

Syllabus (2024-Summer)

Course Title	Reading American Popular Culture in the Digital Age	Course No.	
Credit	3 credits	Hours	45 Hours
Class Time Classroom	Mon to Thr Classroom TBA		
Instructor	Name: Yoonji Kim	Department : GLEO	
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Office Hours Office Location	By appointments. ECC B101 or Zoom Classroom		

I. Course Overview

1. Course Description

People love to watch movies, talk about movies, and post them on their social media as they walk out of movie theaters or as they stream through Netflix or download movies from torrents. This is a common way to enjoy leisure time these days. Would it surprise you that there were times when people could not share their likes or dislikes of movies but only had to wait to read or listen to what the critics commented on the movie? Would it surprise you that there were times when not everyone had a cell phone wired for networking? **How did such technological development change the way people consume popular culture? What features of popular culture made it so fascinating for people to “binge watch” shows for days by investing time and money and voluntarily be part of a “fandom” that leads to market values of the products? To find answers to these questions, it is necessary to explore the roots and evolution of American popular culture. This is a survey course on American popular culture.** Although we live in a world where digital content is produced and consumed every minute, practically competing to catch our attention, it is still very vague to identify what “popular culture” is and what the meaning of such culture is in terms of our understanding of the world. As globalization has created a new dynamic for Koreans’ reception of American popular culture and the world’s reception of Korean popular culture, it is necessary for Korean audience not only to understand but develop critical perspectives to “read,” “analyze,” and “interpret” what those cultural contents entail and influence our perspectives in the digital age. No doubt, digital technology has made it easier for Koreans to access and receive American popular contents that were meant for the American audience; such cultural distance is not acknowledged but instead forced on Koreans to adopt a “pseudo-American” identity as they consume the content, while resistance to such position was also operated by reproducing such contents in “Korean way,” that is by creating glocalized contents. By going through a few key concepts in cultural theory to analyze American popular culture before the internet, students will be able to compare the changes in our contemporary popular content and the role of digital technology (internet and globalization) in the ways we consume and reproduce such contents via new forms of media, such as social media or YouTube. Going through the entire history of American popular culture in a semester would be impossible; nevertheless, **we would be using essential cultural content in American cultural history that is relevant to Korean popular content to understand deeper meanings of how cultural products turn into popular culture at the specific historical moment.** This would eventually allow us to critically “read” contemporary Korean popular culture, which is being capitalized on and consumed worldwide.

2. Prerequisites

3. Course Format

Lecture	Discussion/Presentation	Experiment/Practicum	Field Study	Other
40%	500%	%	%	10%

4. Course Objectives

You do not have to be fluent in English to take this class; this class is for anybody who wants to know and talk about popular culture. We build a community for students interested in sharing their views on American popular culture, how it is produced or consumed by global viewers, and how certain subjects are being (mis)represented.

The general objectives for this course are as follows:

- Understand the underlying structure and meanings of American popular culture
- Use analytic tools to critically “read” American popular culture from the Korean audience’s point of view
- Develop a critical perspective to analyze contemporary Korean popular culture under the influence of globalization and digitalization
- Be aware of the social, political, and economic dynamics of production, consumption, and reproduction of popular culture of our time.

5. Evaluation Systems

Relative evaluation Absolute evaluation (for Ewha International Summer College students only) Others

Midterm Exam	Final Exam	Online Discussion	Presentation	Class Discussion	Participation & Attendance
15%	20%	20%	15%	15%	15%

Explanation of evaluation system:

- Midterm and final exams are based on comprehension and application of key concepts we have discussed in class to American popular culture.
- Presentations are evaluated on completeness and accuracy, NOT on pronunciation or linguistic proficiency.
- Participation depends on coming to class prepared and working actively in groups and online discussions before you come to class; in-class texting (or social media) will negatively affect this score

Attendance: more than 5 classes absent = failure, 3 times late = 1 absence

II. Course Materials and Additional Readings

1. Required Materials

Materials will be uploaded on the cyber campus before the class.

2. Supplementary Materials

Storey, John. *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction*. 7th Edition. Routledge, 2015.

Harington, C. Lee & Denise D. Bielby, eds. *Popular Culture: Production and Consumption*. M.A., Blackwell Publishing, 2001.

Bal, Mieke, ed. *The Practice of Cultural Analysis: Exposing Interdisciplinary Interpretation*. C.A., Stanford University Press, 1999.

Guins, Raiford & Omayra Z. Cruz. *Popular Culture: A Reader*. London, Sage, 2008.

Schiller, *Digital Capitalism*. Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1999.

Campbell, Martin & Fabos. *Media & Culture*. 11th edition, New York, Macmillan. 2017.

George, Diana & Trimbur, John. *Reading Culture: Contexts for Critical Reading and Writing*. 4th edition. New York: Longman, 20001

Colombo, Gary, Robert Cullen, & Bonnie Lisle. *Rereading America*. New York: A Bedford Book. 1989

Barker, Chris. *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice*. 4th Edition. London: Sage, 2012.

Hall, Mitchell. *The Emergence of Rock and Roll.: Music and the Rise of American Youth Culture* New York: Routledge, 2014

3. Optional Additional Readings

III. Course Schedule

Day	Date	Topics & Class Materials, Assignments	
Day 1	(7/1)	Introduction: Course Overview What is Popular culture? 20th century vs 21st century	Reading: Popular Culture Overview DQ: What is Popular Culture? "Why do we study trash?"
Day 2	(7/2)	High Culture vs. Popular Culture Cultural tastes Technology: a medium or culture itself?	Media's role in "educating" the mass (or public) of cultural 'tastes' How did digitalization change the way people view popular culture? Who (What) decides popular tastes in the digital age? Work of art in the digital age?
Day 3	(7/3)	Work of Art and Machines Mass Culture and Culture Industry	Walter Benjamin's Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction "Culture Industry Reconsidered" by Theodore Adorno
Day 4	(7/4)	Culture Industry in the digital age: Consumerism in 1920s-1950s vs late consumerism in 1990s-2010s	Mass Media presents how to live "a life" and what their "tastes" should be like, what about digital media?
Day 5	(7/8)	Celebrity as Industry Participation culture and fans	Who produces celebrities? Who consumes it? Instagram as an assembly line of celebrity production
Day 6	(7/9)	Globalization and American Culture Netflix and cultural homogeneity	McDonald's and Starbucks Social Media, a marketing platform for a global audience Franchises the Reality Shows
Day 7	(7/10)	Digitization and American Culture Who reads books in the digital age?	Library and Magazines Who Reads in the Digital Age? The rise of book clubs in our time?
Day 8	(7/11)	Pop Music in the Digital Age Music: art or product?	Who listens to music? Who consumes popular music? What decides popular tastes in the digital era? Midterm (Take-home)
Day 9	(7/15)	Evolution of Television TV in the Digital Age Reality TV as the TV of the digital age?	How has television changed American life? Why do we still watch television? Reality Shows: Who is watching who? Ex) Big Brother, Survivors, Bachelors, The Apprentice Kpop Star, Solo Inferno, etc.

Day	Date	Topics & Class Materials, Assignments	
Day 10	(7/16)	Late Night-Talk Shows: entertainment or Journalism? Representation of Gender Comedy, is this also a boy's club?	<i>Late Night (2019)</i>
Day 11	(7/17)	Representation of Gender Group Presentations I Identity Crisis and Cyberspace Group Presentations II	Film: <i>Ocean's 11(2001) vs Ocean's 8 (2018)</i> <i>The Social Media (2010)</i>
Day 12	(7/18)	Representation of Gender Group Presentations I Identity Crisis and Cyberspace Group Presentations II	<i>The Circle (2017)</i> <i>Searching (2018)</i>
Day 13	(7/22)	Social media Defines Human relationships Group Presentation V A.I. Industry and Gender Group Presentation VI	<i>Ron's Gone Wrong (2021)</i> <i>Her (2013)</i>
Day 14	(7/23)	A.I. Industry and Gender Group Presentations VII Minority Cultures Group Presentations VIII	<i>Ex Machina (2014)</i> <i>Crazy Rich Asians (2018)</i>
Day 15	(7/24)	Minority Cultures Group Presentation IX Minority Attack: Representation of Koreans to the American public Group Presentation X	Film: <i>Minari (2020)</i> <i>Parasite (2019)</i> Final (Take-Home)
Makeup Classes 1	(mm/dd)		
Makeup Classes 2	(mm/dd)		

IV. Special Accommodations

* According to the University regulation section #57-3, students with disabilities can request for special accommodations related to attendance, lectures, assignments, or tests by contacting the course professor at the beginning of semester. Based on the nature of the students' request, students can receive support for such accommodations from the course professor or from the Support Center for Students with Disabilities (SCSD). Please refer to the below examples of the types of support available in the lectures, assignments, and evaluations.

Lecture	Assignments	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Visual impairment: braille, enlarged reading materials . Hearing impairment: note-taking assistant . Physical impairment : access to classroom, note-taking assistant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extra days for submission, alternative assignments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Visual impairment: braille examination paper, examination with voice support, longer examination hours, note-taking assistant . Hearing impairment: written examination instead of oral examination . Physical impairment: longer examination hours, note-taking assistant

- Actual support may vary depending on the course.

* The contents of this syllabus are not final—they may be updated.