: 15% of final grade.**

I will take attendance at the start of each class, and will make note of individual student's contributions to in-class discussions.

## **Outline of Lectures, Streamed Content, and Required Readings**

### **Jan. 14 Introduction**

#### **Jan. 21 Celebrity/Democracy**

Required Reading:

Joshua Gamson (1994) "Introduction" and Chapter 1, "The Great and the Gifted" Claims to Fame (Berkeley: University of California Press)

**(all readings are found in the OWL Resources "Readings Listed Alphabetically" folder)**

#### **Jan. 28 Mass Media/Mass Appeal**

Required Reading:

Daniel Boorstin (1961) "From Hero to Celebrity" from The Image (OWL)

**Feb. 4** No Lecture: **Required Streamed Film: A Face in the Crowd** (1957)  
<https://www.lib.uwo.ca/cgi-bin/ezpauthn.cgi?url=https://stream.mcintyre.ca/westernu2020/title/21502>

**Feb. 11** **Demagogue in Denim** **"Face" responses due @ 10:30am via OWL**

Required Reading:

Donald Horton & Richard Wohl (1956) "Mass Communication and Para-Social Interaction" Psychiatry 19.3.

Available as a .pdf in OWL or online at:

[http://www.participations.org/volume%203/issue%201/3\\_01\\_hortonwohl.htm](http://www.participations.org/volume%203/issue%201/3_01_hortonwohl.htm)

**Feb. 18** **Authenticity**

Required Readings:

Richard Dyer (1991) "A Star Is Born and the Construction of Authenticity" from Stardom ed. C. Gledhill.

Simon Frith (1988) "The Real Thing: Bruce Springsteen" in Music For Pleasure

Suggested Reading: Gamson (1994) Chap. 7 "Can't Beat the Real Thing".

**March 4** No lecture: **Required Streamed documentaries: The Studio System and The Star**

Studio: [uwo.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01OCUL\\_UWO/1hdoga6/alma991044592068705163](http://uwo.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01OCUL_UWO/1hdoga6/alma991044592068705163)

Star: [https://ocul-uwo.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01OCUL\\_UWO/1hdoga6/alma991044592068605163](https://ocul-uwo.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01OCUL_UWO/1hdoga6/alma991044592068605163)

**March 11** **The Star System in Classical Hollywood** **Studio/Star responses due @10:30am via OWL**

Required Reading:

Richard DeCordova (1991) "The Emergence of the Star System In America" from Stardom.

**March 18** **Conceptualizing Stardom**

Required Reading:

John Ellis (1982) "Stars As A Cinematic Phenomenon" from Visible Fictions.

**March 25** **Star Image, part 1**

Required Reading:

Richard Dyer (1979) "Stars as Stars," "Stars as Types," "Stars as Images" from Stars (London: BFI);

Ligaya Mishan "The March of the Karens" New York Times August 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021

**April 1** **Star Image, part 2**

Required Reading:

Brooks Barnes "A Star Who Isn't Afraid to Take Risks" New York Times November 2, 2011

Suggested Reading:

Gamson (1994) Chap. 4, "The Negotiated Celebration"

**April 8** **Conclusion and Review**

**Take-Home Exam distribution and due dates TBA**

*Western University is situated on the traditional territories of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Lunaapeewak and Attawandaron peoples who have longstanding relationships to the land and region of southwestern Ontario and the City of London. The local First*

*Nation communities of this area include Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Oneida Nation of the Thames, and Munsee Delaware Nation. In the region there are eleven First Nation communities and a growing Indigenous urban population. Western values the significant historical and contemporary contributions of local and regional First Nations and all of the Original peoples of Turtle Island (North America).*

## **Notes from the 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](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\\_undegrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undegrad.pdf)

### **Plagiarism**

Students must write their essays and assignments, including take-home exams, 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 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 Accessible Education (formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#)

### **Academic Consideration for Student Absence**

Students will have two (2) opportunities during the regular academic year to use an on-line portal to self-report an absence during the term, provided the following conditions are met: the absence is no more than 48 hours in duration, and the assessment for which consideration is being sought is worth 30% or less of the student's final grade. Students are expected to contact their instructors within 24 hours of the end of the period of the self-reported absence, unless noted on the syllabus. Students are not able to use the self-reporting option in the following circumstances:

- during exam periods,
- absence of a duration greater than 48 hours,
- assessments worth more than 30% of the student's final grade,
- if a student has already used the self-reporting portal twice during the academic year

If the conditions for a Self-Reported Absence are NOT met, students will need to provide a Student Medical Certificate or equivalent documentation, if the absence is medical, or provide appropriate documentation if there are compassionate grounds for the absence in question. Students are encouraged to contact the FIMS Undergraduate Student Services Office to obtain more information about the relevant documentation.

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 required for absences that are not covered by the Self-Reported Absence Policy must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's home Faculty.**

For Western University policy on Consideration for Student Absence, see [Policy on Academic Consideration For Student Absences - Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs](#) and for the Student Medical Certificate (SMC), see: [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf)

**In the event of a Covid-19 resurgence, it is possible that different procedures may need to be put in place on short notice.**

### **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](#).

## Grading at FIMS

- 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 4<sup>th</sup> 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/uwo.com/mentalhealth/>

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.