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 cultural fields such as popular music, film, and social media shape and are shaped by social processes. We will examine the role of race, class and gender in cultural repertoires and recent theories and debates about the relationship between culture and society.

Required Readings:

Denesi, Marcel: *Popular Culture: Introductory Perspectives*
Moore, Ryan: *Sells Like Teen Spirit: Music, Youth Culture, & Social Crisis*
Lotz, Amanda: *Cable Guys: Television and Masculinities in the 21st Century*
Turkle, Sherry: *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*

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 Wednesday’s class session which will be used as 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 10 percent of your final grade.

Papers and Exam: There are 2 papers due during the semester, each 9-10 pages. The purpose of the paper is to give you an opportunity to expand on the themes raised in the readings. The format and specifics of each paper will be discussed in class. The papers will draw from course readings and discussion. *Each paper is worth 35% of your final grade* There will also be 1 exam that is *worth 20% of your final grade*. Your weekly response essays and participation make up the other 10% of your grade.

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Week 1) The Study of Popular Culture
Sept 1: Key Ideas/Thematic Concerns

Week 2) High Culture vs. Mass Culture
Sept 8: M. Danesi, *Popular Culture: Introductory Perspectives*, chapters 1-2
Week 3) **Boundaries, Categories, and Symbolic Exclusion**  

Week 4) **Music, Commerce, and Identity**  

Week 5) **Authenticity and Cultural Authority**  
D. Grazian, “The Production of Popular Music as a Confidence Game: The Case of the Chicago Blues” *Qualitative Sociology*, 2004, 137-158  

Week 6) **Class and Consumption**  

Week 7) **Race, Gender, and Representation**  

Oct 20: Fall Break

Week 8) **Cinema and Society**  

Week 9) **Television: Programming, Content, and Genre**  
Nov 3: M. Danesi, *Popular Culture* ch.7  
J. Mittell, “Television Genres as Cultural Categories” in *Genre and Television: From Cop Shows to Cartoons in American Culture* (blackboard)

Week 10) **Television and Citizenship**  
Nov 10: *A. Lotz, Cable Guys*, whole book

Week 11) **Social Media Environments**  
Nov 17: J. Burgess and J. Green, “How YouTube Matters” in *YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture*, ps. 1-14
PJ Rey, “Alienation, Exploitation and Social Media” *American Behavioral Scientist*, April 2012, ps. 399-420

**Week 12) Culture and Collectivity**  
Nov 24: S. Turkle, *Alone Together*, chapters 1-7

**Week 13) Isolation and Social Networks**  
Dec 1: S. Turkle, *Alone Together*, chapters 8-14  

**Week 14) Culture in the Age of Digital Reproduction**  
Dec 8: M. Danesi, chs. 8 &10

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).

**Use of Technology in the Classroom:**

Access to the Internet can be a valuable aid to the classroom learning environment. Students may use laptops and other devices in order to explore concepts related to course discussions and topics. **Students are discouraged from using technology in ways that distract from the learning community (e.g. Facebook, texting, Tumblr, Twitter etc.) and if found doing so, will be asked to leave the classroom for the day and will not get credit for attendance that class session.** Students are expected to respect the educational environment. In class, all cell phones should be on silent. Unless specifically directed by the instructor, students shall refrain from sending email and instant messages, or from engaging in other activities (internet, engaging in private conversations and so on) that undermine the classroom environment for others.