Soc 250
Sociology of Popular Culture

Dr. Rick Baldoz
Office Hours Wed 11:00-12:30
Office: King 324

The course surveys recent sociological studies of cultural production. It analyzes how cultural materials are used to establish and maintain boundaries that differentiate among class and status groups in the contemporary United States and how diverse fields of cultural production such as popular music, film, and sports shape and influence social processes. We will examine the role of race, class and gender in cultural production and recent theories and debates about the relation of culture and society.

Required Readings:

Gans, Herbert: *Popular Culture and High Culture: An Analysis and Evaluation of Taste*
Moore, Ryan: *Sells Like Teen Spirit: Music, Youth Culture & Social Crisis*
Wilkins, Amy: *Wannabes, Goths and Christians: The Boundaries of Sex, Style and Status*
Gamson, Joshua: *Freaks Talk Back: Tabloid Talk Shows and Sexual Non-Conformity*
Wright, Will: *Sixguns and Society: A Structural Study of the Western*
Jenkins, Henry: *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*

Other Readings will be available on Blackboard

Course Requirements:

**Attendance and class participation:** Debate and discussion will be an integral component of the class. All students are required to bring a short one-page response to the weekly assigned readings for Friday’s class session which will be used a the basis for class discussion. Students will be evaluated on your ability to analyze and dissect the issues raised in the course materials. You must turn in a hard copy of your response essay and be present in class to receive full credit. This requirement will make up 25 percent of your final grade.

**Papers:** There are 3 papers due during the semester, each 7 pages. The purpose of the paper is to give you an opportunity to expand on a topic tied to class themes. The format and specifics of each paper will be discussed in class. The papers may require a little outside research, but not much. The papers will draw from course readings and discussion. You are encouraged to see me and/or the writing center for assistance on the papers. *Each paper is worth 25% of your final grade.*

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Week 1) The Study of Popular Culture
Sept 7: Some Basic Concepts

Week 2) What is Popular Culture?
Week 3) Music and the Politics of Sound  

Week 4) From Margin to Mainstream: Genealogies of Rebellion  

Week 5) Music and Authenticity  
Oct 4: Kristen Schilt “A Little Too Ironic: The Appropriation and Packaging of Riot Girl Politics by Mainstream Female Musicians” *Popular Music and Society*, (26) 2003 ps. 5-18  
Robin Kelley, “Looking for the ‘Real’ Nigga: Social Scientists Construct the Ghetto” in M. Neal *That’s the Joint!: The Hip Hop Studies Readers*, ps. 119-136

Week 6) The Development of Taste Cultures  

Week 7) Interpretive Communities  
K. Jackson, “The Vampire Next Door” *Sight and Sound*, Nov 2009 ps. 40-45

Week 8) Style and Status Boundaries  
Nov 1: Amy Wilkins, *Wannabes, Goths and Christians*, chapters 1-5

Week 9) Media Spectacle and Cultural Nonconformity  
Nov 8: Josh Gamson, *Freaks Talk Back*, chapters 1-5  

Week 10) Cinema, Ideology and Mythmaking  
Nov 15: W. Wright, *Sixguns and Society*, whole book

Week 11) Deviant Viewership and Changing Social Norms  
Short Week: Thanksgiving Break

Week 12) Media Convergence  
Nov 29: H. Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*, chapters 1-4  

Week 13) Technofutures  
Dec 6: H. Jenkins, Convergence Culture, chapters 5-6 and conclusion  

Week 14) Dec 13: Wrap up session- Short Week
The instructor reserves the right to amend the syllabus and add supplementary readings at any time.

**Honor Code:** This course will follow the policies described in the Oberlin College Honor Code and Honor System. For details see: [http://www.oberlin.edu/students/student_pages/honor_code.html](http://www.oberlin.edu/students/student_pages/honor_code.html).