

ENG\_OX 185

**Critical Reading and Writing:  
Popular Culture and the Pop/Punk Divide**

Fall 2014

Oxford Library Classroom 201

Tues/Thurs 1:40-3:20

Dr. Kevin Quarmby

203 Humanities

kevin.quarmby@emory.edu

Office Hours: When not teaching, I am in my office or in Lil's. Please email in advance for appointment or knock when my door is open.

***Required Texts***

Raiford Guins and Omayra Zaragoza Cruz (eds), *Popular Culture: A Reader* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2005)

Diana Hacker, *A Pocket Style Manual*, 5th edn (Boston: Bedford St Martins, 2008)

***Course Description***

This course explores twentieth century popular culture in all its creative forms. An appreciation of popular literary culture is juxtaposed with analysis of music and fashion. Students will consider how popular culture has adapted to the political and social environment in which it manifests. From rock-and-roll to pop, from glam rock to punk, Popular Culture and the Pop/Punk Divide will offer the perfect environment to develop excellent critical reading and writing skills, with innovative research and inquiry as its core values.

***General Course Guidelines***

English 185 is an intensive writing course. We will approach the fascinating world of popular culture using the analytical skills of a cultural historian and the descriptive skills of a contemporary journalist. Critical reading and writing are the primary tools to develop these skills, as well as observation, concentration and reflection. This course demands your full cooperation and attention, as well as a willingness to stretch the boundaries of your critical reading and writing. It requires an holistic 'life in balance' approach to the subject to appreciate fully the importance of careful reading, intellectual engagement, and creative expression as the principal tools for a successful academic career in any discipline.

### ***Course objectives and learning outcomes***

The student who successfully completes this course will:

1. Possess an increased skill in writing relative to the criteria of the course rubric.
2. Gain knowledge of the cultural, social, and political world in which they live, and be empowered to express this knowledge in an accomplished form.
3. Gain knowledge of writing analytically about that which appears, at first glance, everyday and ubiquitous.
4. Gain greater skill in, and knowledge about, collaborative writing, as well as facilitation of classroom discussion and journalistic interrogation and interview techniques.

The course develops specific core reading and writing skills, while allowing students to analyze and interrogate the popular culture that bombards them on a daily basis. Attendance at class is mandatory, which means that you **MUST** attend all classes to appreciate fully the historical sweep and trajectory of the subject and material. Pop to Punk covers the most exciting period in twentieth century cultural history. It would be a shame to miss any of this amazing and colorful voyage of self-discovery.

Also, **ALL** set texts must be read in full **BY EVERYONE**. This requirement guarantees that class discussion and debate will be of the highest quality. Preparation is the key to success. The set books (above) will come with you to each and every class. You will regularly be required to read aloud from your written assignments, and to explore your own engagement with the orality of this opportunity to test your writing expressiveness. The rhetorical effect you have on others is an excellent measure of your success in developing critical reading and writing skills.

To develop your research skills and to make full use of Oxford College's excellent literary resources of primary and secondary material, we will be visited twice by our personal course Librarian this semester for research guidance and assistance.

### ***Assignments & Evaluation***

**Research:** Essays will often benefit from information derived from other sources. We will follow MLA guidelines for in-text citations and a **bibliography** at the end of each paper **is required**. Essays with incorrect citation format (or no citations or bibliography) will be returned ungraded.

**Oral Presentations:** you will individually, or in small groups, lead at least one class discussion about that week's text or an assigned topic. You will sign up at the beginning of the semester for the day you will lead. Your oral presentation is 10% of your final grade. If you are absent without an excuse on your assigned day, you cannot make it up.

### **Assignments in General:**

1. Short assignments based on readings and following the Oral Reports must be submitted through Blackboard.
2. We will rotate the responsibility of leading/facilitating class discussion of readings (after the first two weeks and Add/Drop).
3. You will write 5 essays (800-1000 words), based on material generated from discussion of course materials and the core readings themselves. The essays will require critical research and formulation. One further essay, a Reflection Paper, will take the form of a reflection on your writing and critical reading development, and your understanding of how popular culture adds to, or detracts from, your sense of 'Life in Balance'.
4. You must keep copies of ALL handwritten work in your personal PORTFOLIO OF LEARNING. This can be any file or folder. It will include drafts, rewrites etc. **IMPORTANT, do not discard ANY writing, no matter how small or of what quality. This will form the basis of your last assignment that traces your development and success in the class.**
5. One formal paper (2500 words) requiring outside sources, MLA documentation, an in-depth treatment of an issue, and some form of oral presentation of the findings to the class. Topics to be decided upon as we discuss the various issues raised by the course content.

### **Grading of the Assignments and Assigned Weights of Each**

Oral Presentations + Participation/attendance 10%

1 Introductory Interview Paper 5%

5 'regular' essays\* 35% (approximately one every two weeks)

1 Fashion assignment 10%

7 Oral presentation Short Assignments\*\* 10%

Reflection Paper, based on Portfolio of Learning 10%

Formal Paper Final 20% (due last day of regular classes)

All the above papers are weighted to reflect improvement as the course progresses.

\*Portfolio of Learning Essay (Essay 6) is a required and very important Reflective Essay, which should reflect your development and growth as a writer. Your Portfolio of Learning will provide you with the principal material for this.

\*\*The oral presentations will provide an opportunity for each student to discuss in depth her or

his work with some aspect of popular culture. It may involve written material, visual or artistic representations, or an exploration of specific musical trends or subcultures. Guidance for these presentations will be offered in class.

### **Other Responsibilities and Related Matters**

1. Attendance. Be present and on time. I take roll the first thing as class begins, and always mark as absent those who are not in the room. Regular absenteeism will result in a Fail. Students who are late must assume responsibility to be certain the attendance record is changed to reflect their attendance. Your grade WILL be lower if you do not attend class.
2. Honor Code. We will discuss this important issue in class, and we will cover plagiarism at that time. But please be aware that your writing is to be your own, and any other person's writing must be acknowledged through citations in the proper form. Please consult the Oxford College Handbook if you have any questions regarding the Code or the Honors Council.
3. Late essays and other work. Work must be turned in on time so that I am able to give feedback when the class is discussing the assignment.
4. Ms. Sarah Bankston is our library support person, and she will be leading training sessions for you at different points in the semester. Attending these sessions during class time is mandatory (e.g. required).

### *Business*

All information about assignments, your grades, and your class syllabus, is available to you on Blackboard. You are responsible for knowing the information and materials posted there.

Office Hours: When not teaching, I am in my office or in Lil's. Please email in advance for appointment or knock when my door is open.

Late Essays: Your essays are due at the *beginning* of class on the specified date. Any late essays will be returned unmarked and will receive an F grade.

Attendance: As noted, attendance is mandatory. There will be no distinction between tardiness and absences. You must notify IN ADVANCE of any absence through sickness or ill health; your classmates may NOT offer explanations on your behalf.

Email: You MUST use email for the following reasons:

- ☐ to cancel an appointment

- ☐ to notify me of an absence
- ☐ to ask a legitimate question about an assignment

Emails requesting information contained in the syllabus will NOT be answered. Emails about grades will likewise NOT be answered. Conversations about such matters MUST be in person.

**Plagiarism:** The work you submit for class must be your own. You may not submit the same essay more than once. If you use another author's words or original ideas in your writing, you must give credit to the author by using the MLA documentation form. All papers suspected of plagiarism will be turned over to the Honor Council (*Oxford College Handbook*). See section at end.

Electronic rules: Laptops are ONLY permitted when I require them for class. Silence your phone and put it away during class.

### *Course Schedule.*

**IMPORTANT NOTE: This schedule is subject to change at the instructor's discretion. All changes will be notified to the students in advance.**

## **AUGUST**

### **POPULAR CULTURE: DEFINITIONS AND DISTINCTIVENESS.**

Thurs. 28: **Introduction to the course**, syllabus. **Introduction to interviewing techniques:** The Journalist's View, in-class paper.

## **SEPTEMBER**

Tues. 2: **READ** 'Introduction to Reader' (pp. 1-13) and F.R. Leavis (p. 33).

## **DELINEATING POPULAR CULTURE: MASS APPEAL AND MASS MEDIA.**

Thurs. 4: **READ** Hall (p. 64). Popular music and mass media: 'Video Killed the Radio Star'.  
Discuss Paper 1. **Short Assignment 1 (250 words) due in class:**  
"What is popular culture? Your personal mission statement." (Add/Drop 4pm Weds. September 3) **ORAL REPORTS will be assigned.**

Tues. 9: **PAPER 1 (800-1000 word) due at beginning of class. "Popular culture: Is mass appeal the same as mass art?"**

## **THE COMMODIFICATION OF POPULAR CULTURE.**

Thurs. 11: **READ** Marx (p. 89) **ORAL REPORTS**

Tues. 16: **READ** Lowe and Lloyd (p. 129). **Short Assignment 2 (250 word) response to Oral Reports Topic due at beginning of class.**

## **THE MARKETING OF POPULAR CULTURE.**

Thurs. 18: **PAPER 2 (800-1000 word) due at beginning of class. "Can we over-consume popular culture?"**

Tues. 23: **READ** Smith (p. 151). **ORAL REPORTS.** Fast fashion in a consumerist society.

Thurs. 25: **Short Assignment 3 (250 word) response to Oral Reports Topic due at beginning of class.**

Tues. 30: **READ** Cashmore (p. 159). Marketing cont.

## **OCTOBER**

### **PRACTICE AND CONSUMPTION: CULTURE AND A 'LIFE IN BALANCE'.**

Thurs. 2: **PAPER 3 (800-1000 word) due at beginning of class. Can a 'black culture industry' survive in a multi-cultural world?** The marketing of 'black culture'.

Tues. 7: **READ** Willis (p. 241). **ORAL REPORTS** + FINAL PAPER QUESTIONS TO BE DISCUSSED.

Thurs. 9: **NO CLASSROOM SESSION: In groups of 2, please conduct your own journalistic fashion survey.**

This will involve (politely) asking an individual (or a group of individuals) on campus if they will let you photograph them on your cells or cameras. You will approach anyone you feel is adopting a specific style, wearing a specific fashion, or is expressing some aspect of popular culture through their clothing.

You do not have to **LIKE** their clothing, but that is not for them to know.

What is important is for **BOTH** interviewers to post their individual responses (250 words from each member of the class), accompanied by the pictures taken, and as much information as you can get about the reasons they dress that way, where they get their clothes, who influenced them etc.

This will require the same skills you learned on the first day of class.

Be **INTERESTED**

Be **POLITE**

If someone does **NOT** want to be questioned or photographed, respect that decision and move on.

This is an excellent way for you to explore the wider Oxford community, to develop your inter-personal skills, to record your findings efficiently and effectively, and to interpret and express your findings in a lucid, structured way.

**This SHORT FASHION ASSIGNMENT is DUE Tuesday 21 October, and**

**adds a potential 10% to your overall grade**, as it represents a unique opportunity to impress your peers with your intelligent attitude to alternative fashion sense, your approachability and warmth as Oxford 185 ambassadors, and your advanced writing technique.

We will be back in class after Fall Break for discussion, and these interview reports will lead us into further fashion material.

## **FALL BREAK**

Thurs. 16: The Beatles and 'pop' culture. **Short Assignment 4 (250 word) response to Oral Reports Topic due at beginning of class.**

## **VOICING POPULAR CULTURE: MUSICAL IDENTITIES.**

Tues. 21: *Help!* And the commodification of The Beatles.

Thurs. 23: The commodification of boy bands. **LIBRARY SESSION, with Librarian, Sarah Bankston.**

Tues. 28: Voicing cont. **PAPER 4 (800-1000 word) due at beginning of class: The Beatles versus Elvis Presley: American dream or American idol?**

Thurs. 30: **READ** Berlant (p. 309). **ORAL REPORTS.**

## **THE STYLING OF POPULAR CULTURE: FASHION AND SOCIAL CHANGE.**

## **NOVEMBER**

Tues. 4: David Bowie: Ziggy plays guitar. **Short Assignment 5 (250 word) response to Oral Reports Topic due at beginning of class.**



Thurs. 6: **READ** Hebdige (355). **ORAL REPORTS.** + Drafting reflective essay based on Portfolio of Learning.

Tues. 11: **Short Assignment 6 (250 word) response to Oral Reports Topic (Hebdige) due at beginning of class.**

Thurs. 13: Styling cont. **PAPER 5 (800-1000 word) due. Choose one fashion (clothing, style, movement, icon etc.) from any period after, and covering any period in, the post-Second World War years and describe its development specifically as an expression of youth culture.**

### **SUBCULTURES AND THE PUNK IMPERATIVE.**

Tues. 18: **READ** Fuchs (p. 417). **ORAL REPORTS**

Thurs. 20: **NO CLASSROOM SESSION: Using the Library and online resources at your disposal, please research and post on Blackboard ONE example of a popular music video (including YouTube link) that best exemplifies your own musical identity. These will form the basis of class discussion on November 21st.**

**AND explain in 100 words WHY you chose this particular musical style/genre.**

#### **NOTE**

**Even though only 100 words in length, please provide a FULL CITATION for the YouTube link and for any textual material that may explain your choice. You will be graded on how well you offer intellectual reasoning for your choice, based on the criteria so far discussed in class. A low grade will be given to anyone who says merely that they LIKE the music. I need an explanation WHY you like it.**

Tues. 25: **Subcultures cont. Punk aesthetic or punk nihilism? The one example of a popular**

**music video (including YouTube links), as posted by all students on November 20, will form the basis of this class.  
+ Short Assignment 7 (250 word) response to Oral Reports  
Topic due at beginning of class.**

## **THANKSGIVING**

## **DECEMBER**

Tues. 2: **Antepenultimate class.** Subcultures cont. Punk aesthetic or punk nihilism?

Presentations **BY**

**REFLECTION PAPER (800-1000 word) based on your Portfolio of Learning due Saturday  
December 6.**

Thurs: 4: **Presentations BY Penultimate Class.**

Tues. 9: **Presentations BY Last Class.**

**Final 2500 word research paper due Friday December 12**

PLEASE NOTE: any aspect of this syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.

## **GRADING POLICIES**

### **Papers:**

A = 93-100%; A- = 90-92% -- an "A" ( 90-100%) paper offers a

persuasive, eloquent, stylistically sophisticated argument. It presents a compelling thesis, which is then developed into a well-structured, coherent essay. An “A” paper uses evidence effectively. Such a paper thoughtfully considers and analyzes other viewpoints, including the views of the paper’s intended audience. An “A” paper’s style is distinctive, and this style helps further the writer’s argument.

B+ = 87-89%; B = 83-86%; B- = 80-82% -- a “B” (80-89%) paper also offers a convincing argument. It has an interesting thesis and is, on the whole, well structured. Like an A paper, it too considers alternative positions and does so in a thoughtful manner. A “B” paper’s style is clear and relatively free of errors that could hinder its readability and/or persuasiveness. A “B” paper grasps the significance of style in making an effective argument.

C+ = 77-79%; C = 73-76%; C- = 70-72% -- a “C” (70-79%) paper makes an argument but does not do so effectively. It may fail to present evidence in support of its thesis or it may present evidence in a haphazard and hence unconvincing manner. In addition, a paper will receive a “C” if it is stylistically unsophisticated, replete with digressions, lacks a sense of audience, or ignores opposing opinions.

D+ = 67-69%; D = 60-66% -- a “D” (60-69%) paper fails to present an argument. The paper lacks a thesis and is merely a string of ideas, some of which may be very interesting but none of which are developed into a clear, rational, coherent essay. Additionally, a plethora of typos, stylistic problems, or grammatical flaws may turn any paper into a “D” paper if such lapses significantly affect the essay’s readability.

F = <60% -- an “F” (less than 60%) paper is the product of a lack of care on the part of the writer. In an “F” paper, the writer may neglect to hand in the assignment; refuse to address the paper topic; or violate common standards of decency.

**Participation:** A student receiving an “A” for participation arrives to class on time, well-prepared and ready to join in the classroom discussion and other activities. This student contributes readily and thoughtfully, but doesn’t dominate; shows respect for other students; and helps advance the conversation or activity.

A student receiving a “B” for participation is prepared and respectful of others, but may need to be prompted to participate. He/she is actively involved in all discussions and activities, but may take a less prominent role.

A student receiving a “C” for participation generally arrives on time and prepared, but needs to be prompted to participate in large and small group activities. Students who find large group discussions difficult should talk to the instructor to determine ways to offset this challenge.

A student receiving a “D” for participation arrives late or unprepared regularly and/or disrupts the class in some way (disrespectful to other students; consistently tangential remarks etc.).

A student receiving an “F” for participation is often absent, late, or

unprepared, and does not contribute to the discussion or class activities in a productive way.

### **Final Grades:**

When final grades are calculated, later work will be weighted more heavily than earlier work in order to allow for improvement and development of skills in writing, participation, and textual analysis. Each student will receive a large number of grades during the course of the term (for papers, participation, attendance, oral reports etc.), so that you have a number of areas in which to succeed. Please come and see the instructor during office hours or by appointment at any point during the term when you would like to discuss your progress.

### **Oxford Student Honor Code**

The responsibility for maintaining standards of unimpeachable honesty in all academic work and in campus judicial proceedings falls upon every individual who is a part of Oxford College of Emory University. The Honor Code is based on the fundamental expectations that every person in Oxford College will conduct his or her life according to the dictates of the Honor Code and will refuse to tolerate actions in others that would violate the Honor Code.

#### **Article 1: Academic Misconduct**

Academic misconduct is an offense generally defined as any action or failure to act that is contrary to the integrity and honesty of members of the academic community.

**A.**Such offenses include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Seeking, acquiring, receiving, or giving information about the conduct of an examination, knowing that the release of such information has not been authorized
2. Plagiarizing
3. Seeking, using, giving, or obtaining unauthorized assistance in any academic assignment or examination
4. Intentionally mis-shelving, damaging or removing library materials without authorization
5. Intentionally giving false information to professors or instructors for the purpose of gaining academic advantage
6. Intentionally giving false testimony in an Honor or Conduct Board hearing or refusing to give evidence when requested by the Honor Council
7. Intentionally giving unauthorized information regarding hearings of the Oxford College Conduct Board or Honor Council

## 8. Breach of any duties prescribed by this code

**B.** A duty of confidentiality is implicit in the Honor System. It is academic misconduct under this Code for any member of the Honor Council, a student witness, or any student (other than the accused) who has obtained knowledge of an Honor Council proceeding, past or present, to breach this confidentiality. Nothing in this paragraph shall restrict communications to officials of the University where knowledge is necessary to the performance of the officials' duties nor shall it restrict disclosure required by law.

**C.** Harassment of witnesses or anyone involved in an Honor Council hearing, before, during or after the hearing constitutes academic misconduct.

### **Article 2: Honor Pledge and Obligation**

**A.** A student's submission of any work to be evaluated for course credit constitutes a declaration that he or she has neither given nor received unauthorized information on the work, nor has condoned the giving or receiving of unauthorized information by others.

**B.** Each student at Oxford College of Emory University agrees to abide by the honor pledge and takes upon himself or herself the responsibility of upholding the Honor Code. Each student is urged to inquire of the Honor Council about any doubtful case at any time throughout the year.

**C.** Each professor shall explain to his or her classes at the beginning of each semester any special aspects of the Honor Code as it pertains to that course.

**D.** "State of the Honor Code" meeting of the student body and the Council shall be held periodically upon the call of the Council. The purpose of these meetings will be to discuss how the Honor Code is working, to strengthen understanding of the Code among members of the College community, and to promote improvements.

### **PLEASE NOTE:**

**Student work submitted as part of this course may be reviewed by Oxford College and Emory College faculty and staff for the purposes of improving instruction and enhancing Emory education.**