

**Dr. Karen Head**  
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**Office Hours · Mondays 11-12 & by appointment**

## **LMC 3843: Communication in Popular Culture**

**Prerequisite: English 1102**

**Fulfills Core Area C: Humanities**

### **Course Description:**

This course is an introduction to and exploration of communication in popular culture (e.g. television, music, photography, visual art, performance art, "self help" literature, etc.). Students will learn to use rhetorical and critical methods of analysis to understand the communicative dimension of these cultural forms as they explore the often complex relationship between language, visual images, mediated communication, and how these shape our social, political, and cultural values.

### **Learning Outcomes:**

*Textual/Visual Analysis:* Students will learn to read, analyze, and interpret not only cultural projects such as film, literature, art, and new media, but also scientific and technical documents.

*Interpretive Frameworks:* Students will become familiar with a variety of social, political, and philosophical theories and be able to apply those theories to creative and scientific texts, as well as to their own cultural observations.

*Communication Skills:* Students will be able to gather, organize, and express information clearly and accurately, with sensitivity to will be able to do so both by using traditional media and by tapping the potential of new digital media.

### **Required Texts**

- Japp, Phyllis, Meister, Mark, Japp, Debra K. (eds.) *Communication Ethics, Media, and Popular Culture*
- McGee, Micki, *Self Help, Inc.: Makeover Culture in American Life*
- Pozner, Jennifer, *Reality Bites Back: The Troubling Truth About Guilty Pleasure TV*
- Sontag, Susan, *On Photography*

### **Grades**

Discussion Postings	10% (all averaged)
Twitter Review	15%
Museum Response	10%
Self-Help Review	20%
Personal Creative Project	20%
Final Project & Presentation	25%

### **Discussion Postings**

These are short questions/observations/responses meant to inspire class discussion. These are due on T-Square by 9:00 am each discussion day. You will be allowed 3 drops, but no discussion postings will be accepted late.

### **Major Assignments**

Following is an overview of the assignments for our course—more detailed descriptions will be given in class.

#### **Twitter Review Project (due 2/3 with presentations 2/3, 6, 8, 10)**

In an attempt to understand the effects of the relationship between public “selves” and “private” commentary, you will follow a public figure (one who tweets at least ten times a day) on Twitter. You will analyze the content and present a condensed 5-minute review to the class. Based on the person you follow and the content being analyzed, you may choose a variety of multimodal approaches for the presentation of materials.

#### **Museum Response (due by 3/2)**

This is an individual 4-page response to a piece of art (or a series by the same artist) considering the political, social, and/or cultural implications of the work.

**Self Help Review/Program (due by 3/16)**

Individuals or groups may tackle this assignment. Choose any self-help book/program that interests you. You will write a 6-8-page critical review and analysis about the program. Alternately, you may create your own self-help program (4-6 page book proposal or a storyboard for an infomercial) in response to the program you review.

**Personal Creative Project (due 4/2 with presentations 4/2, 4, 6, 9, 11, 13)**

You will have an opportunity to express your own agenda regarding an important political, social, or cultural issue through a creative project of your own choosing. You will be expected to present your work along with an artist's statement about how you have imbedded messages about your agenda into the work presented.

**Final Project (due 4/20 with presentations on 4/23, 25, 27)**

This will be a group project that deconstructs and analyzes a major exhibit, performance, or event. Think MTV pop up videos as one way to consider this assignment. Each group will propose a topic and propose the best way(s) of presenting the analysis.

## **CLASS ADMINISTRATION SECTION**

**Traditional Text Assignment Format**

Everything you turn in must be typed and proofread. To quote a colleague, "Typed and proofed, typed and proofed, find the groove, typed and proofed."

**Conferences**

I encourage you to meet with me individually to discuss your work. These meetings can be during my office hours, by appointment, or via videoconference.

**Late Assignment Policy**

Unless you make PRIOR arrangements, I will drop one full letter grade from the assignment grade for each day an assignment is late. If a serious emergency prevents you from contacting me beforehand, I suggest you contact me as soon as possible, so that I may consider your circumstances.

**Attendance Policy**

Attendance is crucial to your success in this class. Consequently, if you are habitually absent and/or tardy, your participation grade will suffer. Three tardies count as one absence. After four absences, your final grade will be lowered by one letter grade. After six absences, your final grade will be lowered another letter grade. After eight absences, your final grade will be lowered another letter grade. If you must miss class, I will assume it is for a good reason. Should the very rare situation occur that would cause you to miss class for two full weeks (six class meetings), I will expect an official written excuse. Otherwise, I don't make distinctions between absences; therefore, I don't need/expect any kind of documentation, and suggest that you use your absences judiciously.

**The Communication Center**

The Communication Center is located in Clough 447. It is an excellent resource for anyone who wants help with a communication-related project. You can visit the center for help at any stage of the process for any project in any discipline. The knowledgeable and friendly tutors are available to help you develop and revise your projects. They are NOT available to "fix" your projects. Please do not ask the tutors to proofread or edit your projects. For information on making an appointment please visit this website:

<<http://communicationcenter.gatech.edu/content/make-appointment>>. If you need assistance with the appointment system, you can call 404-385-3612 or stop by the center. All services are free and confidential.

*Because I am the director of the center, you may wish to consult with me to find out when I will be out of the center in order to ensure your privacy. While I do offer tutoring hours, you may not sign up for my assistance in the center. If you wish to meet with me, you should do so during office hours or by special appointment.*

**Week Prior to Final Exam Notice:**

No major course projects will be completed in their entirety during the week prior to final exams (WPFE). Work on and presentation of major course projects will be part of in-class and out-of-class work during the semester, and work on and presentation of major course projects begun prior to the WPFE may be part of in-class and out-

of-class work during the WPFE. No new assignments will be given during the WPFE. Assignments that have been on the syllabus and are begun before the WPFE may be due during the WPFE. This course includes no quizzes or tests during WPFE. All quizzes and tests will be graded and returned or available for review on or before the last day of class preceding final exam week. This course has no final exam. In lieu of a final exam, this course has a culminating project, which you worked on earlier in the semester. It may be due in the WPFE but not during Final Exams. Since this course has no final examination, nothing for this course is due during Finals Week.

**Disability Notice:**

If any student in the class has a disability which would make it difficult to carry out the work as outlined for the course, please contact Access Disabled Assistance Program for Tech Students (ADAPTS) within the first two weeks of the semester to develop reasonable accommodations. For an appointment with a counselor call (404) 894-2563 (voice) / (404) 894-1664 (voice/TDD) or visit 210 Student Services Building. For more information visit the following website: <http://www.adapts.gatech.edu/guidebook.htm>.

**Academic Honesty:**

All work you turn in for this class must be your own work, with all outside reference sources properly cited and acknowledged. All written assignments for this course will be turned in through turnitin.com. The "Student Conduct Code of the Rules and Regulations" (Georgia Institute of Technology General Catalog, Section XIX) states, "Academic misconduct is an act that does or could improperly distort student grades or other student academic records" and offers the following descriptive list:

- Possessing, using, or exchanging improperly acquired written or verbal information in the preparation of any essay, laboratory report, examination, or other assignment included in an academic course;
- Substitution for, or unauthorized collaboration with, a student in the commission of academic requirements;
- Submission of material that is wholly or substantially identical to that created or published by another person or persons, without adequate credit notations indicating authorship (plagiarism);
- False claims of performance or work that has been submitted by the claimant;
- Alteration or insertion of any academic grade or rating so as to obtain unearned academic credit;
- Forgery, alteration, or misuse of any institute document relating to the academic status of the student.

The Code continues, "While these acts constitute assured instances of academic misconduct, other acts of academic misconduct may be defined by the professor." Consult the Honor Code online at <http://www.gatech.edu/honadv/honorcode.html> or in the General Catalog to remember your primary commitment to academic honesty. Students who engage in academic dishonesty may receive a zero on the assignment or fail the course. In addition, the instance will be reported to the Dean of Students who may take further action.

## Schedule

Date	Readings	Assignments/Events
1/9		Introductions
1/11	<i>CEMPC</i> (chapters 1-2)	Discussion Posting
1/13	<i>CEMPC</i> (chapters 3-4)	Discussion Posting
1/16	<b><i>MLK Holiday</i></b>	
1/18	<i>CEMPC</i> (chapters 5-7)	Discussion Posting
1/20	<i>CEMPC</i> (chapters 8-9)	Discussion Posting
1/23	<i>CEMPC</i> (chapters 10-11)	Discussion Posting
1/25	<i>CEMPC</i> (chapters 12-13)	Discussion Posting
1/27	<i>On Photography</i> (1-82)	Discussion Posting
1/30	<i>On Photography</i> (85-180)	Discussion Posting
2/1		Documentary Photography: Guest Speaker
2/3		Twitter Review Presentations
2/6		Twitter Review Presentations
2/8		Twitter Review Presentations
2/10		Twitter Review Presentations
2/13	<i>Self-Help, Inc.</i> prologue+intro )	Discussion Posting
2/15	<i>Self-Help, Inc.</i> (chapters 1-2 )	Discussion Posting
2/17		Project Work Day
2/20	<i>Self-Help, Inc.</i> (chapters 3-4 )	Discussion Posting
2/22	<i>Self-Help, Inc.</i> (chapters 5-6 )	Discussion Posting
2/24		Project Work Day
2/27		Concerts: Guest Speaker
2/29		Performance Art: Guest Speaker
3/2		Museum Responses Due
3/5	<i>Reality Bites</i> intro-chapter 2)	Discussion Posting
3/7	<i>Reality Bites</i> (chapters 3-5)	Discussion Posting
3/9	<i>Reality Bites</i> (chapters 6-8)	Discussion Posting
3/12	<i>Reality Bites</i> (chapters 9-11 )	Discussion Posting
3/14		Reality TV: Guest Speaker
3/16		Self-Help Review Projects/Papers Due
3/19-3/23	<b><i>Spring Break</i></b>	
3/26		Group Project Work Day
3/28		Group Project Work Day
3/30		Group Project Work Day
4/2		Personal Creative Presentations
4/4		Personal Creative Presentations
4/6		Personal Creative Presentations
4/9		Personal Creative Presentations
4/11		Personal Creative Presentations
4/13		Personal Creative Presentations
4/16		Group Project Work Day
4/18		Group Project Work Day
4/20		Group Project Work Day
4/23		Final Project Presentations
4/25		Final Project Presentations
4/27		Final Project Presentations