

COURSE OUTLINE

Anthropology of Popular Culture
ANT 2130
Meg Stalcup
Winter 2017

Class schedule:	Tuesday 13:00 - 14:30 Thursday 11:30 - 13:00 MNT 201
Professor's office hours:	Thursday 13:00 - 15:00 (and by appointment) Office FSS 10008 613-562-5800 ext. 7679
E-mail:	mstalcup@uottawa.ca Please put ANT2130 and your name in the subject heading.
Teaching assistants:	Jess Cloutier jclou095@uottawa.ca Office hours: by appointment
On virtual campus:	Yes

OFFICIAL COURSE DESCRIPTION

Theoretical trends and debates around the notion of "popular culture": analyses in different countries on how context shapes the meaning of mass consumption, symbolic exchanges, and cultural and media productions.

GENERAL COURSE OBJECTIVES

Popular culture is all around us. From fairytales to urban legends, blue jeans to online gaming, the study of popular culture is a way to access key insights into how contemporary lives are lived. This course takes popular culture today to be that which emerges through the relation between the ordinary yet intimate and particular ways that we undertake everyday acts, and spectacular forms of mass culture. Through readings that include articles, chapters and a recent book, as well videos and films, we cross geographic areas in order to addresses what it means to study popular culture anthropologically, and what popular culture brings to anthropology, from the study of urban space as well as the intimacy of the home, with people ranging from graffiti artists to professional organizers. The first part of the course covers significant approaches and

concepts in the anthropology of popular culture, including folklore, commodities, consumption, and material culture. In the second, we bring to the fore the way anthropologists have used ethnographic methods at the nexus of aesthetic experience and expressive forms and practices, with a focus on the internet as a particularly vibrant domain of popular culture today.

SPECIFIC COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course students will have a better understanding of a range of anthropological approaches for researching and analyzing popular culture, including folklore, material culture, and ethnographic fieldwork. In addition, students will be able to draw on anthropological concepts and methods for their own study of popular cultural forms and practices, in social, historical, and political context.

TEACHING METHODS

This class combines teaching and learning strategies, including in-class lectures, video and film screenings and analysis, class discussions and small group work. Before each class, you will be responsible for completing a short reading listed on the syllabus, which may be an article or a book chapter. During each of our meetings, I will give a lecture on the ideas presented in these readings, contextualizing them into a longer history of anthropological inquiry, and providing you with additional examples. Since we are not using a textbook in this class, my lectures will be the thread that holds everything together. While I will use PowerPoint often, my slides will be outlines of my lectures, rather than a comprehensive summary of them. It is therefore imperative that you come to class regularly, and **take very good notes**. Your exams, and therefore your grade, will largely be based on the material covered in the lectures and in the readings. **You will not pass this course unless you do the assigned reading, and attend lectures regularly.**

ASSESSMENT METHODS

1) 15% First Assignment January 26th Folklore in Contemporary Popular Culture

The first assignment asks you to find and write about a fairytale or other item of folklore that remains, demonstratively, part of contemporary popular culture. Ground your essay in one specific example, so pick a film (you may go back as far in time as you like), a TV program or series, a video game, comic book, etc., that retells a classic tale. While we have focused on the European examples that have been central to the disciplinary subfield of Folklore, you are welcome to pick a traditional tale from anywhere in the world, as long as it is alive and well (and commercialized in some form). Write a **600-800 word essay** that 1) describes the historical trajectory of your example; 2) undertakes a visual analysis (you will be asked to provide an image, such as a screenshot and, if possible, a link, although you may write about more than is shown in your image); and 3) analyzes your version for its contemporary anthropological significance. More instructions will be provided in class.

Please note that this assignment is meant to give you a sense of how well you are doing in class, and give me a sense of the current state of your analytical, reading and writing skills. Not doing well on this assignment does not mean you will fail the class, but it does mean you should come see me during office hours right away and seek help with the Academic Writing Centre as soon as possible.

2) 30% The midterm exam February 14th

("closed book" i.e. no access to notes or texts) covering readings, lectures, discussion, videos, and in-class exercises from the first six weeks. The exam will consist of a combination of multiple choice and true and false questions, and short answers.

3) 45% The final exam April 11th

open-book, take-home assignment consisting of paragraph-long IDs (definitions and explanations of anthropological concepts from the readings) and two essays, in which you will be asked to tie together various ideas from the readings, class lectures, video clips and films. This will be handed out well ahead of the end of the semester. **The deadline for submitting the exam is 2:30 PM on April 11, 2017.**

Participation

Participation grade will be based on regular attendance of class lectures, timeliness, in-class attentiveness and respectful attitude, and capacity to self-regulate when it comes to using technology in class (no texting and no internet browsing during lectures!). Attendance sheets will be circulated throughout the semester but not every class, while in-class exercises will also be assigned and collected, which will provide another measure of your participation. You should aim for at least 10 assessments (there will be around 12), and **if you are missing 5 or more you will receive an incomplete in the course**. Although this is a large class, I encourage meaningful and productive class discussion, and appropriate and thoughtful student questions that add to everyone's educational experience. Absenteeism and distracting behavior during lecture will lead you to lose these points. I also encourage all of you to visit me during office hours at least once during the semester to discuss your progress.

Components of Final Grade

Note: All evaluation components must be completed to receive a grade in the class. If any component is missing, the student will receive an incomplete (EIN), regardless of the point total.

Evaluation format	Weight	Date
First Assignment	15 %	January 26 th on Blackboard
Midterm	30 %	February 28 th in class
Final exam (take-home)	45 %	April 11th on Blackboard
Participation	10 %	Throughout the semester

REQUIRED READING

Nardi, Bonnie. 2010. My life as a night elf priest: An anthropological account of World of Warcraft. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press (available online through the uOttawa library).

All other readings will be made available via Blackboard. I may make changes to readings as the semester progresses. Readings labeled "For Pleasure" are optional.

SCHEDULE

I. ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO POPULAR CULTURE

Week 1: Introduction to the Anthropology of Popular Culture

January 10

Introduction to the course

January 12

Maasik, Sonia and Jack Solomon (2012) "Popular Signs Or, Everything You Always Knew about American Culture (but Nobody Asked)," *Signs of Life in the U.S.A. Readings on Popular Culture for Writers*. Seventh ed. Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martin's. 1-6

Week 2: Folklore and Fairy Tales

January 17

Calvino, Italo. 2013 (1956 [trans 1980]). "Introduction" in *Italian folktales*. Translated by George Martin. San Diego, New York, London: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, xv-xxxiii
<https://books.google.ca/books?id=WZCPAAAQBAJ&lpg=PP1&pg=PT15#v=onepage&q&f=false>

For pleasure: Berger, John (1985) Go Ask the Time. *Granta* <https://granta.com/go-ask-the-time/>

January 19

Zipes, Jack "Who's Afraid of the Brothers Grimm? Socialization and Politicization through Fairy Tales" in *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion: The Classical Genre for Children and the Process of Civilization* (2006), Routledge: New York and London.

For pleasure: Acocella, Joan (2012) Once Upon A Time: The lure of the fairy tale. *New Yorker* <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/07/23/once-upon-a-time-3>

Week 3: Folklore Today: Urban Legends to Fake News

January 24 Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. 2002. "Mining the body: On the trail of organ stealing rumors." In *Exotic No More: Anthropology on the Front Lines*, edited by Jeremy MacClancy, 33-63. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chicago.

For pleasure: Hofstadter, Richard. 1964. The paranoid style in American politics. *Harper's Magazine*, November, 77-86. <http://harpers.org/archive/1964/11/the-paranoid-style-in-american-politics/?single=1>

January 26

Peck, Andrew. 2015. "Tall, Dark, and Loathsome: The Emergence of a Legend Cycle in the Digital Age." *Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 128 no. 509, pp. 333-348. *Project MUSE*, muse.jhu.edu/article/589184.

For pleasure: boyd, danah 2017 "Did Media Literacy Backfire?" *Points* <https://points.datasociety.net/did-media-literacy-backfire-7418c084d88d#.63fb1ks94>
Gusterson, Hugh 2017 *Sapiens* <http://www.sapiens.org/blog/conflicted/power-of-rumors/>

*** First Assignment Due **Before Class** on Blackboard "Folklore in Contemporary Popular

Culture" ***

Week 4: Material Culture : Consumption and Commodities

January 31

Miller, Daniel, and Sophie Woodward. 2007. "Manifesto for a study of denim*." *Social Anthropology* no. 15 (3):335-351.

February 2 Pinheiro-Machado, Rosana. 2011. "The Jeans that Don't Fit: Marketing Cheap Jeans in Brazil." In *Global denim*, edited by Daniel Miller and Sophie Woodward, 181-196. Oxford and New York: Berg.

Week 5: Anthropologies of Material Culture: On Hoarding and Piracy

February 7 Kilroy-Marac, Katie. "A Magical Reorientation of the Modern: Professional Organizers and Thingly Care in Contemporary North America." *Cultural Anthropology* 31, no. 3 (2016): 438–457.

February 9 Dent, Alexander S. 2016. "Policing the unstable materialities of digital-media piracy in Brazil." *American Ethnologist* no. 43 (3):424-436. doi: 10.1111/amet.12336.

II. ANTHROPOLOGIES OF POPULAR CULTURE

Week 6 Aesthetic Politics | Public Spaces

February 14

Caldeira, Teresa P. R. 2012. "Imprinting and Moving Around: New Visibilities and Configurations of Public Space in São Paulo." *Public Culture* no. 24 (2 67):385-419.

February 16

Film: *The Beautiful Losers*. 2008. (dir. Aaron Rose and Joshua Leonard)

Week 7: Reading Week (Feb 19-25)

Week 8: Fun and Games | Gaming and Work

February 28

*** In-class Exam ***

March 2

Nardi "Prologue"

McGrath, Ben 2014 "Good Game: The rise of the professional cyber athlete. New Yorker <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/11/24/good-game>

Week 9: Introduction to World of Warcraft

March 7

Nardi Chapter one. What Is World of Warcraft and Who Plays It?

March 9

Nardi Chapter two. An Ethnographic Investigation of World of Warcraft

Week 10: Active Aesthetic Experience**March 14**

Nardi Chapter three. Play as Aesthetic Experience

March 16

Nardi Chapter four. A New Medium

Week 11: Cultural Logics of World of Warcraft**March 21**

Nardi Chapter five. Work, Play, and the Magic Circle

March 23

Nardi Chapter six. Addiction

Week 12: Cultural Logics of World of Warcraft**March 28**

Nardi Chapter seven. Theorycraft and Mods

March 30

Nardi Chapter eight. Gender

Week 13**April 4 Cultural Logics of World of Warcraft**

Nardi Chapter nine. Culture: WoW in China . . . and North America and Coda

April 6 (last class!) Popular Anthropology of Popular Culture

Stoller, Paul. 2016 "The Anthropology of Trump: Myth, Illusion and Celebrity Culture"
Huffington Post http://www.huffingtonpost.com/paul-stoller/the-anthropology-of-trump_b_9366242.html

Backe, Emma Louise 2016 "Magical Maladies and Injuries: Cultural Appropriation in J. K. Rowling's *Ilvermorny*" <https://thegeekanthropologist.com/2016/07/08/magical-maladies-and-injuries-cultural-appropriation-in-j-k-rowlings-ilvermorny/>

de Seta, Gabriele 2016 "Buying plastic sprouts to sell cuteness" Pop Anth: Hot Buttered Humanity <https://popanth.com/article/buying-plastic-sprouts-to-sell-cuteness>

Luhrmann, TM 2014 Ghosts Are Back! *New York Times*
<https://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/30/opinion/ghosts-are-back.html?>

POLICY ON ATTENDANCE, MEETING COURSE REQUIREMENTS, LATE SUBMISSIONS AND LANGUAGE QUALITY

Attendance is required for the successful completion of this course. Absences must be justified (with a medical note or equally compelling documentation, which is at the discretion of the instructor), and unauthorized late arrivals carry a penalty.

All components of the course must be completed for the student to receive a grade. That is, even if total points add up to a passing mark, if any of the course elements are missing the student will receive an incomplete (EIN) in the course.

Absences from exams and the late submission of assignments must be supported by a medical certificate. See the University policy on this matter.

<http://www.uottawa.ca/governance/regulations.html#r36>

Absences for any other serious reason must be justified in writing to the professor or to the academic secretariats of the Faculty within **five business days** following the date of the exam or the assignment deadline. **The professor or the Faculty reserves the right to accept or refuse the reason put forward. Justifications such as travel, jobs or the misreading of the examination timetable are not acceptable.**

We suggest that you advise your professor as early as possible if a religious holiday or a religious event will force you to be absent during an evaluation.

Late assignments will be penalized 10% for each subsequent day (including weekends) following the due date if justification is not acceptable.

You will be judged on your writing abilities. It is recommended to take the appropriate measures to avoid mistakes such as spelling, syntax, punctuation, inappropriate use of terms, etc. The quality of your writing will count for 10% of all evaluations.

CLASSROOM GROUND RULES

Classroom Discussions

Large-scale lecture courses do not always allow for a great deal of interaction between the professor and the students, and among the students themselves. I find this to be a major disadvantage of this format, which is why I will actively encourage student questions, class discussions and occasional work in groups and pairs. Participating in the class this way will make the class experience more effective, more interesting and more meaningful for all involved.

That being said, I expect each one of you to treat your colleagues and myself with respect and courtesy during these times.

Green Classroom

For ecological reasons and those of everyone's convenience, I strive to run a nearly paperless classroom. This means that you will only receive an electronic copy of the syllabus and other course documents (such as assignment instructions), and that your readings will be available as PDFs on the Blackboard site for the course. This also means that you will turn in all of your work—with the exception of the in-class midterm exam—in the electronic format via our

Blackboard site, using the appropriate tools. This is where you will also receive your comments and grades (again, with the exception of the midterm).

Email Etiquette

Email is the quickest way to reach me, should you have a question about class materials or assignments. Please include your full name and put ANT 2130 in the subject line. Please do not address me with “Hey” or by my first name; such informal language is not appropriate to the context. A simple “Dear Professor” goes a long way!

Lecture PowerPoint Slides

In order to do well in this class, you will need to attend lectures and take very good notes. To help you succeed, I will share my lecture slides for the day— after the class ends. I cannot share these ahead of time because much of this material requires context to be understood, and hence will only be helpful after the end of the lecture.

Laptop Use

Due to the fact I find them distracting, I typically frown upon or outright forbid the use of laptops in my classes. However, I understand that typing, rather than writing is the preferred note-taking method for many of you. I also understand many of you will choose not to print out your writings, but read them in the electronic format. That being said, I have little understanding for Internet browsing, cute animal videos, streaming movies or football matches, shopping for shoes, applying for jobs, doing other homework or the variety of other forms of multitasking you might want to engage with during class time. These kinds of activities will not get you on my good side—and they certainly will not help with your overall grade.

Smartphone use

For most of you, there is absolutely no need for mobile phones during class time. If I notice that you are using one during the lecture, I may ask you to leave. In that case, you will be marked as absent. Please do not do this so that we all can avoid the embarrassment and discomfort this situation will cause.

RESOURCES FOR YOU

COUNSELLING-SERVICE - <http://www.sass.uottawa.ca/personnel>

There are many reasons to call on the Counseling Service, including:

- personal counselling
- career counseling
- study skills counseling

FACULTY MENTORING CENTRE - <http://www.sciencessociales.uottawa.ca/mentor/fra/>

The goal of the Mentoring Centre is to help students with their academic and social well-being during their time at the University of Ottawa. Regardless of where students stand academically, or how far along they are in completing their degree, the Mentoring Centre is there to help them continue on the path to success.

A student may choose to visit the Mentoring Centre for very different reasons: talking to older peers to gain insight into programs and services offered by the University, or to simply brush up on study skills (time management, note-taking, exam preparation, etc.).

In sum, at the Mentoring Centre, you can discuss all things academic and everything about life on campus with mentors who are social science students themselves and trained to answer all your questions.

ACADEMIC WRITING HELP CENTRE - <http://www.sass.uottawa.ca/writing/>

The Academic Writing Help Centre provides free, individualized help and advice for writing academic assignments. With the help of our advisors, you learn to correct your errors, to write well independently, to improve your critical analysis and to sharpen your argumentation skills— everything you need to master the official language of your choice.

CAREER SERVICES - <http://www.sass.uottawa.ca/careers/>

This unit provides an array of career-development services and resources designed to help students identify and put forward the critical skills they need to enter the work force.

ACCESS SERVICE - <http://www.sass.uottawa.ca/acces/>

The University has always strived to meet the needs of individuals with learning disabilities or with other temporary or permanent functional disabilities (hearing/visual impairments, sustained health issues, mental health problems), and the campus community works collaboratively so that you can develop and maintain your autonomy, as well as reach your full potential throughout your studies. You can call on a wide range of services and resources, all provided with expertise, professionalism and confidentiality.

If barriers are preventing you from integrating into university life and you need adaptive measures to progress (physical setting, arrangements for exams, learning strategies, etc.), contact the Access Service right away:

- in person at the University Centre, Room 339
- online at <http://www.sass.uottawa.ca/access/registration/>
- by phone at 613-562-5976

Deadlines for submitting requests for adaptive measures during exams

- midterms, tests, deferred exams: seven business days before the exam, test or other written evaluation (excluding the day of the exam itself).
- final exams:
 - November 15 for the fall session
 - March 15 for the winter session
 - Seven business days before the date of the exam for the spring/summer session (excluding the day of the exam itself).

STUDENT RESOURCES CENTRE - <http://www.communitylife.uottawa.ca/en/resources.php>

These centres strive to meet all sorts of student needs.

BE AWARE OF ACADEMIC FRAUD

Academic fraud consists of dishonest and wrongful acts on exams, tests or assignments, resulting in flawed grades and assessments. The University does not tolerate academic fraud, and anyone found guilty of this behaviour is liable to severe penalties.

Here are some examples of academic fraud:

- Plagiarizing or cheating in any way;
- Presenting falsified research data;
- Submitting an assignment of which you are not the sole author ;
- Presenting the same work from another course without written permission from the professors concerned.

With the development of the Internet these past years, it has become much easier to detect plagiarism. Indeed, given the powerful tools now at their disposal, your professors can, by typing a few simple words, readily trace the exact source of a text on the Web.

For more information on fraud and how to avoid it, you can refer to the Faculty web page, which offers tips to help you with your studies and the writing process for university-level projects at the following address: <http://www.socialsciences.uottawa.ca/undergraduate/student-life-academic-resources>.

Persons who commit or try to commit academic fraud, or who are accomplices in fraud, will be penalized. Here are some of the possible sanctions:

- a grade of **F** for the assignment or course in question;
- the imposition of three to 30 more credits as a condition of graduation;
- suspension or expulsion from their faculty.

To consult the regulation, go to: <http://www.uottawa.ca/governance/regulations.html#r72>.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASMENT

The University of Ottawa does not tolerate any form of sexual violence. Sexual violence refers to any act of a sexual nature committed without consent, such as rape, sexual harassment or online harassment. The University, as well as student and employee associations, offers a full range of resources and services allowing members of our community to receive information and confidential assistance and providing for a procedure to report an incident or make a complaint. For more information, visit www.uOttawa.ca/sexual-violence-support-andprevention.