SYLLABUS: COMM 3466 (ONLINE) COMMUNICATION AND POPULAR CULTURE

Course Overview

As stated in the course catalog, this course examines "communication causes and impacts of the changing technological environment where traditional differences between cultural products, folk, mass, popular, low, elite, high, knowledge, journalistic, and informational are disappearing." Prereq: Not open to students with credit for 666. Credit Hours: 3.0. The course will be presented entirely online.

Instructor(s)

Instructor
Charles (Joe) Francemone, M.A.   Email Address: francemone.1@osu.edu   Online Office Hours: Friday 12pm-1pm; By appointment (preferred)

Course Description

This general elective course will take a broad perspective examining how popular culture is reflected in human communication. Although the course will focus primarily on mass communication as a source of popular culture, we will also explore how popular culture influences our interpersonal relationships and how we communicate with each other. Written/media assignments, tests/quizzes, and online discussions will aid students' understanding of the intersection of popular culture and communication.

Presented in an online format, this course will take a dynamic approach to learning. We will venture through various aspects of popular culture: Music, movies, TV shows, books, clothing, and even memes. Although all assignments are completed individually, you are expected to engage other students through our online discussions. To this end, certain technologies are required for taking this course (see Course Technology section).

Throughout the 15 weeks of class, you'll develop a more thorough understanding of popular culture through the lens of the communication discipline. Our focus will help you explain popular culture's intersection with the individual. We will explore how popular culture came to be, why it is more important than many people think, and how it helps us to understand our place in the world and how we communicate with others.

Course Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Classify various definitions of popular culture and their relationship to the various levels of communication (e.g., interpersonal, group, mass).
- Recognize and categorize different elements of popular culture as they relate to communication phenomena, such as social bonding and group formation.
- Identify the historical and contemporary sources of popular culture as they relate to communication theories, including but not limited to diffusion of innovations, two-step flow, and entertainment appraisal.
- Apply communication theories to understand the communicative functions of popular culture.

Course Materials

No official textbook is being adopted for this course. Readings for the course will consist of chapters and articles posted in digital format on Carmen.

The readings and other media materials presented in the course are designed to challenge the students' current abilities. They range from chapters in undergraduate textbooks to cutting edge research articles published in the field's best journals.

Course Requirements

Assignments

The assignments are designed to assess basic-level understandings (e.g., remember and understand) as well as higher-level understandings (e.g., apply and analyze). The specific assignments are presented below along with a short description of the general format of the assignment and its relationship to student learning. All assignments will be due by Sunday night at 11:59 p.m. of the week they were assigned.

- Introduction Post (5%)
  - Students will write a short introduction post where you describe yourself, some of your current favorite popular culture artifacts, and what you hope to get out of this class.
  - The purpose of this assignment is to allow the professor and the other students to familiarize with one another in a virtual setting.
- 11 Weekly Quizzes (30% of grade)
  - Quizzes will be administered throughout the semester on a weekly schedule.
  - The quizzes represent a check-in point for the students and the professor. They ensure that students are keeping up with the lectures/readings and that the students are getting the "overarching lesson" from each lecture/reading.
  - I will drop the lowest quiz grade.

- 10 Discussion Posts (25% required, 5% bonus available)
  - Students' participation will be assessed by examining whether they substantially contributed to weekly discussion boards. Students are required to participate in at least 10 of the 13 discussion boards throughout the semester. Students also can earn 5% extra credit by participating in 2 additional discussion boards outside of the required 10.
  - To receive points for each discussion board, students are required to make at least 1 discussion board **post** and 1 discussion board **reply** each week. The purpose of these requirements is to allow students to engage with one another with respect to the weekly material. Students can feel free to post more each week if they choose to do so.
  - The introduction discussion post is **NOT** included in the total 10 posts required.
    - Note: Students are encouraged to post either questions or observations about the readings. To receive points, a student's post must make a *substantive* contribution the course's discussion boards. A simple comment is not a substantive contribution. Linking various theories, topics, etc. and bringing in outside information is. Although the discussion boards are open-ended and students can present any information they wish, I've included suggested topics for each week in the course schedule.
- Term Paper (40%)
  - The term paper will ask students to trace the history of a popular cultural product and how it has impacted society at large. What are the origins of the cultural product, how did it gain popularity, and how has it impacted society?
  - Students will link their historical analysis to important communication theories discussed throughout the course.
  - There are two milestone assignments related to the term paper at different points in the semester. These milestone assignments will help you stay on track so that your final product is higher in quality.
    - Milestone Assignment 1 is due during Week 5. (10% of grade)
      - This assignment asks students to identify their topic of interest.
      - Students will identify their cultural product, how they intend to research its evolution, and present an annotated bibliography of at least 5 sources that they plan on using in their final paper.
    - Milestone Assignment 2 is due during Week 10. (10% of grade)
      - This assignment requires students to present an outline of their final paper.
      - By this point, students should have completed the primary research phase of their project and have an outline of the structure of their final paper. The outline should be at least 2 pages long (single-spaced) and have enough detail that the professor has a firm understanding of what the student will present in their final document.
  - Final Paper: An approximately 6-8 page (double-spaced) term paper will be due at the end of the semester. (20% of grade)

Grading scale

93–100: A
90–92.9: A-
87–89.9: B+
83–86.9: B
80–82.9: B-
77–79.9: C+
73–76.9: C
70 –72.9: C-
67 –69.9: D+
60 –66.9: D
Below 60: E

Faculty feedback and response time

I am providing the following list to give you an idea of my intended availability throughout the course. (Remember that you can call **614-688-HELP** at any time if you have a technical problem.)

Grading and feedback

For assignments, you can generally expect feedback within **10 days**.

E-mail

I will reply to e-mails within **24 hours on school days**. Please email through Buckeyemail (grizzard.6@osu.edu) and not Carmen Messages. DO NOT reply to a Carmen message through Buckeyemail.

Instructor communication

At times announcements will be made to the class via Carmen Announcements and sent through a Carmen message. Please regularly check both to ensure you do not miss a communication.

Attendance, participation, and discussions

Student participation requirements

Because this is a distance-education course, your attendance is based on your online activity and participation. The following is a summary of everyone's expected participation:

- **Online lectures**
  Recorded lectures will be uploaded with all other materials every Monday. More than one lecture may appear in the upload. The videos are short to provide the most optimal viewing experience and to increase attention and engagement. Watch a lecture, take a break, come back to the next.

- **Readings**

  All readings are expected to be completed prior to taking the weekly quiz or participating in the weekly discussion board.

Communication guidelines

The following are my expectations for how we should communicate as a class. Above all, please remember to be respectful and thoughtful.

- **Writing style**: This course is intended to prepare you for future communications as a professional. Assignments should be approached in this manner. Please proofread, edit, and include appropriate language.
- **Tone and civility**: Let's maintain a supportive learning community where everyone feels safe and where people can disagree amicably. Furthermore, rude or impatient communications are generally not appreciated in professional situations. Please consider your words as if you were a professional when communicating with other students, the instructor, and the teaching assistant.
- **Citing your sources**: When requested, please cite your sources to back up what you say. (For the textbook or other course materials, list at least the title and page numbers. For online sources, include a link.)

Academic Misconduct

All of your work in this class is expected to be your independent contribution. You should not seek help from other students, friends, family, etc.

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term "academic misconduct" includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/.

Late Assignments

Late work is not accepted in this class. Assignments turned in after the deadline will only be accepted with a valid medical or university excuse. It is the student's responsibility to be sure the assignment submitted correctly. Please check your Carmen folder after submission to ensure the upload is there and complete.

Disability Services

The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Student Life Disability Services. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. SLDS contact information: slds@osu.edu; 614-292-3307; slds.osu.edu; 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue.

Mental Health

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities. The Ohio State University offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. If you or someone you know are suffering from any of the aforementioned conditions, you can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Office of Student Life's Counseling and Consultation Service (CCS) by visiting ccs.osu.edu or calling 614--292--5766. CCS is located on the 4th Floor of the Younkin Success Center and 10th Floor of Lincoln Tower. You can reach an on call counselor when CCS is closed at 614--292--5766 and 24 hour emergency help is also available through the 24/7 National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1--800--273-TALK or at suicidepreventionlifeline.org.

Sexual Misconduct/Relationship Violence

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories (e.g., race). If you or someone you know has been sexually harassed or assaulted, you may find the appropriate resources at http://titleix.osu.edu or by contacting the Ohio State Title IX Coordinator, Kellie Brennan, at titleix@osu.edu

Diversity Policy

The Ohio State University affirms the importance and value of diversity in the student body. Our programs and curricula reflect our multicultural society and global economy and seek to provide opportunities for students to learn more about persons who are different from them. We are committed to maintaining a community that recognizes and values the inherent worth and dignity of every person; fosters sensitivity, understanding, and mutual respect among each member of our community; and encourages each individual to strive to reach his or her own

potential. Discrimination against any individual based upon protected status, which is defined as age, color, disability, gender identity or expression, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status, is prohibited.

Course Technology

For help with your password, university e-mail, Carmen, or any other technology issues, questions, or requests, contact the OSU IT Service Desk. Standard support hours are available at https://ocio.osu.edu/help/hours, and support for urgent issues is available 24x7. The following technologies may be used in this course. You should familiarize yourself with them if you have questions.

- **Carmen:**
  - Carmen, Ohio State's Learning Management System, will be used to host materials and activities throughout this course. To access Carmen, visit Carmen.osu.edu. Log in to Carmen using your name.# and password. If you have not setup a name.# and password, visit my.osu.edu.
  - Help guides on the use of Carmen can be found at https://resourcecenter.odee.osu.edu/carmen
  - **This online course requires use of Carmen (Ohio State's learning management system) and other online communication and multimedia tools. If you need additional services to use these technologies, please request accommodations with your instructor.**
    - **Carmen accessibility**
- **Secured Media Library:**
  - Media materials for this course will be made available via the Secured Media Library. **go.osu.edu/SecuredMediaLibrary**
  - To obtain additional help for use of the Secured Media Library, please email emedia@osu.edu
  - Frequently Asked Questions and support can be found at https://resourcecenter.odee.osu.edu/secured-media-library
- **Carmen Zoom**
  - Office hours will be held through Ohio State's conferencing platform, Carmen Zoom.
  - Students may use the audio and video functions if a webcam and microphone are available. If not, there is still a chat function within Carmen Zoom for the student to live chat with the professor or TA in the virtual office hours room.
  - Help guides on the use of Carmen Connect can be found at https://resourcecenter.odee.osu.edu/carmenconnect
- **Self-Service and Chat support:** http://ocio.osu.edu/selfservice
- **Phone:** 614-688-HELP (4357)
- **Email:** 8help@osu.edu
- **TDD:** 614-688-8743

Baseline technical skills necessary for online courses
- Basic computer and web-browsing skills
- Navigating Carmen

Necessary equipment
- Computer: current Mac (OS X) or PC (Windows 7+) with high-speed internet connection
- Webcam and microphone recommended for office hours, chat function available for students without webcam or microphone.

Necessary software
- Word processor with the ability to save files under .doc, .docx, .rtf, or .pdf. Most popular word processing software programs including Microsoft Word and Mac Pages have these abilities.
- OSU students have access to Microsoft Office products <u>free of charge</u>. To install, please visit https://osuitsm.service-now.com/selfservice/kb_view.do?sysparm_article=kb04733

Tentative Course Schedule – 16 Weeks of Class

Week	Topic	Reading	Assignment
1 (1/10 - 1/16)	Syllabus and Course Overview	Syllabus	Introduction Post
2 (1/17 - 1/23)	What is popular culture?	Story, J. (2018). What is popular culture? In *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture* (pp. 1-17). New York, NY: Routledge. National Communication Association. (n.d.). What is communication? Retrieved from https://www.natcom.org/about-nca/whatcommunication Gans, H. (1974). The critique of mass culture (pp. 17-64). In Popular culture and high culture. New York, NY: Harper Collins.	Quiz 1 Discussion Post 1
3 (1/24 - 1/30)	How can we study popular culture?	Danesi, M. (2019). Explaining pop culture. In Popular Culture: Introductory Perspectives (pp. 63-101). New York, NY: Rowman & Littlefield. McQuail, D. (2010). Mass communication and culture (pp. 111-134). In McQuail's mass communication theory (6th edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.	Quiz 2 Discussion Post 2

Week	Topic	Reading	Assignment
4 (1/31 - 2/6)	Business and popular culture	Danesi, M. (2019). The business of pop culture. In Popular Culture: Introductory Perspectives (pp. 102-142). New York, NY: Rowman & Littlefield. McQuail, D. (2010). The production of media culture (pp. 307-336). In McQuail's mass communication theory (6th edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE. "Media Giants: What is the point?" - https://www.economist.com/leaders/2002/05/23/what-is-the-point "Here's who owns everything in Big Media today" https://www.vox.com/2018/1/23/16905844/media-landscapeverizon-amazon-comcast-disney-fox-relationships-chart	Quiz 3 Discussion Post 3
5 (2/7 - 2/13)	Popular language	Danesi, M. (2019). Pop language. In Popular Culture: Introductory Perspectives (pp. 336-363). New York, NY: Rowman & Littlefield. Dumas, B. K., & Lighter, J. (1978). Is slang a word for linguists?. American speech, 53(1), 5-17.	Milestone Assignment 1 Discussion Post 4
6 (2/14 - 2/20)	How does pop culture spread? - Diffusion	Rogers, E. M. (1983). Elements of diffusion. In Diffusion of Innovations (pp. 1-37). New York, NY: The Free Press. Xu, W. W., Park, J. Y., Kim, J. Y., & Park, H. W. (2016). Networked cultural diffusion and creation on YouTube: An analysis of YouTube memes. Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 60(1), 104-122.	Quiz 4 Discussion Post 5
7 (2/21 - 2/27)	How does pop culture spread? - Two-step flow	Choi, S. (2015). The two-step flow of communication in Twitter-based public forums. Social Science Computer Review, 33, 696-711. doi: 10.1177/0894439314556599 Kayahara, J., & Wellman, B. (2007). Searching for culture—high and low. Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 12(3), 824-845.	Quiz 5 Discussion Post 6

Week	Topic	Reading	Assignment
8 (2/28 - 3/6)	Spread of information	Atran, S. (2001). The trouble with memes. Human Nature, 12(4), 351- 381. Mesoudi, A. (2009). How cultural evolutionary theory can inform social psychology and vice versa. Psychological review, 116(4), 929- 952.	Quiz 6 Discussion Post 7
9 (3/7 - 3/13)	Identifying experts in pop culture	Boster, F. J., Kotowski, M. R., Andrews, K. R., & Serota, K. (2011). Identifying influence: Development and validation of the connectivity, persuasiveness, and maven scales. Journal of Communication, 61(1), 178-196. Carpenter, C. J., Boster, F. J., Kotowski, M., & Day, J. P. (2015). Evidence for the validity of a social connectedness scale: Connectors amass bridging social capital online and offline. Communication Quarterly, 63(2), 119-134.	Milestone Assignment 2 Discussion Post 8
10 (3/14 - 3/20)	Spring Break	N/A	N/A
11 (3/21 - 3/27)	What makes music popular?	Krause, A. E., & North, A. C. (2017). Pop music lyrics are related to the proportion of female recording artists: Analysis of the United Kingdom weekly top five song lyrics, 1960–2015. Psychology of Popular Media Culture, 8, 233-242. Askin, N., & Mauskapf, M. (2017). What makes popular culture popular? Product features and optimal differentiation in music. American Sociological Review, 82, 910-944. doi:10.1177/0003122417728662 Eden, A., Hoeksema, B., Burgers, C.F. (November, 2015). Mixed and mashed: Novelty as predictor of enjoyment and appreciation of mashups.	Quiz 7 Discussion Post 9

Week	Topic	Reading	Assignment
12 (3/28 - 4/3)	What makes movies popular?	Litman, B. R. (1983). Predicting success of theatrical movies: An empirical study. The Journal of Popular Culture, 16(4), 159-175. Lewis, R. J., Grizzard, M. N., Choi, J. A., & Wang, P. L. (2019). Are enjoyment and appreciation both yardsticks of popularity?. Journal of Media Psychology: Theories, Methods, and Applications, 31(2), 55-64.	Quiz 8 Discussion Post 10
13 (4/4 - 4/10)	How do people choose popular media?	Rubin, A. M. (2009). Uses and gratifications: An evolving perspective on media effects. In R. L. Nabi & M. B. Oliver (Eds.), The SAGE Handbook of Media Processes and Effects (pp. 147-160). Los Angeles, CA: SAGE. Knobloch-Westerwick, S. (2006). Mood management: Theory, evidence, and advancements. In D. Zillmann & P. Vorderer (Eds.), Psychology of entertainment (pp. 239-254). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.	Quiz 9 Discussion Post 11
14 (4/11 - 4/17)	Representations of gender, sex, and race in popular culture	Smith, S. L., Choueiti, M., Pieper, K., Gillig, T., Lee, C., & DeLuca, D. (2016). Inequality in 700 Popular Films: Examining Portrayals of Gender, Race, & LGBT Status from 2007 to 2014. Retrieved from https://celluloidjunkies.com/podfiles/asib-2.pdf Schug, J., Alt, N. P., Lu, P. S., Gosin, M., & Fay, J. L. (2017). Gendered race in mass media: Invisibility of Asian men and Black women in popular magazines. Psychology of Popular Media Culture, 6(3), 222- 236.	Quiz 10 Discussion Post 12
15 (4/18 - 4/24)	What does it mean to have "taste"?	Excerpts from Gans, H. J. (1974). The evaluation of taste cultures and publics (pp. 119-160). Popular culture and high culture: An analysis and evaluation of taste. New York: Basic Books, Inc.	Quiz 11 Discussion Post 13
16 (4/25 - 5/1)	N/A	N/A	Final Term Paper