



FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL AND CULTURAL STUDIES

*Te Kura Mahinga Tangata*

# Sociology and Social Policy

# **SOSC 306**

## Special Topic: Sociology of Popular Culture

20 POINTS

TRIMESTER 3 2015

### Key dates

**Teaching dates:** 16 November 2015 to 18 December 2015

**Last assessment item due:** 18 December 2015

**Withdrawal dates:** Refer to [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/withdrawals-refunds](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/withdrawals-refunds). If you cannot complete an assignment or sit a test or examination, refer to [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/aegrotats](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/aegrotats).

### Class times and locations

Lectures: Monday and Friday 10.00-11.50am HMLT205

Tutorials: Enrolment can be completed using the myAllocator system.

## Names and contact details

Dr Bronwyn Polaschek  
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Office Hour: By appointment

## Communication of additional information

Any additional course information will be posted on Blackboard. You will automatically receive all Blackboard announcements as an email sent to your @myvuw.ac.nz email address. If you are not going to use this Victoria email address set up for you, we strongly encourage you to forward messages received from the Victoria email system to the email address you do use.

## Prescription

This course explores theoretical perspectives within the sociology of popular culture. It analyses the relationships between popular cultures, social groups, and individuals. Concepts such as popular rituals, cultural capital, imagined communities, post-feminism, surveillance and confession will be explored. Case studies include examples from television, fashion, music, film, and celebrity culture.

## Course Content

<b>Week 1: Fashion</b>	
Nov 16	Mass fashion, popular rituals and late capitalism
Nov 20	Fashion in everyday life
<b>Week 2: Social Media</b>	
Nov 23	Online networks, confession and surveillance through the selfie
Nov 27	Ritual, authenticity, institutionalisation on YouTube <b>[Essay 1 Due]</b>
<b>Week 3: Music</b>	
Nov 30	Imagining Aotearoa New Zealand through popular culture
Dec 4	Globalisation, 'race', and American popular culture
<b>Week 4: Television</b>	
Dec 7	The cultural discourse of 'reality' on reality television
Dec 11	Official and satirical news on screen and online <b>[Essay 2 Due]</b>
<b>Week 5: Celebrity Culture / Film</b>	
Dec 14	The cultural capital of celebrity <b>[Take-home test made available]</b>
Dec 18	Film genres and post-feminism: the biopic and the documentary <b>[Take-home test due]</b>

## Course learning objectives (CLOs)

Students who pass this course should be able to:

1. Identify historical and contemporary sociological perspectives on popular culture
2. Critically analyse the influence of class, race, and gender on popular culture
3. Analyse popular culture from a global perspective
4. Apply knowledge of popular culture to New Zealand society

## Teaching format

The course will be taught through a combination of two 2-hour lectures, and one 1-hour tutorial.

While attendance at lectures/tutorials is not compulsory, students are expected to regularly attend, and will be advantaged if they do so.

## Workload

University guidelines stipulate that a 20-point course should require 200 hours, including class time, of student work. Because this course is being taught and assessed over five weeks, students should be prepared to commit approximately 40 hours a week to the course over the five weeks.

This time will be spent in attending lectures twice a week, attending tutorials once a week, reading in preparation for classes and assignments, and writing assignments.

## Assessment

Assessment items and workload per item		%	CLO(s)	Due date
1	1500-word Essay 1	20%	1, 3	27 Nov
2	2000-word Research Essay 2	50%	1, 2, 3, 4	11 Dec
3	Take-home test (1500 words)	30%	1, 2, 3	18 Dec

### Essay 1 (20%)

#### Due date: Friday 27 November

Choose a contemporary popular culture text you have watched, listened to, worn, or read about (e.g. a clip on YouTube, an episode from a television show, a song, a film, an item of clothing intended for a wide audience). This might be a text you know well, or that is new to you.

Analyse this text sociologically. You may want to use one of the theorists we have covered in the course – for example Adorno and Horkheimer, de Certeau, Foucault – or combine different concepts covered in lectures and readings on the course so far (mass culture, everyday life, confession, surveillance etc.).

### Research Essay 2 (50%)

#### Due date: Friday 11 December

Write a 2000-word essay on ONE of the following five topics.

1. Colin Cremin argues that popular culture “works to cajole and manipulate the broad mass of the population into wanting products as psychic emollients for provoked anxieties and desires” (2012: 54). Critically discuss his argument drawing on sociological theory.

2. Dustin Kidd argues, “Popular culture goes further than providing the tools for social change; in many cases, it is actually the driving force behind social change” (2007: 80). Critically discuss his argument drawing on sociological theory.
3. Nick Couldry states “...the media provide a ‘central’ space where it makes sense to disclose publicly aspects of one’s life that one might not otherwise disclose *to anyone*” (2003: 116). Critically discuss his argument drawing on sociological theory.
4. Trin T Minh-Ha argues that “user-generated media” has the potential “to allow minoritized individuals the means to self-create and self-name identities that challenge dominant ways of seeing and knowing beauty and personhood” (2015: 231). Critically discuss her argument drawing on sociological theory.
5. Draw on a theorist of your choice to analyse a popular culture case study of your choice. This question must be discussed with the course co-ordinator in advance.

In your essay you may focus on a specific case study (e.g. Nom’d), a genre (e.g. hip-hop), a form of popular culture (e.g. social media or television), or argue about popular culture in general.

Do not repeat material from your first essay.

### **Take-home Test (30%)**

#### **Due date: Friday 18 December**

The test will be made available on Monday 14 December, at 9am and is due on Friday 18 December at 4pm.

You will be directed to various examples from popular culture, and asked to write 1500 words analysing **two** of these examples, drawing on the theoretical perspectives introduced on the course.

An internet connection will be required to complete this assessment.

Do not repeat material from your first two assessments.

### **Marking criteria for assessments**

The marking criteria for each of the three assessments will be posted on Blackboard. A full bibliography is required for essays 1 and 2. References to key theorists, concepts and sources are required for the take-home test.

### **Submission and return of work**

Assignments must be placed in the **assignment box** on level 9, Murphy Building, to the side of the lifts. The Assignment Box is cleared at **4.00pm** on the due date, all work is date-stamped, and its receipt recorded, and then handed on to the appropriate markers.

Assignments must also be submitted electronically to **Turnitin**. Assignments will not be graded or returned until uploaded to Turnitin.

Every effort will be made to return marked assignments within two-weeks of the due date. Marked assignments not collected in lectures or tutorials can be collected at the Murphy 9<sup>th</sup> floor reception desk, between **2.00 and 4.00pm only** from Monday to Friday

## Extensions and penalties

### Extensions

Assignments are due on the dates stated. In a five-week course there is little room for extensions. If for some serious reason (e.g. illness or bereavement) you don't think you can get an essay in on time, contact your course coordinator **prior** to the due date and discuss the problem.

### Penalties

Late submissions for student assignments in all Sociology and Social Policy undergraduate courses are subject to a penalty. The exact deduction will be calculated on the basis of one half mark per day late for each 10 marks, i.e. 1 mark will be deducted each day for an assignment worth 20% of the total course mark.

*Note: assessment work will not be accepted for marking more than 7 days after the due date or 7 days after an approved extension date.*

### Set texts

There is no set text or book of student notes for this course. Course readings will be placed on Blackboard by the Course Coordinator.

### Recommended reading

A full list of recommended readings will be available on Blackboard.

For the most recent discussions about popular culture you will need to consult the journals. There are a range of excellent sources including: *Celebrity Studies*, *Cultural Sociology*, *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies*, *Media, Culture and Society*, *The Journal of Popular Culture*, *Theory and Society* and *Visual Studies* (known as *Visual Sociology* until 2001).

Popular culture recurs across sociology/cultural studies journals. You will find articles in journals as varied as *The Sociology of Health and Illness* or *The Sociology of Religion*. Mindful use of Te Waharoa, databases such as JSTOR, as well as searching the journals themselves, will bring up a raft of articles on the topics we are covering.

Other selected recommended readings include:

Cremin, C. (2011) *Capitalism's New Clothes*. Pluto Press: London.

Featherstone, M. (2007) *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism* (Second edition). Sage: London.

Gill, R. (2007) *Gender and the Media*. Polity: Cambridge.

McRobbie, A. (2005) *The Uses of Cultural Studies*. Sage: London.

Storey, J. (2009) *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction* (Fifth edition). Pearson: Harlow.

Storey, J. (2009) *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader* (Fourth edition), Pearson: Harlow.

### Class representative

The class representative provides a useful way to communicate feedback to the teaching staff during the course. A class representative will be selected at the first lecture of the course.

### Student feedback

SOSC 306: The Sociology of Popular Culture is a new course. Student feedback on the course will be sought near the end of the course.

Student feedback on University courses may be found at

[www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/feedback/feedback\\_display.php](http://www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/feedback/feedback_display.php).

## Other important information

The information above is specific to this course. There is other important information that students must familiarise themselves with, including:

- Academic Integrity and Plagiarism: [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/integrity-plagiarism](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/integrity-plagiarism)
- Academic Progress: [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/progress/academic-progress](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/progress/academic-progress) (including restrictions and non-engagement)
- Dates and deadlines: [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/dates](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/dates)
- FHSS Student and Academic Services Office: [www.victoria.ac.nz/fhss/student-admin](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/fhss/student-admin)
- Grades: [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/progress/grades](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/progress/grades)
- Special passes: refer to the *Assessment Handbook*, at [www.victoria.ac.nz/documents/policy/staff-policy/assessment-handbook.pdf](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/documents/policy/staff-policy/assessment-handbook.pdf)
- Statutes and policies including the Student Conduct Statute: [www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/strategy](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/strategy)
- Student support: [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/support](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/support)
- Students with disabilities: [www.victoria.ac.nz/st\\_services/disability](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/st_services/disability)
- Student Charter: [www.victoria.ac.nz/learning-teaching/learning-partnerships/student-charter](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/learning-teaching/learning-partnerships/student-charter)
- Subject Librarians: <http://library.victoria.ac.nz/library-v2/find-your-subject-librarian>
- Terms and conditions: [www.victoria.ac.nz/study/apply-enrol/terms-conditions/student-contract](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/study/apply-enrol/terms-conditions/student-contract)
- Turnitin: [www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/wiki/index.php/Turnitin](http://www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/wiki/index.php/Turnitin)
- University structure: [www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/structure](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/structure)
- Victoria graduate profile: [www.victoria.ac.nz/learning-teaching/learning-partnerships/graduate-profile](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/learning-teaching/learning-partnerships/graduate-profile)
- VUWSA: [www.vuwsa.org.nz](http://www.vuwsa.org.nz)

## School Contact Information

Head of School:	Prof Brigitte Bönisch-Brednich MY1019 Phone: 463 6528, Email: <a href="mailto:brigitte.bonisch-brednich@vuw.ac.nz">brigitte.bonisch-brednich@vuw.ac.nz</a>
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