

The United States Entertainment Industry & Social Change

CAS SO 346 / Fall 2011

Wednesdays 7:15-10:00 pm

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Course Statement

No one can doubt that the American entertainment industry - including film, television, and music - has a major influence on society at home and abroad. What is the relationship between the entertainment industry and social change? Does the mass media reflect changes in society or lead them? What are the images of society and cultural values reflected through Hollywood and the entertainment industry? How have these changed in recent decades, and what is their relationship to the surrounding society?

The course’s first unit, “The Medium, The Message, and You: Entertainment as a Way of Life,” addresses such themes as the medium itself (such as television, radio, the internet, etc.) as a major cultural influence; entertainment as a way of life; celebrity culture and reality TV; and gender, race, class, and sexual orientation in the media.

The course’s second unit, social change through music and film, addresses music and social change (including social change and music in the 20th century: the blues, country, and protest songs; the development of rock and rolls; the 70’s and beyond; and modern music, celebrity culture, and social change) and film and social change.

Course Readings

There are 5 softcover books, several book excerpts, and several online articles required for this course, as follows:

1. Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*
2. Jean Twenge, *Generation Me*
3. Greil Marcus, *Lipstick Traces (20th Anniversary Edition)*
4. Dorian Lynskey, *33 Revolutions per Minute: A History of Protest Songs, from Billie Holiday to Green Day*
5. Ian MacDonald, *Revolution in the Head: The Beatles' Records and the Sixties*

Excerpts: (these will be provided free of charge in class)

1. Hal Niedzviecki, *The Peep Diaries*
2. Neil Postman and Steve Powers, *How to Watch TV News*
3. Mark Andrejevic, *Reality TV: The Work of Being Watched*

4. Joshua Gamson, *Claims to Fame: Celebrity in Contemporary America* (excerpts)
5. Gail Dines and Jean McMahon Humez (eds.), *Gender, Race, and Class in Media: A Text-Reader* (excerpts)
6. Dick Weissman, *Talkin' 'Bout a Revolution: Music and Social Change in America*
7. Ian Inglis, *The Beatles, Popular Music and Society: A Thousand Voices*
8. Ernest Giglio, *Here's Looking at You: Hollywood, Film & Politics*
9. Robert C. Bulman, *Hollywood Goes to High School*

Links to pertinent news articles and exemplary videos and songs are included in this syllabus; a few more may also be emailed to you as necessary and pertinent. These are also required course reading.

Books can be purchased online through Amazon.com, or anywhere else you can find them. Most of them are available used at very low cost through Amazon.com.

Grading

Grades will be based on attendance & participation, two essays, and one research project (each worth 25% of your grade). I will be using a non-competitive grading scale. This means that in this course, there is no grading curve. The grade you earn does not depend on how well you do compared with others in the class.

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>% Total Grade</u>	<u>Date Due</u>
Attendance & Participation Weekly attendance AND active vocal participation are required. For each week, showing up is worth approximately 1 point, and talking is worth approximately 1 point. Any excuses for a missed class must be accompanied by verified documentation (like a doctor's note).	25%	weekly

Essay 1: 25%
What do celebrity culture and reality TV say about the place of entertainment in our culture? Using course texts, the film *We Live in Public*, and your experience on a Hollywood bus tour, make your own argument about the above topic. Be sure to include discussion of the way that the medium (media) itself shapes who we are and the way we see the world, the recent and overwhelmingly powerful development and effect of “peep” and surveillance culture, entertainment as America’s dominant form of communication (not only in the mass media, but in everyday life), and how celebrity culture and reality TV provide a strong and focused illustration of the combined effect of “peep” culture and the dominance of “entertainment consciousness.”

Address the topic in five-six typed double-spaced pages (normal margins, font size no larger than 12 pt., etc.). It is very important that you deeply integrate course readings into your discussion (Huxley, Niedzviecki, Postman, Gamson, and Andrejevic are especially important). Please note that this is a formal essay, with thesis, theme, paragraphs, references, page numbers, and a bibliography.

Essay 2:

25%

How does popular music reflect and influence social change? Using four songs as examples - one protest, blues or country song from the 30's, 40's, or 50's, one rock and roll song from 1963-1969, one punk song, and one popular song from the last 5 years -- explain and explore the mutually determining influence of popular music and large-scale (as opposed to personal) social change. Include discussion of sociopolitical issues of the time that influenced the composition (and possibly style) of the songs, how each song reflects those issues, how musical styles developed and influenced each other, and how music influences you personally. Address the topic in five-six typed double-spaced pages (normal margins, font size no larger than 12 pt., etc.). It is very important that you deeply integrate course readings into your discussion (Weissman, MacDonald, and Marcus are especially important). Please note that this is a formal essay, with thesis, theme, paragraphs, references, page numbers, and a bibliography.

Essays will be graded with special attention to the following dimensions:

1. How appropriately, thoroughly, and deeply course readings are used.
 2. Creativity in approach to and execution of essay.
 3. Skill (including clarity, coherence and strength of argument, organization, correctness of spelling and grammar) in writing.
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Final Research Project: Case Study

25%

How is social change produced within the entertainment industry?

For this project, you'll be exploring the mundane details of how social change is produced in one specific area of the entertainment industry. You will not have to range far afield to do your research; it is fine, perhaps even preferable, if your research site is one with which you are already involved (for example, your internship).

You will need to gather data in two different ways:

- 1) Interview two subjects (for about 15-20 minutes each). **Record the interviews, and transcribe the portions that you will use in your paper.** Interviews should be anonymous; names should be changed in any write-up.
- 2) Observe the scene where the change happens for about 3-4 hours total (this could be a collection of shorter observations), and type up at least 10 pages (single-spaced, 12 point font) of ethnographic notes from your research site

Using this data and any appropriate course readings, write a 7-8 page analytical discussion of the topic in question. Discussion should be in the form of an analytical essay, with thesis statement and paragraph and concluding statement and paragraph. Argue your point, using course readings and your original research to back up your point. Turn in your recordings with the paper (flash drives are preferable, but cassette tapes are fine too). Put everything in a large (8.5 X 11, for

example) envelope together, and put your name on everything, to be sure no pieces of your project are lost.

* Readings should be widely and deeply referenced IN EVERY WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT. Your work WILL be graded with respect to how well it integrates course readings.

* Good grammar, spelling, and punctuation count towards your grade. Please proofread.

* Any excuses for late or missed work must be accompanied by verified documentation (like a doctor's note), or 1 point will be taken off for each weekday the assignment is late. Assignments that are more than 1 week late will not be accepted, and no late papers at all will be accepted after the final week of class.

* **"The most effective way to do it, is to do it." - Amelia Earhart** No plagiarism, please. Plagiarism is using the words and/or work of another as your own - that is, without citing the other person as the author of those words. Anything you take off of the internet must be cited. Always do your own work, and reference any words that did not originally come from you. If you are caught doing or turning in plagiarized work, your work will, without exception, be turned in to the office of the Dean of Students. Do not expect the outcome to be positive.

At Boston University, academic misconduct is defined as the misrepresentation of a student's work or impeding the ability of the instructor to fairly judge the work of other students. This may include, among other acts:

- * Turning in the work of another student
- * Allowing another student to use your work
- * Falsification of data
- * Stealing a test
- * Unauthorized collaboration
- * Forging grade records

Boston University takes academic honesty very seriously; thus, the sanctions are very steep. Look here to see the Boston University Arts & Sciences Academic Conduct Code:
<http://www.bu.edu/cas/students/undergrad-resources/code/>

A Detailed Road Map

Schedules and topics are subject to change,
in which case announcements will be made in class as appropriate.

Part 1

The Medium, The Message, and You: Entertainment as a Way of Life

Week 1

September 7

Introduction

Week 2

September 14

The Medium Is The Message

Required Reading (377)

Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (pp. 3-259)

Jean Twenge, *Generation Me*, Introduction and chs. 1-3 (pp. 1-103)

Gail Dines and Jean McMahon Humez (eds.), *Gender, Race, and Class in Media: A Text-Reader*

- #1, Douglas Kellner, "Cultural Studies, Multiculturalism, and Media Culture" (pp. 9-20)

- #5, James Lull, "Hegemony" (pp. 61-66)

Study Questions for *Brave New World*

1. What is the use of Bokanovsky's Process? What is the equivalent in our society?
2. How are we programmed to want what we want and work in the jobs we do? If it IS essentially different from the situation in *Brave New World*, how is it different?
3. What role do media play in creating our morality? Our prejudices?
4. What, in our society, has effects on us that are similar to soma?
5. Why would feeling be taboo? What problems would it cause?
6. Why do we like to go shopping? Is it inherently enjoyable, or is something else at work?

Online

Hooked on Gadgets, and Paying a Mental Price

Week 3

September 21

Entertainment as a Way of Life

Required Reading (171 + several brief online articles)

Hal Niedzviecki, *The Peep Diaries*, chs. 1-3 (pp. 1-119)

Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, ch. 1 (pp. 3-15)

Neil Postman and Steve Powers, *How to Watch TV News*, chs. 1-3 (pp. 1-39)

Online

Amusing Ourselves to Death, the comic-strip version:

<http://www.recombinantrecords.net/docs/2009-05-Amusing-Ourselves-to-Death.html>

Susan Butcher & Carol Wood, *World of Tomorrow*:

http://undergrowth.org/world_of_tomorrow_by_susan_butcher_carol_wood

The Boob Tube vs. YouTube

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/stephen-balkam/the-boob-tube-vs-youtube_b_805537.html

Reality TV Is Not Reality

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dr-jim-taylor/reality-tv-is-not-reality_b_816104.html

The Fiction of Nonfiction TV

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/susan-kim/the-reality-of-reality-tv_b_815128.html

Modern Storytelling and the Search for Meaning

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/alex-pattakos/storytelling-culture-meaning_b_814798.html

Charlie Brooker - How to Report the News,

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YtGSXMuWMR4>

How Big Is Too Big?

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/reese-schonfeld/how-big-is-too-big_b_810580.html

Week 4

Field Trip / TBA

Hollywood Bus Tour

This bus tour will give us an in-person, on the scene view of both some elements of celebrity culture (the Sunset Strip, celebrity homes), as well as giving us a first-hand look at how those interested in celebrities, and working to sell celebrity culture, talk about celebrities and their environs.

This bus tour comes in between two pertinent course units --

Entertainment as A Way of Life, and Celebrity Culture and Reality TV -- which highlight our culture's deep concern with entertainment and celebrities.

Los Angeles is probably the best place in the country to study these topics, and a Hollywood bus tour provides a focused examination of both of these areas of study.

Required Reading (79)

Joshua Gamson, *Claims to Fame: Celebrity in Contemporary America* (chapters 2-4, 6) (pp. 40-107, 129-141)

Recommended

Manufacturing Consent: <http://www.hulu.com/watch/118171/manufacturing-consent>

Week 5

October 5

Celebrity Culture and Reality TV

“You can't shame or humiliate modern celebrities.
What used to be called shame and humiliation is now called publicity.”
P.J. O'Rourke

Required Reading (98)

Mark Andrejevic, *Reality TV: The Work of Being Watched* (chapters 1, 3, 4, 7) (pp. 1-22, 61-116, 173-194)

Film: *We Live in Public*

Week 6

October 12

**Perceptions and Reality:
Gender, Race, Class, and Sexual Orientation in the Media**

Required Reading (73)

Gail Dines and Jean McMahon Humez (eds.), *Gender, Race, and Class in Media: A Text-Reader*

- #7, Robin R. Means Coleman, “Black Sitcom Portrayals” (pp. 79-88)
- #8, Stuart Hall, “The Whites of Their Eyes: Racist Ideologies and the Media” (pp. 89-93)
- #14, Imani Perry, “Who(se) Am I? The Identity and Image of Women in Hip-Hip” (pp. 136-148)
- #55, Kristal Brent Zook, “The Fox Network and the Revolution in Black Television” (pp. 586-596)
- #63, Chyng Feng Sun, “Ling Woo in Historical Context: The New Face of Asian American Stereotypes on Television” (pp. 656-664)
- #26, Jean Kilbourne, “The More You Subtract, The More You Add” (pp. 258-267)
- #52, Joshua Gamson, “Sitting Ducks and Forbidden Fruits” (pp. 548-552)
- #56, Kylo-Patrick R. Hart, “Representing Gay Men on Television” (pp. 597-607)
- #57, Susan J. Hubert, “What’s Wrong with This Picture? The Politics of Ellen’s Coming Out Party” (pp. 608-612)

Part II
Social Change through Music and Film

Weeks 7-10

Music and Social Change

Week 7

October 19

Social Change and Music in the 20th Century: The Blues, Country, and Protest Songs

Required Reading (193)

Dick Weissman, *Talking 'Bout A Revolution: Music and Social Change in America*

- ch. 3, "African Americans" (pp. 63-130)

- ch. 5, "Protest Songs: Music as a Tool for Social Change" (pp. 171-230)

Dorian Lynskey, *33 Revolutions per Minute: A History of Protest Songs, from Billie Holiday to Green Day*, part I, songs 1-4 (pp. 3-69)

Essay #1 due

No class on October 26
(mandatory BU event)

Week 8

November 2

The Development of Rock and Roll, 1955-1970: The 60's and The Beatles

Required Reading (180)

Dick Weissman, *Talking 'Bout A Revolution: Music and Social Change in America*

- ch. 7, "Rock and Roll" (pp. 265-294)

- Dorian Lynskey, *33 Revolutions per Minute: A History of Protest Songs, from Billie Holiday to Green Day*, part II, songs 7-11 (pp. 109-194)

Ian MacDonald, *Revolution in the Head: The Beatles' Records and the Sixties*

- Preface (1st ed.), Introduction (pp. xv-xxiii, 1-37)

- Read for all songs as listed in supplement (see end of syllabus)

- skim/browse Chronology: The Sixties (pp. 393-472)

Online

A History of Modern Music (review all timelines and charts for context)

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/series/a-history-of-modern-music>

“How The Beatnik Riot Helped Kick Off The '60s,” Joel Rose (listen)

<http://www.npr.org/2011/04/09/135240040/how-the-beatnik-riot-helped-kick-off-the-60s>

John W. Whitehead, John Lennon: 'We're Only Trying to Get Us Some Peace'

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/john-w-whitehead/john-lennon-were-only-try_b_838392.html

Week 9

November 9

From Rock to Punk: The 70's and Beyond

Required Reading (198)

Dorian Lynskey, *33 Revolutions per Minute: A History of Protest Songs, from Billie Holiday to Green Day*, part IV, songs 16-26 (pp. 265-425)

Greil Marcus, *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century*

- Prologue (pp. 1-22)

- Version One: The Last Sex Pistols Concert (pp. 25-141)

Recommended

Patti Smith, *Just Kids*

Week 10

November 16

Modern Music, Celebrity Culture, and Social Change

Required Reading (113)

Dorian Lynskey, *33 Revolutions per Minute: A History of Protest Songs, from Billie Holiday to Green Day*, part V, songs 27-33 (pp. 429-535)

Dick Weissman, *Talking 'Bout A Revolution: Music and Social Change in America*

- ch. 10, “Music and Social Change” (pp. 315-322)

Online

“Lady Gaga Ends Target Partnership, Reportedly over LGBT Stance”

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/03/08/lady-gaga-ends-target-lgbt_n_833209.html

Film and Social Change

Week 11

November 30

Option: Go to a TV show taping tonight (free).

Required Reading (109)

Robert C. Bulman, *Hollywood Goes to High School*

- chapter 1, "Using the Movies to Make Sense of Society: A Sociological Introduction" (pp. 1-15)

- chapter 2, "Middle-Class Individualism and the Adolescent Frontier: What High School Films Reveal about American Culture" (pp. 16-42)

Ernest Giglio, *Here's Looking at You: Hollywood, Film & Politics*

- chapter 1, "It's Showtime: The Hollywood-Washington Connection" (pp. 1-26)

- chapter 2, "In Search of the Political Film: From Riefenstahl to the Three Stooges" (pp. 27-42)

- chapter 4, "Kiss, Kiss, Bang, Bang, Or How I Came to Love Sex and Violence on the Big Screen" (pp. 69-94)

Essay #2 due

Week 12

December 7

Conclusion

Research Project due December 7
