

English 1117 WA: Introduction to Popular Culture

Course Location: ATAC 2021

Class Times: Monday/Wednesday 11:30-1:00

To our Student: Should you require information or documents from our office in another format, please let us know. We are happy to help you. Contact your instructor or our Department of English Administrative Assistant.

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Instructor Information

- Instructor: Rebecca Menhart
- Office: BB 0029E
- Email: ramenhar@lakeheadu.ca
- Office Hours: Thursdays 9:00-11:00 a.m.

Teaching Assistant Information

- Teaching Assistant: Austin Campbell
- Office: RB 3032
- Telephone: 807-343-8855
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- Office Hours: TBA

Course Description/Overview

An introduction to the critical study of popular culture, considering definitions of “the popular” and how popular movements, genres, and subcultures emerge and develop. Popular culture theories and their applications will be covered, and a variety of cultural texts will be analyzed.

Course Objectives

- Develop analytical skills to understand and interpret everyday cultural texts and practices.
- Think independently and critically about popular culture and the issues raised by cultural texts and practices.
- Identify and use key critical/theoretical concepts for the study of popular culture, such as production, consumption, representation, and identity.
- Critically read texts in a variety of media forms and assess their rhetorical, ideological, and aesthetic strategies.
- Explain how a text is produced by, and produces, its historical and/or cultural contexts.
- Identify and assess the social, environmental and ethical themes presented in texts.
- Explain how form, genre, media, and context produce meaning.
- Develop the ability to write about culture with precision, clarity and competence.
- Use library resources to research a topic and use what is discovered to illuminate a text.
- Develop professional skills in oral discussion, attentive listening, critical reflection, and persuasive argument.

Course Resources

Required Course Texts

- Silverman, Jonathon and Dean Rader. *The World is a Text: Writing about Visual and Popular Culture*. Broadview, 2018.
- Graff, Gerald and Cathy Birkenstein. *They Say, I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*. 4E. Norton, 2018.

Course Website

[Desire2Learn¹](https://mycourselink.lakeheadu.ca/d2l/home)

Course Schedule *subject to revision*

TWIAT= *The World is a Text*

TSIS= *They Say/I Say*

	Topic	Readings
Week 1	Jan. 6: Introduction	
	Jan. 8: Semiotics Media and Advertisements	<i>TWIAT</i> Chapter 1 <i>TWIAT</i> Chapter 21
Week 2	Jan. 13: Writing about Pop Culture Media Text Analysis	<i>TSIS</i> Chapter 1 <i>TWIAT</i> Chapter 6 <i>TWIAT</i> Chapter 17
	Jan. 15: Media Text Analysis Workshop	
Week 3	Jan. 20: Project Proposals How to Formulate an Argument	<i>TWIAT</i> Chapter 7 <i>TSIS</i> Chapter 2
	Jan. 22: Proposal Workshop Session Media Text Analysis Due	<i>TSIS</i> Chapter 10
Week 4	Jan. 27: The Production of Pop Culture: Mass Culture vs Pop Culture	<i>TWIAT</i> Chapter 8
	Jan. 29: Researching Pop Culture	<i>TSIS</i> Chapter 4 <i>TSIS</i> Chapter 5
Week 5	Feb. 3: The World as a Text	<i>TWIAT</i> Chapter 3
	Feb. 5: The Production of Pop Culture: Mainstream vs Subculture Project Proposal Due	<i>TSIS</i> Chapter 3
Week 6	Feb. 10: Writing about Movies and Television	<i>TWIAT</i> Chapter 18
	Feb. 12: Discussion #1	<i>TWIAT</i> Chapter 19

¹ <https://mycourselink.lakeheadu.ca/d2l/home>

	Topic	Readings
		<i>TSIS</i> Chapter 12
	Winter Break: No Classes (Feb. 17-21)	
Week 7	Feb. 24: Memes, Social Media, and Technology Feb. 26: More on Memes	<i>TWIAT</i> Chapter 23 <i>TSIS</i> Chapter 9
Week 8	Mar. 2: Writing about Race and Ethnicity Mar. 4: Discussion #2 Final Date to Withdraw from Classes (Mar. 6)	<i>TWIAT</i> Chapter 12 <i>TSIS</i> Chapter 6
Week 9	Mar. 9: Writing about the Environment Mar. 11: Editing and Revision Major Project Workshop	<i>TWIAT</i> Chapter 14 <i>TSIS</i> Chapter 7
Week 10	Mar. 16: Writing about Music Mar. 18: NO CLASS	<i>TWIAT</i> Chapter 22
Week 11	Mar. 23: Writing about Gender Mar. 25: Community Major Project Due	<i>TWIAT</i> Chapter 15
Week 12	Mar. 30: Discussion #3 Apr. 1: Exam Review	

Assignments and Evaluation

Table of Assignments

Assignment	Due Date	Value	Length
Attendance & Participation	Throughout term	10	-
Media Text Analysis	January 22	15	2-3 pages
Discussions	Feb. 12, Mar. 4, Mar. 30	15	1 page/80 min.
Project Proposal	February 5	10	3 hours
Major Project	March 25	25	varies
Final Exam	TBA	25	3 hours

Assignment Policies

- Major assignments are due by 11:59 p.m. on the dates indicated. All major assignments must be submitted electronically via the appropriate submission folder on D2L. I will NOT accept assignments slipped under my office door or via email.
- If you require an extension, you must ask me for one BEFORE the due date. Extensions are only granted in extenuating circumstances.

- Unless you ask for (and receive) an extension, late assignments will be penalized 10% the first day and by 2% every day thereafter (to a maximum of 20%) and will not be accepted after 4:30 pm on the last day of class (April 1st).
- All major assignments must be typed in MLA format, Times New Roman font, double spaced, with 1" margins, and in 12-point font.
- Exceptions to these policies are allowed only with a doctor's note or other appropriate documentation and remain at my discretion.

Details of Assignments

Attendance and Participation

10 marks

Regular attendance is crucial to student success as class discussion is the primary means of engaging with course material. However, active participation includes more than attendance; students are required to become active participants in their education. Offering opinions on readings, asking and answering questions, and responding to one another helps to foster a community and improve the learning experience for all class members.

Media Text Analysis

15 marks

Each student is to select a music video, commercial/advertisement, YouTube video, or visual meme to analyze. You are to consider how and why the visual media was produced and how it is received by its readers. More information on the particulars of this assignment will be given in the January 13th lecture. In the following class, you are expected to have chosen your media example, and you will be working on your interpretations and consulting with me during the class period.

Your final submission will be 2-3 pages in length, formatted according to MLA guidelines (12-point Times New Roman font, 1-inch margins), and include either a picture or a link to your chosen media.

Discussions

15 marks

There will be three group discussions throughout the course (Feb. 12, Mar. 4, and Mar. 30), focusing on the week's topics. Questions will be posted on D2L at least one week prior to the discussion. Before class, each student is to prepare at least one page of notes to help guide discussion (point form is fine). These notes will be submitted at the end of each discussion. These notes are to be prepared individually; however, you may add to your notes during the course of the discussion.

Project Proposal

10 marks

This assignment marks the beginning of your culminating Major Project assignment. You will write 2-3 paragraph description of your major project and a working bibliography of potential primary and secondary sources, for which you will provide both

an MLA citation and a one paragraph annotation. More details will be given during the lecture on the subject on January 20th. The following class, January 22nd, will be a workshop session during which you will begin putting together your ideas and start researching.

Major Project

25 marks

Applying the concepts discussed in the course, you will create a major project that allows you to delve deeply into one of the issues of popular culture. This project can take a variety of forms, and the choice of form will entail different expectations in terms of the final project. During the class on January 20th (the project proposal lecture), I will offer some examples of these different forms. More information will also be posted on D2L at that time.

Exam

25 marks

The three-hour final exam will take place in the regular exam period on a date set by the university's scheduling office. All students are expected to write the exam on that date. All material in course readings and lectures may be examined.

Marking Standards

All assignments will be marked in accordance with the [English Department Marking Standards](#)².

Collaboration/Plagiarism Rules

Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of someone else's words and/or ideas. Not acknowledging your debt to the ideas of a secondary source, failing to use quotation marks when you are quoting directly, buying essays from essay banks, copying another student's work, or working together on an individual assignment, all constitute plagiarism. Resubmitting material you've submitted to another course is also academic dishonesty.

All plagiarized work (in whole or in part) and other forms of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean, who is responsible for judging academic misconduct and imposing penalties. The minimum penalty for academic misconduct is a 0 on the assignment in question. It might also be subject to more severe academic penalties. See the [Code of Student Behaviour](#)³.

² <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/academics/departments/english/marketing-standards>

³ <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/current-students/student-conduct/academic-integrity/node/51239>

Course Policies

- Regular attendance is important. Chronic absenteeism will be reflected in the student's final mark since a large portion of the course revolves around in-class instruction and discussion.
- You must be in attendance to participate in the Discussions; there will be no make-ups offered for these assignments, and answers must be submitted at the end of class.
- Extensions will be granted only for special circumstances and must be approved well in advance of the due date. All extensions will be given solely at my discretion. No assignments will be accepted after 4:30 pm on the final day of class (April 1st).
- If you are using phones, computers, or other media in what I deem to be an inappropriate or disruptive manner, you will be asked to leave the class.

University Policies

- Students in this course are expected to conform to the Code of Student Behaviour - Academic Integrity⁴.
- **Accommodations:** Lakehead University is committed to achieving full accessibility for persons with disabilities in accordance with the terms of the Ontario Human Rights Code⁵. This occurs through a collaborative process that acknowledges a collective obligation to develop an accessible learning environment that both meets the needs of students and preserves the essential academic requirements of the course.
Part of this commitment includes arranging academic accommodations for students with disabilities to ensure they have an equitable opportunity to participate in all of their academic activities. If you think you may need accommodations, you are strongly encouraged to contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS)⁶ and register as early as possible.
- This course outline is available online through the English Department homepage⁷ and/or the Desire2Learn or My Courselink¹ site for the course.

⁴ <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/faculty-and-staff/policies/student-related/code-of-student-behaviour-and-disciplinary-procedures>

⁵ <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/ontario-human-rights-code>

⁶ <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/faculty-and-staff/departments/services/sas>

⁷ <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/academics/departments/english>