

**THE SOCIOLOGY OF MEDIA AND POPULAR CULTURE**  
**SOC1 137**  
**Prof. David Grazian**

**Department of Sociology**  
**University of Pennsylvania**  
**Fall 2004**

Class Meeting: CHEM 102, Monday and Wednesday, 1-1:50pm, plus recitation section (required)

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Office Hours: By appointment on Monday and Wednesday, 3-5pm

This course relies on a variety of sociological perspectives to examine the role of media and popular culture in everyday life, with a particular emphasis on the organization of the mass media industry, the relationship between cultural consumption and social status, and the social significance of leisure activities from sports to shopping. Specific course topics will include the rise of tabloid TV talk shows; the marketing of Disney, Nike and Starbucks; the excessive media coverage of contemporary celebrities; the blurring of boundaries between news and entertainment; and the commodification of the American blues.

This class meets every Monday and Wednesday from 1:00pm until 1:50pm.

**The following books are available for purchase at House of Our Own Bookstore (3920 Spruce Street):**

Howard S. Becker. 1982. *Art Worlds*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Joshua Gamson. 1994. *Claims to Fame: Celebrity in Contemporary America*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Malcolm Gladwell. 2002. *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*. Boston: Back Bay.

David Grazian. 2003. *Blue Chicago: The Search for Authenticity in Urban Blues Clubs*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Laura Grindstaff. 2002. *The Money Shot: Trash, Class, and the Making of TV Talk Shows*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Naomi Klein. 1999. *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies*. New York: Picador.

All additional readings, denoted below with an asterisk (\*), are included in a bulk-pack available from the Campus Copy Store, and online at <https://courseweb.upenn.edu/> (under "Course Documents" on the Blackboard course site). All books and additional readings are also available on reserve at Van Pelt Library; all journal articles are available on JSTOR.

Lecture slides shown in class, and review questions for selected readings, will also be made available online (under "Course Information" on the Blackboard course site) on the evening prior to each class meeting.

**Recitations:** All students must be enrolled in a recitation section; the Registrar's Office will automatically cancel the enrollment of any student not registered for a recitation within a few days. Attendance is required for all recitation sections, and individual recitation instructors may assign additional work as they deem necessary.

**Course Requirements:**

(1) **CLASS PARTICIPATION:** All students will be expected to complete all of the readings listed on the course schedule, attend all class lectures and recitation sessions on time, actively contribute to recitation class discussions and complete all work assigned by the recitation instructor (10% of final grade).

(2) **FIELDWORK ASSIGNMENT:** All students will be required to complete a fieldwork assignment on city nightlife, to be explained in greater detail once the semester is underway. Student's work will contribute to an ongoing research project on urban entertainment (10% of final grade).

(3) **EXAMINATIONS:** There will be two in-class examinations, a midterm and a final. Students will be asked to select and identify key terms, and complete short essays on a range of topics, requiring students to employ materials from the classroom lectures as well as the assigned readings. **The midterm will be held in class on Wednesday, November 3<sup>rd</sup>, and the final exam will be held on Monday, December 20<sup>th</sup>, 8:30-10:30am** (Midterm Exam, 30% of final grade; Final Exam, 50% of final grade).

Please note the following:

*ALL ASSIGNED GRADES ARE NON-NEGOTIABLE.*

*THE CASES OF STUDENTS WHO ARE SUSPECTED OF CHEATING ON THE ASSIGNMENT, MIDTERM OR FINAL EXAM WILL NOT BE ADJUDICATED BY THE PROFESSOR OR THE RECITATION INSTRUCTORS, BUT WILL AUTOMATICALLY BE FORWARDED TO THE UNIVERSITY OFFICE OF STUDENT CONDUCT FOR EVALUATION.*

*THERE WILL BE NO MAKE-UP EXAMINATIONS FOR THE MIDTERM OR THE FINAL EXAM. STUDENTS WHO WILL NOT BE ABLE TO ATTEND THESE SESSIONS ARE ADVISED AGAINST ENROLLING IN THE COURSE.*

**PART ONE: THE SOCIOLOGY OF POPULAR CULTURE****Week 1: Course Introduction**

9.8

No readings are assigned for the first class meeting.

**Week 2: The Social Organization of Popular Culture**

9.13

\*Raymond Williams. 1985. "Culture," "Popular," "Folk," "Art," and "Media." In *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 87-93, 236-8, 136-7, 40-2, 203-4.

Howard S. Becker. 1982. *Art Worlds*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 1-39.

9.15

Howard S. Becker. 1982. *Art Worlds*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 40-67; 272-99.

**Week 3: The Importance of Competitive Games: A Functionalist Approach**

9.20

\*H.G. Bissinger. 1990. *Friday Night Lights: A Town, a Team, and a Dream*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, pp xi-xiv, 1-52.

9.22

\*Clifford Geertz. 1973. "Deep Play: Notes on a Balinese Cockfight." In *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic, pp. 412-53.

Film: *Strut!* A 2001 documentary about the Philadelphia Mummers and their annual New Year's Day parade will be shown in class.

**Week 4: The Power of Advertising: A Critical Approach**

9.27

Naomi Klein. 1999. *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies*. New York: Picador, pp. 3-61.

9.29

Naomi Klein. 1999. *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies*. New York: Picador, pp. 63-105.

### **Week 5: How Fads Become Popular: An Interaction Approach**

10.4

Malcolm Gladwell. 2002. *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*. Boston: Back Bay, pp. 3-88.

10.6

Malcolm Gladwell. 2002. *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*. Boston: Back Bay, pp. 89-132, 169-215.

## **PART TWO: THE PRODUCTION OF POPULAR CULTURE**

### **Week 6: The Organization of the Media Industry**

10.11

\*Lawrence Grossberg, Ellen Wartella, and D. Charles Whitney. 1998. "Media and Money." Chapter 4 in *Media Making: Mass Media in a Popular Culture*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, pp. 89-117.

10.13

\*Paul M. Hirsch. 1972. "Processing Fads and Fashions: An Organization Set Analysis of Culture Industry Systems." *American Journal of Sociology* 77: 639-59.

### **Week 7: Reality TV and the Production of Popular Culture**

10.18

Laura Grindstaff. 2002. *The Money Shot: Trash, Class, and the Making of TV Talk Shows*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 1-78.

10.20

Laura Grindstaff. 2002. *The Money Shot: Trash, Class, and the Making of TV Talk Shows*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 80-147.

Guest Speaker: Cyndi Butz, Location Coordinator, *Trading Spaces*; Production Manager, *Ambush Makeover*.

### **Week 8: The Mass Marketing of Popular Culture**

10.25

Due to Fall Break, there will be no class.

10.27

Naomi Klein. 1999. *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies*. New York: Picador, pp. 129-91.

Guest Speaker: Robert Felton, Director of Business Development, Wizard Entertainment.

### **Week 9: Midterm Examination**

11.1

There will be no class; instead, students are encouraged to prepare for the upcoming midterm examination.

11.3

The midterm exam will be administered in class.

## **PART THREE: THE CONSUMPTION OF POPULAR CULTURE**

### **Week 10: The Consumption of Urban Nightlife**

11.8

David Grazian. 2003. *Blue Chicago: The Search for Authenticity in Urban Blues Clubs*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. xv-xix; 1-59.

11.10

David Grazian. 2003. *Blue Chicago: The Search for Authenticity in Urban Blues Clubs*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 61-124.

*The fieldwork assignment will be explained in class.*

### **Week 11: Cultural Consumption and Social Class**

11.15

\*Lawrence W. Levine. [1984] 1991. "William Shakespeare and the American People: A Study in Cultural Transformation." In *Rethinking Popular Culture*. Chandra Mukerji and Michael Schudson, eds. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, pp. 157-97.

11.17

\*David Halle. 1992. "The Audience for Abstract Art: Class, Culture, and Power." In *Cultivating Differences: Symbolic Boundaries and the Making of Inequality*. Michele Lamont and Marcel Fournier, eds. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 131-151.

\*Richard A. Peterson. 1992. "Understanding Audience Segmentation: From Elite and Mass to Omnivore and Univore." *Poetics* 21: 243-258.

### **Week 12: Shopping in a World of Consumption**

11.22

\*Margaret Crawford. 1992. "The World in a Shopping Mall." In *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space*. Michael Sorkin, ed. New York: Hill and Wang, pp. 3-30.

*The fieldwork assignment will be due in class.*

11.24

Due to the upcoming Thanksgiving break, there will be no class.

### **Week 13: Entertainment as Art and Commerce**

11.29

\*Shyon Baumann. 2001. "Intellectualization and Art World Development: Film in the United States." *American Sociological Review* 66: 404-26.

12.1

Joshua Gamson. 1994. *Claims to Fame: Celebrity in Contemporary America*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 1-12, 57-78.

Guest Speaker: Shirley Halperin, Music Editor, *US Weekly Magazine*; Contributing Writer, *Rolling Stone Magazine*.

### **Week 14: The Consumption of Celebrity and the Media Event**

12.6

Joshua Gamson. 1994. *Claims to Fame: Celebrity in Contemporary America*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 79-107.

12.8

Joshua Gamson. 1994. *Claims to Fame: Celebrity in Contemporary America*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 129-41.

\*Daniel J. Boorstin. 1961. "From News Gathering to News Making: A Flood of Pseudo-Events." Chapter 1 in *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, New York: Vintage, pp. 7-44.

**The final will be held on Monday, December 20<sup>th</sup>, 8:30-10:30am.**