

UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
BRESCIA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
English 2017 Section 530: Reading Popular Culture
Summer Evening, 2014

Instructor: Dr. Dominick M. Grace
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Class time: M, W 6:00-9:00
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Course Description

This course addresses the many forms of popular culture, including television, music, popular fiction and film, urban myths, and celebrities. The aim of this course is to develop a critical understanding of all aspects of popular culture.

Texts

Collins. *The Hunger Games*. Scholastic.
Gedalof et. al. *Cultural Subjects: A Popular Culture Reader*. Nelson
Gibson. *Virtual Light*. Random.
King. *Misery*. NAL
Montgomery. *Anne of Green Gables*. Bantam
O'Brien and Szeman. *Popular Culture: A User's Guide*. 3rd. ed. Nelson.
Seth. *It's a Good Life, If You Don't Weaken*. Drawn & Quarterly.

In addition to the assigned texts (available from the UWO Bookstore), we will be studying several films, and possibly some television shows, which will be watched in class. In addition, there will be a class-selected "blockbuster" film, released some time during the run of the course, that ALL students will be expected to go to see and to discuss in class. Full details of materials to be studied (except for this film) will be available on the full syllabus at the beginning of the course.

Methods of Evaluation

Quizzes:	10%
Class Participation:	10%
Critical Review (750 words)	10%
Test:	20%
Major Essay (1500 words):	15%
Final Exam:	35%

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, successful students will

- have an understanding of some of the key theories that inform cultural studies (e.g. the Frankfurt School, feminism)
- have developed an active, critical relationship with popular culture, rather than a passive, consumerist one
- have developed an understanding of how popular culture artefacts interact with culture at large, both reflecting and influencing the world in which we live
- have developed an understanding of the historical contexts from which pop culture artefacts have emerged
- have developed their critical and analytical skills as applied to pop culture, via class discussion and written work
- be able to construct informed and persuasive readings of pop culture artefacts

STUDENTS MUST PASS BOTH THE TERM WORK AND THE FINAL EXAM IN ORDER TO PASS THE COURSE. STUDENTS WHO FAIL THE EXAM (REGARDLES SOF THEIR TERM MARK) AUTOMATICALLY FAIL THE COURSE.

The class-by-class schedule of assigned readings, including the dates for the in-class test and the submission for the major essay, will be available no later than the first class.

CLASS POLICIES: ENGLISH 2017

Literary Studies

Literature is by its nature exploratory. It pushes against conventions, assumptions, limits, and even good taste. Literary texts may be culturally, morally, politically, racially, socially, religiously, ideologically, and/or linguistically or otherwise offensive to some. This may be especially true in a popular culture context. In taking this course, you agree to expose yourself to material that you may find offensive and agree to read all required work and do all required assignments, even if the materials involved are offensive to you. It is understood that literary analysis and evaluation can include consideration of what is offensive and why, within the context of reasoned discussion and civil debate.

General Requirements

You will be expected to engage in activities and pursuits outside the confines of the university (e.g. going to see a current first-run movie in the theatre), as part of the requirements for this course. Failure to follow such direction will be taken into account and may have a detrimental impact on your grade. It is understood that such requirements will be directly relevant to the materials being studied or to your progress as a student and that such directions will not be unduly onerous or burdensome.

Attendance

The academic calendar states that frequent absence from class can lead to students being “debarred from taking the regular examination in the course.” In other words, you may fail a course for missing classes. I take attendance and absenteeism into account when calculating final grades. Attendance is expected. Part of your grade is based on participation, so missing class will have a direct impact on your final grade.

Participation

Attendance alone is not enough to earn a passing grade for class participation. Students must engage actively in class. However, one can do so in several ways. Asking questions or bringing to the class's attention interesting/relevant information, as well as answering questions and/or engaging actively in discussion will be considered participation at some level. ALL participation should be respectful. Diversity of opinion is valuable, and diverse opinions, whether positive, negative or neutral, should be expressed. However, such opinions should be expressed constructively.

Academic Accommodation

See the attached document on Brescia policies for the rules governing academic accommodation for illness. Situations not covered by that policy (e.g. assignments worth less than 10%, or late or non-submission without academic accommodation) are covered as appropriate below.

Essay

The essay due date is included on the course schedule. Assignment topics will be provided well in advance of the due date. Consequently, you are expected to be aware of the deadline and to observe it; few excuses for lateness are acceptable under these circumstances. The pressure of other work is not an acceptable excuse for lateness, as the point of giving you your deadline in advance is to allow you to plan your schedule accordingly. **Late assignments will be accepted but will be penalized 2% per day, including weekends,** unless academic accommodation has been granted. Apologizing for lateness or asking if you can submit the essay a day or two late will in no way affect this policy. **Essays MUST be written to conform to the MLA guidelines for research papers. Failure to conform to the MLA guidelines will be penalized.** Essays must have their pages held together by a paper clip or staple; loose sheets will not be accepted. Do not submit essays in duotangs, binders, plastic folders, or any other kind of folder. All essays submitted on time will be returned promptly (usually within two weeks of submission) and will include written annotations and a commentary following the essay. Late essays will be returned eventually and may include little or no written commentary. Where research requirements are specified, failure to observe them will be penalized; it is incumbent on you to begin work sufficiently in advance of the due date to meet the assignment requirements.

Submission of Work

Submit work to me IN PERSON or through the main office for placement in my mailbox, which guarantees that the date of submission will be recorded. Essays placed under my office door are, in the first instance, likely to get lost and therefore subject to a grade of zero, as unsubmitted; furthermore, essays I find on my floor are considered received when I find them, NOT when they are dated by the student. For example, an essay due on Thursday and placed under my door on Friday might not be found until Monday. That essay is considered to have been submitted the day I found it: four days late, not one day late. It is your responsibility to get your essay in on time. When you submit written work, you should keep a copy, so that you have it should something happen to your original.

Quizzes

Quizzes will be scheduled randomly but will probably fall every second or third class. These will consist either of short factual questions or multiple choice questions on the works studied in the classes prior to the quiz and since the preceding quiz. You may miss one quiz without penalty, as I will discard your lowest quiz grade, basing the final quiz grade on a total one less than the actual number set. **There will be no make-ups for missed quizzes; if you miss the class, you miss the quiz. If you miss more than one quiz, those subsequent zeroes will NOT be discarded.**

Review Assignment

You must submit a short (approximately 750-word—2-3 pages, typed, single-spaced) critical review of one of the texts studied on the course, prior to our in-class discussion. You

will be expected to engage actively and critically with that text, not merely to summarize its plot or to provide a subjective evaluation (e.g. "I really liked the way *Virtual Light* uses *Videodrome*" would not be an appropriate conclusion; instead, you would evaluate how/why the use of *Videodrome* is a significant element in the novel). You may apply a theoretical model (either one covered in class or one already familiar to you) if you wish. Due dates for these reviews will be contingent on when the works in question are to be studied, but there will be limited freedom to select which you review. I will post a list of eligible works along with sign-up slots, roughly dividing the number of slots per work by the number of students who end up enrolled in the class. This will be available no later than the second class.

Examinations

The midterm test will be written in class. Final examinations are held during the examination period and are scheduled through the Registrar's office. You are expected to acquaint yourself with the examination schedule when it is posted and to attend the examination. If you miss an examination without academic accommodation, you will receive a grade of 0 on it. Consider the examination period as part of your academic year; do not make plans to be unavailable until you know your examination schedule. Remember: you must pass both the examination and term work to pass the course.

Academic Standards

As a university student, you are expected to meet certain requirements in your work. First, you are expected to use the English language clearly and correctly (see page 16 of the calendar for University policies on English language proficiency). Grammatical errors or infelicities in your writing will have an impact on your grade, though since this is not designated a *san Essay* course, I will be less rigorous than normal on this front. You are expected to use formal language, not colloquial language. Second, as an English student you are expected to follow MLA guidelines for essay writing; matters of format will be referred to as the "mechanics" of writing in class and in comments on essays. Third, you are expected to have a thesis and to build an argument that will provide reasonable evidence and analysis sufficient to convince the sceptical reader of the validity of your position. You are not expected to summarize the plot of the work you are discussing, to repeat what we have done in class, or to toe a particular line. Overall, there are three broad areas in which you must show competence: grammar, mechanics, and analysis. A guide to how work is evaluated follows.

A: "A" work is exceptional. To earn an "A" you must handle the mechanics of essay writing perfectly or nearly so; work must conform to MLA requirements and must be grammatically correct (or nearly so), clear, formal, and elegant. "A" work has a well-defined thesis, is carefully and clearly structured, makes excellent use of evidence from primary and secondary sources, and provides an argument that goes significantly beyond the information provided in class: you cannot earn an "A" by telling me what I have told you.

- B: "B" work is above average/average. To earn a "B" you must write well, making few grammatical errors; you may slip occasionally, but infrequently. Major errors, such as sentence fragments, dangling participles, misplaced modifiers, etc., are not acceptable and will pull your grade down to, at best, low "B" range. "B" work will be fairly well-organized and argued but will probably miss some important aspect of its case. Overall, it will make good use of evidence from the primary text, and perhaps from secondary materials, but will not fully capitalize on the best material available to prove its case. It will be less adventurous than "A" work, closer in theme and content to the "safe" material (e.g. perspectives explored in class or readily available in the bulk of the critical material).
- C: "C" work is average/below average. "C" work will probably suffer from numerous writing problems, both grammatical and mechanical, which will probably affect clarity. The structure of the argument will probably be unclear, due to an insufficient introduction, an illogical linking of arguments, or a loose linking of points. When your argument consists of a sequence of points treated more as a list than as a coherent structure, you are likely working in the "C" range. "C" work tends not to use evidence well, either because it integrates evidence poorly into the essay, because it misinterprets the evidence in some way, or because it does not use any direct evidence at all. The thesis in "C" work will probably be overly general, vague, or simplistic; the argument will be similar.
- D: "D" work is below average/poor. "D" work will be weak grammatically and mechanically. Numerous major and minor grammatical errors will occur. Clarity will be a problem in the essay. Evidence, if used at all, will be poorly integrated and poorly evaluated, though it may be of some relevance to the topic. The argument will be poorly structured and/or unclear; links between ideas will not be evident, and the ideas themselves may not seem related to the central topic. Important arguments will be missed, as will important evidence; the interpretation may be based in a misreading of the text under discussion.
- F: "F" work is very poor. "F" work will suffer from severe writing limitations. What is meant will often be difficult or impossible to determine. The mechanics will be nonexistent, or so poorly handled as to be incoherent. The thesis will be vague to the point of banality, or simply wrong. Evidence will not appear or will be misused significantly; "F" work will show a fundamental lack of understanding of the topic and/or work under discussion. The argument will probably be poorly structured; elements of it will seem to be irrelevant to the topic. Significant evidence will be missed, or misused if it appears. Significant errors will probably occur with evidence use, including the misquotation or even misrepresentation of your text. Clear conclusions will be lacking, or will be so self-evident as to be meaningless (e.g. "Therefore, if Seth hadn't found the Kalo cartoon, everything would have been different").

BRESCIA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE ACADEMIC POLICIES AND REGULATIONS

1. POLICY REGARDING MAKEUP EXAMS AND EXTENSIONS OF DEADLINES

When a student requests academic accommodation (e.g., extension of a deadline, a makeup exam) for work representing 10% or more of the student's overall grade in the course, it is the responsibility of the student to provide acceptable documentation to support a medical or compassionate claim. All such requests for academic accommodation **must** be made through an Academic Advisor and include supporting documentation. Academic accommodation on medical grounds will be granted only if the documentation indicates that the onset, duration and severity of the illness are such that the student could not reasonably be expected to complete her academic responsibilities. Appropriate academic accommodation will be determined by the Dean's Office in consultation with the student's instructor(s). Please note that personal commitments (e.g., vacation flight bookings, work schedule) which conflict with a scheduled test, exam or course requirement are not grounds for academic accommodation.

A UWO Student Medical Certificate (SMC) is **required** if a student is seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds. This documentation should be obtained at the time of the initial consultation with the physician/nurse practitioner or walk-in clinic. A SMC can be downloaded under the Medical Documentation heading of the following website: <https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm> . If it is not possible to have an SMC completed by the attending physician/nurse practitioner, the student must request documentation sufficient to demonstrate that her ability to meet academic responsibilities was seriously affected. Please note that under University Senate regulations documentation stating simply that the student "was seen for a medical reason" or "was ill" is **not** adequate to support a request for academic accommodation. All documentation is to be submitted to an Academic Advisor.

Whenever possible, requests for academic accommodation should be initiated in advance of due dates, examination dates, etc. Students must follow up with their professors and Academic Advisor in a timely manner.

The full statement of University policy regarding extensions of deadlines or makeup exams can be found at <http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2013/pg117.html>

2. ACADEMIC CONCERNS

If you feel that you have a medical or personal problem that is interfering with your work, contact your instructor and Academic Advisor as soon as possible. Problems may then be documented and possible arrangements to assist you can be discussed at the time of occurrence rather than on a retroactive basis. Retroactive requests for academic accommodation on medical or compassionate grounds may not be considered.

If you think that you are too far behind to catch up or that your work load is not manageable, you should consult an Academic Advisor. If you consider reducing your workload by dropping one or more courses, this must be done by the appropriate deadlines (refer to the Registrar's website, www.registrar.uwo.ca, for official dates). You should consult with the course instructor and the Academic Advisor who can help you consider alternatives to dropping one or more courses. *Note that dropping a course may affect OSAP eligibility and/or Entrance Scholarship eligibility.*

The Dean may refuse permission to write the final examination in a course if the student has failed to maintain satisfactory academic standing throughout the year or for too frequent absence from the class or laboratory.

3. ABSENCES

Short Absences: If you miss a class due to a minor illness or other problems, check your course outline for information regarding attendance requirements and make sure you are not

missing a test or assignment. Cover any readings and arrange to borrow notes from a classmate. Contact the course instructor if you have any questions.

Extended Absences: If you have an extended absence, you should contact the course instructor and an Academic Advisor. Your course instructor and Academic Advisor can discuss ways for you to catch up on missed work and arrange academic accommodations, if appropriate.

4. POLICY ON CHEATING & ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

Students are responsible for understanding the nature of and avoiding the occurrence of plagiarism and other academic offences. Students are urged to read the section on Scholastic Offences in the Academic Calendar. Note that such offences include plagiarism, cheating on an examination, submitting false or fraudulent assignments or credentials, impersonating a candidate, or submitting for credit in any course without the knowledge and approval of the instructor to whom it is submitted, any academic work for which credit has previously been obtained or is being sought in another course in the University or elsewhere. Students are advised to consult the section on Academic Misconduct in the Western Academic Calendar.

If you are in doubt about whether what you are doing is inappropriate or not, consult your instructor, the Student Services Centre, or the Registrar. A claim that "you didn't know it was wrong" is not accepted as an excuse.

The penalties for a student guilty of a scholastic offence (including plagiarism) include refusal of a passing grade in the assignment, refusal of a passing grade in the course, suspension from the University, and expulsion from the University.

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 (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software 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. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com.

Computer-marked Tests/exams:

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating. Software currently in use to score computer-marked multiple-choice tests and exams performs a similarity review as part of standard exam analysis.

5. PROCEDURES FOR APPEALING ACADEMIC EVALUATIONS

All appeals of a grade must be directed first to the course instructor. If the student is not satisfied with the decision of the course instructor, a written appeal signed by the student must be sent to the Department Chair. If the response of the department is considered unsatisfactory to the student, she may then submit a signed, written appeal to the Office of the Dean. Only after receiving a final decision from the Dean may a student appeal to the Senate Review Board Academic. A Guide to Appeals is available from the Ombudsperson's Office, or you can consult an Academic Advisor. Students are advised to consult the section on Academic Rights and Responsibilities in the Western Academic Calendar.

6. PREREQUISITES AND ANTIREQUISITES

Unless you have either the prerequisites for a course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you will be removed from the course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Similarly, you will also be deleted from a class list if you have previously taken an antirequisite course unless this has the approval of the Dean. These decisions may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course because you have taken an antirequisite course.

7. SUPPORT SERVICES

The Brescia University College Registrar's website, with a link to Academic Advisors, is at http://www.brescia.uwo.ca/academics/registrar_services/index.html . The Western Registrar's website is at <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/index.cfm> . The website for the Student Development Centre at Western is at <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/> . Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health @ Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Portions of this document were taken from the Academic Calendar, the Handbook of Academic and Scholarship Policy and the Academic Handbook of Senate Regulations. This document is a summary of relevant regulations and does not supersede the academic policies and regulations of the Senate of the University of Western Ontario.