Popular Culture (SO 307)
Section ZA
Spring 2015 Course Policy Statement

Stacy Smith
Class times/Location: Online
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Office: BC 115B
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Office Hours: TR 1:00 – 3:30; also by appointment

Course Materials:
- Other readings will be provided to you via Canvas.

Course Description:
This course will examine popular culture as an influential institution within our society. Students will take a critical look at popular culture from a sociological perspective. Within this foundation, students will be analyzing society through popular culture.

Course Objectives/Goals:
Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:
- Examine popular culture from a sociological perspective
- Become aware of the cultural values embedded within popular culture
- Have a deeper understanding of the role each of us plays in creating and consuming popular culture
- Learn how to be open to differing opinions about popular culture

Course Format:
In this class you will be expected to participate in an active learning environment, engage in experiential assignments, and make connections with ideas and knowledge from other disciplines. Course evaluation will consist of written assignments with instructor feedback on critical thinking and communication skills, active participation in the social world, and active engagement in online classroom discussion of social issues.
Throughout these assignments, students are given the opportunity to connect the sociological perspective to the “real” world around us. I try to keep the course as current as possible, focusing on what is happening NOW, so please feel free to send me materials that you think are interesting and relevant to the course.

We all learn in different ways, and this course design accommodates various learning strategies. Students members are expected to read assigned material, to be prepared for participation in online discussions. In this class, you will learn by doing sociology; therefore your active participation is critical.

WE WILL BE USING LEARNING CIRCLES IN THIS CLASS. This means that you will be required to collaborate with other class members in the production of graded assignments, in addition to producing some independent work. More information on this process will be provided.

Course Requirements:
This course challenges us to think critically and scientifically about our social world. When I say challenge, that is exactly what I mean. Learning to step outside of ourselves and see our world with new eyes (the Sociological Imagination) is extremely difficult. At times it may even be uncomfortable and may even tread on personal practices or beliefs. We will also explore where we fit within society and what responsibilities we have as ethical members of society. I expect members of this class to work together as a conscientious learning team.

To that end, as a class we will acknowledge the following:
- It is very likely that in our communities of origin, we have informally and possibly formally been taught misinformation (not necessarily purposefully!) about ourselves and others in our own and other communities.
• As members of groups who are numerical majorities/minorities in differing contexts, we have likely (but not necessarily purposefully!) been informally and possibly formally taught misinformation about our own and other groups of differing size and power.
• As individuals with differing gender identities, we have likely (but not necessarily purposefully!) been informally and formally taught misinformation about members of our own and the opposite sex and gender.
• We should not be blamed for the misinformation we have previously been taught; however, we should not continue to repeat misinformation once we have learned that it is false, and we should be held accountable if we continue to perpetuate the teaching of misinformation.
• We agree to assume, at least in class, that people are always doing the best that they can in discussion, under their particular circumstances.
• We agree that in class we will actively pursue information about our own groups and about those of others, and we agree to share that information.
• We agree to create a safe atmosphere for open discussion in class. This involves the following:
  o We agree to never demean, devalue, or in any way “put down” people for their experiences.
  o We agree not to repeat remarks outside of the classroom if a student requests that his or her comments remain confidential to the class.

To that end, three requirements are fundamental for this class:

1. Respect each other. Your classmates can and will have different ideas, viewpoints, personal lives, etc. You don’t have to agree with everyone around you, but you are required to disagree in an adult and academic manner. Students who are rude, snide, or abusive to their classmates or who make “-ist” comments (i.e. racist, sexist, etc.) will be temporarily blocked from the course until we can have a conversation about appropriate course participation. If necessary, a student may be removed from the course.
2. Make your point using scientific logic/proof. Personal experiences are very important for this class; however, Sociology is also a scientific discipline, therefore arguments and counterarguments should be well thought out and personal experience should be linked to the subject matter at hand in some meaningful way. Arguments and counterarguments (note that this is different from sharing personal experience) must be based on reliable scientific publications and students are expected to provide those references in order to participate in discussion. Students are expected to keep purely personal opinion to themselves; personal opinion is important to individuals, but in this class we will be using evidence-based discussion.
3. Refute points using scientific logic/proof. For any scientific “law,” we can almost always find an exception to the rule. The exception, however, does not disprove the rule – it is simply an exception. For example, because you were not raised within a racist environment does not mean that racism no longer exists. Etc.

In other words, students are expected to engage with course material as a science and respect one another’s participation in that engagement 😊

ASSIGNMENTS

Coursework: From time to time I may assign small coursework or activities as they become relevant. Students are responsible for checking the “assignments” tab or the week’s module to make sure that they know when assignments are due. Points possible: variable.

Weekly Message Board Posts: Students will be expected to (1) post a question, insight, connection, summary, etc. of the readings for most weeks and (2) respond in a meaningful way to at least one other student’s post on the same week. Responses should be meaningful and substantive (“I agree” will not earn points). There will be questions for some of the weeks’ readings, so make sure to check the message board header before responding. Five points for the post, 5 points for the response: 10 points each, apprx 11 posts.

Participation Points: I will maintain a class discussion board that is open to any and all questions, comments, articles, videos, etc. related to the class, as long as what is posted does not violate the requirements laid out in this syllabus. This board is intended as a place to share ideas, quandaries, experiences, and so on. You may receive credit for an original post AND for commenting on the posts of others. Both original posts and
responses must be thoughtful and substantive. Simply writing “I agree” will not earn points. Students will earn 5 points for each post with a cap of 50 points (although students are encouraged to continue to participate past the cap!).

**Participate and Post:** Students will complete 3-4 “Participate and Post” assignments for 25 points each (see schedule). Assignment sheets will be available on Canvas. Many message boards require outside activity, so be sure to leave plenty of time to get them done. Grades will be dependent on the level of effort the student puts into the posts, both in preparation and in writing, and the degree to which the student fulfills the activity and the assignment. Responses can be written or you may record your answer or use some other format (just be thorough in your answer!).

**Testing:** There will be no midterm or final exam for this class. Instead, students will be evaluated on their work in the Learning Circle. See below for more information.

**Learning Circle:** Students will be assigned to a Learning Circle composed of classmates. I will assign members to groups based on individual answers to a required survey. The Learning Circle will produce three projects: a project proposal (50 points), a midterm review/assessment that summarizes how work done to date assimilates course material (100 points), and a final project (150 points). Total = 200 points.

More information on the nature of the project will be given as the semester progresses.

Some notes about group work: First, successful distance education requires that students interact with one another; that is, the online classroom should be a dynamic environment where students bounce ideas and opinions off of each other. Points in this class are based off of such interaction; the learning circle is a more focused extension of that principle. Second, I am well aware from personal experience as a student and as a teacher that some people do not contribute equally to group work. I also know that it’s sometimes hard to be upfront with a teacher about someone’s lack of effort. In other words, we have probably all had experiences with “slackers” who just didn’t put in the work but expected to get the credit. I don’t like that any more than you do. Here are the steps I’m taking to deal with that: 1. Students who don’t complete the survey by the second week of class will be dropped from the class. 2. Along with your midterm project, I will ask students to independently report on how well students are participating in group work. This report will be for credit. If I don’t hear from a student, they will be dropped. If a significant number of students in a group report that a student is not contributing, that student will be dropped. 3. Along with your final project, I will ask students to report as with the midterm. Students who do not report or whose group mates report that they did not contribute equally will not receive credit for the final project. 4. Students can approach me at any time throughout the semester if they are having a problem with their group members. In extreme cases, I may move one or more students into another group, although I would like to avoid this if at all possible.

IF YOU GET SICK or have other responsibilities that you are aware of ahead of time, then you need to make arrangements with your group that everyone finds satisfactory.

**Extra Credit:** Extra credit assignments are a gift, not a right, and will be available to the entire class, not to individual students.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points Possible</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coursework</td>
<td>Variable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Message Board</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posts</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation Points</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate and Post</td>
<td>75-100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exams</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning Circle</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Points</td>
<td>535+</td>
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### Grading Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>90-100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>80-89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70-79%</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60-69%</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>59% and lower</td>
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### Class Policies

**Assigned Coursework:** Students are responsible for all assigned coursework, whether the materials are covered in class or not.

**Canvas.** All course information and materials (such as slides, assignment sheets, and tests) will be posted on Canvas. *It is your responsibility to check Canvas on a regular basis so that you can keep up with course requirements.*

**Late Assignments and Make-up Work.** Being allowed to turn in a late assignment or make up missed work is always at my discretion and in most cases, late or missed work will not be accepted. If you must miss a deadline for a good reason, see “Missing Classes” above. *If I accept a major assignment late (such as an exam or paper) I reserve the right to drop the assignment letter grade by 10% for each day past due.*

**Office Hours and Conferences.** I am always happy to meet with students; please feel free to contact me if you are confused or need help. Office hours are on Tuesdays and Thursdays between 2:30 – 5:00 pm and by appointment. To set up an appointment, email me and we will find a time that works for both of us. I will be happy to discuss questions you have about the material, how you’re doing in the course, things that you find particularly interesting (or irritating). You can also email me at any time; generally I respond to email very quickly.

**Grades.** This course uses a standard scale: A=90% and above, B=80-89%, C=70-79%, D=60-69%, F=59% and lower. Grades will be recorded promptly on Canvas. Students should check Canvas and report any inaccuracies as soon as possible. Sometimes I do make mistakes, and it’s much better to fix them quickly. If you have any questions about why you received a score on a specific assignment, feel free to email me to set up a meeting to discuss your grade.

**Note that I do not grade on the basis of need.** If you need a certain grade out of the class, start planning from the beginning of the semester. Do not ask me to give you extra credit or to revise work at the end of the semester, or otherwise ask for your grade to be raised.

Borderline grades: At the end of the semester, I reserve the right to bump up borderline grades, but I will only do so for students who have made a good faith effort to complete their work and attend class. I will bump borderline grades at my discretion alone.

**Extra Credit:** Extra credit will be offered to all students when and if appropriate opportunities arise. Announcements will be made to the entire class and assignment sheets will be available on Canvas. Extra credit will not be offered to individual students.

**Incompletes.** A grade of incomplete will be considered only under extraordinary (emergency) circumstances; an expected incomplete must be arranged prior to the end of the semester. In no case will an incomplete be given to a student who simply fails to attend class and complete assignments.

**Cheating/Academic Dishonesty:** Students are expected to adhere to the University’s Academic Dishonesty policy (see below).
**Student rights.** Information regarding your rights and responsibilities may be found in the undergraduate general catalog. If you have any condition, such as physical or learning disabilities, which will make it difficult for you to carry out the work as outlined, and/or require special accommodations, please notify me during the first two weeks of class.

**Emporia State University Policies**

**Disability Services:** Emporia State University will make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities. Students need to contact the Director of Disability Services and the professor as early in the semester as possible to ensure that classroom and academic accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion. All communication between students, Disability Services, and the professor will be strictly confidential.

**3D.0701 Academic Dishonesty Policy** (FSB 95002 approved by President 1/31/96; FSB 03002 passed by Faculty Senate 1/15/02; approved by President 2/9/04; FSB 05002 passed by Faculty Senate 1/17/06; approved by President 2/7/06; title update approved by President of the Faculty 8/22/2010; FSB 10007 passed by Faculty Senate 3/15/2011; approved by President 3/21/2011): Academic dishonesty, a basis for disciplinary action, includes but is not limited to activities such as cheating and plagiarism (presenting as one’s own the intellectual or creative accomplishments of another without giving credit to the source or sources). The faculty member in whose course or under whose tutelage an act of academic dishonesty occurs has the option of failing the student for the academic hours in question, or for and components or requirements for that course. Departments, schools, and colleges may have provisions for more severe penalties. Emporia State University may impose penalties for academic dishonesty up to and including expulsion from the student’s major or from the University. In addition, acts of academic dishonesty shall be grounds to deny admission to a department or program. In addition to the penalties above, the faculty member shall notify in writing his/her department chair and the registrar of the infraction. The department chair shall forward a report of the infraction to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and Student Life. The registrar shall block the student from withdrawing from the course to avoid the penalties that result from the infraction. The Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and Student Life shall act as the record keeper for student academic infractions. The Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and Student Life will notify the student in writing that an infraction has been reported and inform the student of the right to appeal and of the appropriate appeal procedures. The Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and Student Life shall notify the student, the department chair, and the faculty member that initiated the proceedings, of any additional action taken beyond those already imposed by the faculty member. Should a single infraction be so egregious, or should a student have a record of multiple infractions, the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and Student Life may impose additional penalties, including expulsion of the student from the University. The student has the right to appeal the charge of academic dishonesty (see Student Conduct section). If after an appeal it is found that the student did not commit an act of academic dishonesty, no penalties will be imposed on the student.

A chair of a department of director of a program may request from the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and Student Life a list of all currently enrolled ESU students within that major or program who have committed acts of academic dishonesty. This request may be a standing request to be filling automatically during each semester until the request is rescinded by the chair or director. In addition, a chair of a department or director of a program may submit to the office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and Student Life a list of applicants to a program or major and the chair or director may be informed if any of the applicants has committed any acts of academic dishonesty. Prior to the beginning of the next academic year, the office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and Student Life shall send to the Chair of the Academic Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate a list containing nonspecific student identifiers, such as Student 1, Student 2, etc., their specific academic infraction(s) reported to the Provost’s office, the total number of infractions that have been reported for each student, and any actions taken by the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and Student Life.

**3D.07 Student Conduct** (FSB 01011 approved by President, 4/29/02): Excessive absenteeism is defined as a number of absences beyond which the faculty member has determined on his/her syllabus that a student cannot
complete the course without the academic integrity of the course being compromised. Emporia State University is committed toward development of sensitive and responsible individuals and believe this goal is best achieved through a sound educational program and reasonable policies concerning student conduct, both in and out of the classroom. Operating from this concept, recognition is given to the importance of an honest approach to learning which ideally is shared by the instructor and the student. Faculty members may make the disposition of any cases of disruptive behavior, excessive absenteeism, or academic dishonesty within their classes as they deem appropriate. Following such cases, the faculty member shall make available to the chair of the department and to the office of the Vice President for Student Affairs a record of such student absenteeism or disruptive behavior and the action taken by the faculty member. (This information will be helpful in dealing with those students who may have had similar problems in other classes or departments.) If the problem is not settled between the faculty member and the student, assistance will be given from the office of the Vice President for Student Affairs. If the problem cannot be resolved at this point the student may request a hearing. This request must be in writing. If a case of dishonesty, excessive absenteeism, or disruptive behavior also involves a disagreement regarding a grade, the student may be referred to the committee which hears academic appeals. If the behavior is such that broader disciplinary action by the school/college is recommended, a hearing board shall be established by the President of the University to make disposition of the case. (In all cases of disciplinary action the office of the Vice President for Student Affairs is available for assistance.) At any point where student conduct directly interferes with the health, safety, or well being of individuals in the campus community, the University may apply sanctions or take other appropriate action. Since the University is responsible for the subsidiary duties of maintaining property, keeping records, providing living accommodations, and sponsoring a variety of nonclassroom activities, it is necessary that a climate supportive of such duties be maintained. Student status will not be a basis for any special consideration from the University when a community, state, or national law has been violated, although every effort will be made to assist with the rehabilitation of a student violating such laws. This is done by working with law enforcement or other agencies, and ordinarily further sanctions are not applied after such a case is closed. No disciplinary sanction as serious as suspension, probation, or adverse notation on permanent records (available to other than official personnel of the college) will be imposed without proper notification given to the student in writing. This notification will state the charges and will give the accused the opportunity to appear alone, or with appropriate representation before the proper committee, judicial council, court, or official. Included will be the nature and source of evidence and the encouragement for the student to present evidence in turn. Following this review final disciplinary action will be taken by the University. Students may also request that such appearance before committees, councils, courts, or officials be waived and the case be determined in conference with appropriate campus officials. The University conduct policy commits all individuals serving on any of the above named groups dealing with student problems to a code of confidence. Failure to comply may lead to sanctions from student, faculty, or administrative governing bodies, or officials. Students, faculty, and administration shall have the opportunity to participate fully in the formulation of policies and rules and their enforcement. Penalties for men and women shall be based equally; like penalties following like violations.

4E.13 Faculty Initiated Student Withdrawal (FSB 76006; FSB 95008 approved by President 5/9/96; FSB 09016 approved by President 5/3/2010): If a student’s absences from class, disruptive behavior, lack of prerequisites, or academic dishonesty become detrimental to the student’s progress or that of other students in the class, the faculty member may advise the student to withdraw from the class. Withdrawal may also be advised if the student is inappropriately enrolled in the class. If the faculty member chooses to withdraw the student, he/she shall attempt to notify the student in writing that a faculty initiated withdrawal is in progress. This notification will be copied to the department chair and Academic Affairs office to serve as the request for withdrawal. If efforts to contact the student have been unsuccessful, or unacknowledged, the faculty member shall then seek the aid of the Academic Affairs office in contacting the student. The Academic Affairs office shall provide the student with information about the existing appeals procedures. Upon receiving a written request for withdrawal from the faculty member, the Academic Affairs office may initiate a student withdrawal from the class. None of the above implies or states that faculty members are required to initiate any student withdrawal.
This syllabus is subject to change; changes will be announced in class and updated on Canvas. When in doubt, always rely on the syllabus uploaded to Canvas.