Perspectives on Film, Social Media, and Collegians’ Learning Experiences

EDL 741
Wednesdays 4:00-6:40 p.m.
Fall 2011

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Seminar Overview
This seminar examines the inescapable influence of American popular culture on collegians’ identities (i.e., individual identity and subculture identity) by exploring two popular culture mediums: cinema and YouTube. Often, popular culture refers to leisure activities, which is distinct from work activities. In the United States, consumption is at the epicenter of leisure. Americans are notorious mass consumers of culture. Most leisure activities (e.g., attending concerts, watching cable television, attending sporting events) involves economic exchanges. For example, film studios produce most of movies that theater patrons consume; these studios invest heavily in advertising to persuade target audiences to consume specific goods—securing profits and reinforcing a “consumer way of life.” The advent of social media (e.g., Facebook, YouTube), has sustained America’s thirst for consumption and it has empowered individuals to assume the role of producers of popular culture. YouTube has also redefined what it means to engage in a participatory culture. These popular culture topics will consume our weekly discussions and we will hopefully produce keen insights and knowledge about higher education.

Throughout the semester we will: [1] explore the multiple meanings of the terms “culture” and “popular;” [2] examine the influences of film and YouTube (i.e., examples of popular culture) in the lives of collegians and vice-versa; [3] reveal the social consequences and political implications of mass mediated entertainment; and [4] introduce theoretical frameworks to enrich understanding of popular culture and higher education.

The seminar will seek answers to questions such as: [a] Who influences the popular culture available to the masses? [b] What messages and ideologies do these popular culture producers transmit? [c] Whose interests are being served and whose interests are harmed? [d] What are cinematic and YouTube characterizations of collegians and how have these perceptions changed over time? [e] To what extent do films and YouTube influence or reflect major historical events and trends in higher education?

An overarching seminar goal is to hone seminar participants’ analytical and theoretical skills and perspectives to interrogate popular culture and use these skills and insights to improve their efforts as student affairs educators.

Seminar Objectives
- Enrich understanding about the importance of popular culture on student and subculture identity and its influence on collegians’ learning.
• Enhance our knowledge and understanding of the influences of popular culture on issues that historically have perplexed the academy (e.g., race, gender, ability, social class, sexual orientation, religion/spirituality).

• Apply our knowledge of cultural studies and popular culture to our higher education and student affairs practice.

Seminar Expectations

Out-of-class Preparation

The seminar works if students thoroughly read, evaluate, and assimilate all reading and multimedia materials and assignments before each weekly gathering. While reading, please summarize the authors’ arguments, compile questions, identify points of disagreement, and document issues worthy of discussion.

In-class Participation

Optimal learning takes place when seminar participants respectfully share perceptions and listen to colleagues (and disagree if occasions arise). It is essential for students to share their honest thoughts and listen carefully to others’ perspectives. The success of our seminar requires all participants to engage in genuine and civil dialogue.

Attendance

I expect students to attend every class and actively participate in class discussions. Students missing three classes will be dropped one full letter grade at the end of the semester (e.g., if a student earned an “A” and missed three classes, the student’s final grade would be a “B”). Students missing four classes will automatically be dropped from the course.

Meeting Deadlines

There are no optional written assignments. This syllabus includes all due dates. Students submitting a late assignment must also include a written explanation for the delay that includes: The due date of the assignment, the date the student submitted the assignment, a rationale for the delay, and a proposed penalty (if any) for the delay. If students fail to submit a written assignment, they may be dropped from the seminar.

Accommodations

Students with disabilities, please notify me about your special accommodations as it relates to the curriculum, instruction, or assessments of this seminar so that you can fully participate. All accommodations discussions are confidential.

Assignments

Midterm Examination [35%]

This exam is a major undertaking that require students to synthesize and integrate the readings and connect theory to practice. The take-home midterm examination will require responses to 2 or 3 questions. Due Date: October 19, 2011.

Theory Project [30%]

This project—centering on the influences of film or social media (e.g., YouTube) on collegians—involves both team and individual work. Pairs of students will have two options from which to choose:

Option A: Research Paper

Dyads will work together to identify, assess, and synthesize scholarly literature related to the specific topic under the umbrella of the influence of a form of popular culture (i.e., film or music) on collegians, and vice-versa. Each dyad
will co-construct a 5-page annotated bibliography of seminal readings (35%). Each person will then complete a 10-page position paper about the topic that he or she will link to the scholarly literature. Each paper should integrate and synthesize the influence of the particular social media on collegians and vice-versa (65%). Due Date: November 16, 2011.

**Option B: Fieldwork Paper**

Dyads will work together to design and conduct a mini-fieldwork study (approximately 10 hours of fieldwork for each team member) of a collegiate subculture immersed in a popular culture activity (e.g., anomie film festival or interacting on a social media website). After completing the fieldwork, the dyad will craft a 5-page summary of key insights and findings (35%). Each person will then complete a 10-page theoretical interpretation of the observation using the readings from the seminar as a guide for the analysis (65%). Due Date: November 16, 2011.

**Team Final Examination [35%]**

For this final examination, seminar participants will form four teams; each team will include two or three students. We will select teams during the first few weeks of class. Teams will work throughout the semester to complete this final examination. Teams will meet twice during the semester with the instructor for progress updates.

“Creating social media for the SAHE (Student Affairs in Higher Education) program that enhances student learning” is the focus of this examination. Each team will select one of four social media projects (note: each project targets a distinct SAHE stakeholder group): [1] prospective SAHE students, [2] current SAHE students, [3] SAHE alumni, and [4] SAHE faculty. In consultation with the instructor, each team will design AND implement a comprehensive social media action plan that enhances the learning of their stakeholder group. For example, the team focusing on prospective SAHE students will design and produce a comprehensive social media (as defined by the readings and team members) initiative to enhance learning of individuals who express an interest in applying to the Miami University SAHE M.S. or Ph.D. program. It is the responsibility of each team to implement the social media plan. Teams will also submit a 6-page paper that provides a theoretical rationale for the action plan. Due Date: December 7, 2011.

**Movie Nights [Optional]**

Five times throughout the semester (outside of our weekly class meetings)—approximately every three weeks—we will sponsor an optional movie night. These events will allow seminar participants to watch full-length feature films and informally discuss them. Seminar participants will have the opportunity to host these gatherings.

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<tr>
<th>MOVIE</th>
<th>MONTH</th>
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<tr>
<td>Higher Learning (1995)</td>
<td>August</td>
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<tr>
<td>Educating Rita (1983)</td>
<td>September</td>
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<td>School Daze (1988)</td>
<td>October</td>
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<td>Spinning into Butter (2008)</td>
<td>November</td>
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<td>The Social Network (2010)</td>
<td>December</td>
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**Required Texts**


**Required Readings**


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<th>SEMINAR ORGANIZATION</th>
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<tr>
<td>Unit 1: Introduction to Cultural Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unit 2: Collegians and Film</td>
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<td>Unit 3: Collegians and Social Media</td>
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<td>Unit 4: Social Media Research Presentations and Wrap-up</td>
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Weekly Study Guide

Session 1—August 24, 2011

Topic: Seminar Introduction

Learning Goals

There are three learning goals for this introductory meeting of this seminar. The first goal is to get acquainted. A second goal is to discuss seminar goals, outcomes, and community norms. A third aim is to explore the ways the academic discipline of cultural studies can enrich understanding about collegians and higher education.

Session 2—August 31, 2011

Topic: Introduction to Cultural Studies-1

Learning Goals

This session provides readers an introduction to cultural studies as a theoretical lens through which to view collegians and universities. Rockler’s essay invites readers to examine more critically the notion of “popular culture as entertainment.” Next we will read the first four chapters of Story’s Cultural Studies and the Study of Popular Culture,
which provide an introduction to cultural studies as well as discuss three popular culture mediums: television, fiction, and film. The White and Walker chapter discusses centers on popular culture in education (i.e., pedagogy; demystification, self-defense, and social understanding; and critical and postmodernism). In total, these readings provide an accessible introduction to the content and focus of the seminar.

Readings


Session 3—September 7, 2011

Topic: Introduction to Cultural Studies-2

Learning Goals

This third session continues to introduce readers to cultural studies as a theoretical lens through which to view collegians and popular culture. We will read the final four chapters of Story’s *Cultural Studies and the Study of Popular Culture* text, which discusses the influences of newspapers and magazines, music, consumption in everyday life, and globalization. The Barker chapter defines key cultural studies terms, and introduces numerous intellectual strands of cultural studies (e.g., structuralism, capitalism, Marxism). Muggleton’s chapter, entitled: “Back to Reality? My Experiences with Cultural Studies,” provides insights about the various ideological tensions within cultural studies.

Readings


Session 4—September 14, 2011

Topic: Introduction to Cultural Studies-3

Learning Goals

This fourth session examines nuances of cultural studies. We will read another chapter from Barker’s *Cultural Studies* text that discusses culture and ideology. The Giannetti chapter also discusses the topic of ideology and its influence on popular culture.

Readings


Session 5—September 21, 2011

Topic: Collegians and Film-1

Learning Goals

During this session we explore the interrelationship of cinema, schools, and American culture by reading Robert Bulman’s *Hollywood Goes to High School*. This text examines some of the complex cultural processing of social difference (e.g., social class, and gender) that occur as American teens “come of age” and the myths about high school perpetuated by Hollywood. These myths, no doubt, influence students as they transition to college. The text illuminates popular culture influences that accompany students to college. The Smith reading deconstructs school leaders portrayed in contemporary schools. Smith’s framework affirms many of Bulman’s findings and includes some unique insights about administrative culture.

Readings


Session 6—September 28, 2011

Topic: Collegians and Film-2

Learning Goals

During this session, we continue to examine the interrelationships involving cinema, higher education, and American culture by reading David Hinton’s *Celluloid Ivy: Higher Education in the Movies 1960-1990*. This text allows us to examine some of the complex cultural processing of social difference (e.g., social class, gender) involving undergraduates. We also examine the myths about college perpetuated by Hollywood, that influence collegians and student affairs educators. The Scull and Reltier reading examines both films about high school and college—offering provocative interpretive possibilities of these films. The Miller reading examines a particular collegiate subculture—football players.

Readings


Session 7—October 5, 2011

Topic: Collegians and Film-3

Learning Goals

This session focuses on what Mary Dalton refers to as the “Hollywood Curriculum.” Dalton’s text focuses on collegians’ relationship with professors and learning. The Markgraf and Pavlik manuscript offers metaphorical representations of the teaching-learning processes in films in education. Finally, the Umphlett reading include a filmography of well-known and obscure films about campus life.
Readings


Session 8—October 12, 2011

Topic: Collegians and Film-4

Learning Goals

This session will consider how films have influenced how race is understood and acted out in everyday American cinema. We will examine how filmmakers represent race and ethnicity in film. What relationship do these film images have to the “real” lives of collegians?

Readings


Session 9—October 19, 2011

Topic: Midterm Review

Learning Goals

A goal for this week is to revisit readings from the first half of the semester that warrant a closer or more in-depth analysis. During the October 12 class meeting we will select readings from the first half of the semester to revisit.

Session 10—October 26, 2011

Topic: Collegians and Film-5

Learning Goals

This session will focus on the multiple ways Hollywood portrays social class and race/ethnicity in film. Of particular importance are issues of: stereotyping, essentialism, and cultural assimilation.

Readings


Session 11—November 2, 2011

Topic: Collegians and Film-6

Learning Goals

This session will focus on the multiple ways Hollywood portrays gender in film. Of particular importance are issues of: male privilege and gender power dynamics.

Readings


Session 12—November 9, 2011

Topic: Social Media-1

Learning Goals

This session we will read and discuss the Burgess and Green text, which critically examines debates centering on YouTube, demonstrating its influence on media and consumers. The authors introduce a range of theoretical sources and empirical research, the authors discuss how YouTube is being used by the media industries, by audiences and amateur producers, and by particular communities of interest, and the ways in which these uses challenge existing ideas about cultural production and consumption. The second reading examines viral video and the participatory culture of YouTube.

Readings


Session 13—November 16, 2011

Topic: Social Media-2

Learning Goals

This session introduces readers to a sampling of YouTube research, which is a new research domain. The essay provides some insights about domains of interest to researchers and the uncharted research possibilities.

Readings


**Session 14—November 30, 2011**

**Topic: Presentations**

**Learning Goals**

During this session we will showcase the final exam projects. Each team will present a 30-minute overview of the project.

**Session 15—December 7, 2011**

**Topic: Presentations-2**

**Learning Goals**

During this final seminar meeting, we will devote time to examining how scholars have used popular culture to enhance learning in college curriculum and co-curriculum. The Seyforth and Golde reading discusses ways the authors have used movies to help collegians get more out of college and understand possibilities they can pursue while in college. Trier, too, discusses ways to use “school films” as ways to engage pre-service teachers in critically reflective practice. Yosso, who focuses on deficit discourses about Chicanas/os using critical race theory, describes how she used entertainment media as a pedagogical tool to analyze the intersection of race, gender, and class subordination. We will uses these three exemplars to explore ways to use the ideas gained from the seminar.

**Readings**

