

## **MSP 2421: Media and Popular Culture**

### **Professor information:**

- Name: Anyun Chatterjee
- Email: [anyun.chatterjee@temple.edu](mailto:anyun.chatterjee@temple.edu)
- Office hours: By appointment, please email to set a meeting

### **Course information:**

- Class time: Asynchronous
- Room: Virtual, all readings and submissions on Canvas

### **Course description:**

Popular culture surrounds us, like air. It is the music playing in coffee shops, the latest hit show on your streaming service of choice, and the characters or slogans you might accessorize your outfit with. Pop culture is both highly visible in how we consume it, and in many ways invisible in how we perceive its development and impact. In this class, we'll examine the pop culture we engage with and develop theory-informed arguments about how this culture impacts us.

### **Upon completion of this course, students will be better able to:**

- Identify constituent arguments of foundational media theories
- Articulate arguments regarding what constitutes popular culture and why it matters
- Critique the mechanisms through which pop culture and media act on their own lives
- Develop a personal philosophy with regards to engagement with pop culture

### **Course materials**

Students will not need to purchase any textbook for this course. All readings will be provided on Canvas or are accessible online through the Temple Library.

Students are expected to have reliable access to the internet to access readings and submit assigned work. Students are also expected to have a working webcam on a desktop or laptop computer - videos recorded on cell phones and tablets will not be accepted. If the student does not have access to a personal machine with a webcam, the Charles Library and Tech Center are both able to lend and provide access to adequate resources.

For written submissions, Microsoft Word is provided to all students, and Google Docs and LibreOffice Writer are also free options for text processing. For video submissions, a student subscription to Zoom is included with student fees.

### **What you will be graded on**

| Item          | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | % of Final Grade | Due Date                        |
|---------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------------|
| Syllabus Quiz | Successfully completing this quiz represents your official agreement to abide by the terms of the course syllabus for the remainder of the course.                                                                                                                                                                     | 5%               | 8/28/26<br>5PM<br>Eastern Time  |
| Media log     | Students will track their media usage for 2 non-consecutive days using the template provided on Canvas                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 5%               | 9/18/26<br>5PM<br>Eastern Time  |
| Video 1       | Students will prepare a <b>4-5 minute</b> video of themselves discussing their responses to the reflection questions on Canvas. <u>You must complete the media log to be able to submit this assignment.</u>                                                                                                           | 10%              | 9/25/26<br>5PM<br>Eastern Time  |
| Video 2       | Students will prepare a <b>8-10 minute</b> video of themselves discussing their responses to the reflection questions on Canvas. <u>You must complete Essay 1 to complete this assignment.</u>                                                                                                                         | 15%              | 11/20/26<br>5PM<br>Eastern Time |
| Essay 1       | Students must review at least <b>3</b> classmates' first video reflections and prepare a <b>3-5 page</b> essay which addresses the original prompts for the video reflection in an argumentative essay with a clear and well defended thesis statement. <u>You must complete Video 1 to complete this assignment.</u>  | 10%              | 10/9/26<br>5PM<br>Eastern Time  |
| Essay 2       | Students will review at least <b>5</b> classmates' second video reflections and prepare a <b>4-5 page</b> essay which addresses the original prompts for the video reflection in an argumentative essay with a clear and well defended thesis statement. <u>You must complete Video 2 to complete this assignment.</u> | 15%              | 12/4/26<br>5PM<br>Eastern Time  |
| Quiz 1        | An objective style quiz (multiple choice, ordering, etc.) which will test recall from readings and ability to apply concepts from readings.                                                                                                                                                                            | 5%               | 9/11/26<br>5PM<br>Eastern Time  |
| Quiz 2        | An objective style quiz (multiple choice, ordering, etc.) which will test recall from readings and ability to apply concepts from readings.                                                                                                                                                                            | 5%               | 10/2/26<br>5PM<br>Eastern Time  |

|        |                                                                                                                                             |     |                                    |
|--------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|------------------------------------|
| Quiz 3 | An objective style quiz (multiple choice, ordering, etc.) which will test recall from readings and ability to apply concepts from readings. | 10% | 10/16/26<br>5PM<br>Eastern<br>Time |
| Quiz 4 | An objective style quiz (multiple choice, ordering, etc.) which will test recall from readings and ability to apply concepts from readings. | 10% | 10/30/26<br>5PM<br>Eastern<br>Time |
| Quiz 5 | An objective style quiz (multiple choice, ordering, etc.) which will test recall from readings and ability to apply concepts from readings. | 10% | 11/13/26<br>5PM<br>Eastern<br>Time |

### **Grading policies**

45% your grade is dependent on quizzes, and 55% is dependent on submitted work (2 videos and 2 essays). Please note that the professor reserves the right to not grade any improperly formatted work, especially in cases where formatting corrections have been provided for previous work.

Grading disputes must be submitted in writing to the professor no later than 4 business days after grade is released to be considered. Disputes submitted after the deadline will be considered only at the professor's discretion.

### Videos (25%)

Submitted videos must be uploaded to the appropriate discussion thread. A video earning full points will accomplish the following:

- A clear and well defended thesis in response to the questions on the assignment page on Canvas
- Masterful reference to and analysis of the covered readings to date
- Thoughtful discussion of how the course concepts relate to either personal pop culture experiences or to broader social trends

Students are encouraged to use the "Share Screen" function on Zoom to use visual aids like slides, graphics, web browsers, etc.

### *Video formatting guidelines:*

- Landscape video aspect (i.e. not recorded on a vertical phone camera)
- Stable camera (i.e. not a laptop placed on a lap, but a camera placed on a stable surface)
- Edited videos are allowed if edits serve the broader aesthetic or argumentative points of the submission

- Responses should be delivered in a natural speaking cadence - any evidence of reading off a screen or other aid will be cause for a points deduction
- The author must be communicating some information germane to their overall argument for at least 80% of the video's run time, meaning excessive tangents of any sort will be cause for a points deduction

### Essays (25%)

Submitted essays must be uploaded to the appropriate assignment page. An essay earning full points will accomplish the following:

- A clear and well defended thesis in response to the questions on the assignment page on Canvas, using well referenced sources from both the course materials and elsewhere
- A brief comparison of the topics covered in the author's own video versus those of their classmates' videos
- A continuous analytic or argumentative essay - not a summary or piecewise response to the questions. No bullet points or sections for specific questions, but rather a single essay which covers the prompting questions in some form.

### *Essay formatting guidelines:*

- PDF filetype only
- 12pt Times New Roman
- Double spaced
- 1 inch margins
- APA format
- A reference page containing at least 3 well-used sources from the course readings
  - Please note that the minimum page count does not include references page(s)

### **Course schedule**

| Week | Dates             | Readings                                                                                                                                                                            | Assignments and Quizzes                    |
|------|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| 1    | 8/24/26 - 8/28/26 | Review the syllabus                                                                                                                                                                 | Syllabus Quiz                              |
| 2    | 8/31/26 - 9/4/26  | Read Chapter 1, <i>What is Popular Culture</i> , in <i>Popular Culture: Introductory Perspectives</i> and watch <i>Cultures, Subcultures, and Countercultures</i> from Crash Course |                                            |
| 3    | 9/7/26 - 9/11/26  | Read <i>Cultivation Analysis: An Overview</i> by George Gerbner and watch Bandura's Bobo Doll Experiment                                                                            | Quiz 1 - foundational pop culture theories |
| 4    | 9/14/26 -         | Read <i>E unibus pluram</i> by David Foster                                                                                                                                         | Media Log                                  |

|    |                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                             |
|----|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|    | 9/18/26             | Wallace                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                             |
| 5  | 9/21/26 - 9/25/26   | While developing your Video, reference the Purdue OWL article on Classical Arguments                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Video 1                                                                     |
| 6  | 9/28/26 - 10/2/26   | Watch <i>The five filters of the mass media machine</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Quiz 2 - Media, Irony, Culture, and the Construction or Subsumation of Self |
| 7  | 10/5/26 - 10/9/26   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Essay 1                                                                     |
| 8  | 10/12/26 - 10/16/26 | <p>Read the following:</p> <p><i>What is Media Consolidation and Why Should Anyone Care</i>, from BillMoyers.com</p> <p><i>One Nation, Still More Or Less Under A Groove</i>, from AVClub</p> <p>“<i>My Tastes Don’t Evolve; They Broaden</i>,” from PopMatters</p> <p>Watch clip from <i>The Devil Wears Prada</i></p> | Quiz 3 - Corporate Construction of Pop Culture                              |
| 9  | 10/19/26 - 10/23/26 | <p>Read <i>A Brief History of Advertising in America</i>, in Advertising &amp; Society Review</p> <p>Watch <i>Advertising at the Edge of the Apocalypse</i></p>                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                             |
| 10 | 10/26/26 - 10/30/26 | <p>Watch <i>Why on-screen representation matters</i>, from PBS</p> <p>Read <i>Why Representation Matters and Why It’s Still Not Enough</i>, from PsychologyToday</p>                                                                                                                                                    | Quiz 4 - Advertising and Representation                                     |
| 11 | 11/2/26 - 11/6/26   | Read <i>Uses and Gratifications Research</i> by Elihu Katz and <i>Examining Comfort Media</i> by Grady et al.                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                             |
| 12 | 11/9/26 - 11/13/26  | Review readings from the semester in preparation for final quiz, and end of term assignments                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Quiz 5 - Summing it all up                                                  |
| 13 | 11/16/26 -          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Video 2                                                                     |

|    |                     |                                                   |         |
|----|---------------------|---------------------------------------------------|---------|
|    | 11/20/26            |                                                   |         |
| 14 | 11/23/26 - 11/27/26 | FALL BREAK - NO READINGS, ASSIGNMENTS, OR QUIZZES |         |
| 15 | 11/30/26 - 12/4/26  |                                                   | Essay 2 |

## General course policies

I have now been teaching for about a decade, and have seen my fair share of students. The policies below have been developed not because I want to make it hard for students to get the support they need, but because I value communication and effort above all else. My basic expectation for students working with me is to stay in touch and do your best. Students who follow this principle will be fine, students who disappear and fail to communicate will not receive much support.

### Late work and illness policies

As this course is asynchronous and self-directed, it is the student's responsibility to look ahead and communicate all possible coursework delays (travel, athletics, military service, internships, etc.) ahead of time, preferably within the first two weeks of the semester.

For late work to be considered for a grade, a notice of extension must be submitted by email *at least 3 business days before the deadline*. Extension notices must be framed as a commitment from the student, i.e. a proposal of when the delayed work will be submitted. For example, "Can I please have an extension?" is not acceptable, instead an extension request should read more like "I will need until 7PM this Friday to submit the assignment." **For professionally and respectfully framed extension notices, there will be no grade penalty.** Failure by a student to meet their own proposed deadline is cause for an automatic 0 on that work.

The professor reserves the right to not grant extensions based on their expert judgement, especially in cases where a student has either been non-communicative throughout the semester, or has abused the late policy repeatedly.

Every 1 hour delay past the deadline for any assignment or quiz without appropriate notice of extension results in a 2% deduction for that assignment or quiz. For example, if you complete the syllabus quiz 8 hours late, at 1AM Eastern Time on 8/29/26, the maximum score you can get on that quiz is 84%, assuming a perfect score on the quiz. As all quizzes and assignments are

available from the beginning of term, there are very few cases in which an extension will be considered.

For students who join the course after the semester begins, extensions may be granted for the Syllabus Quiz and Quiz 1 as appropriate, but it is the student's responsibility to email the professor with a clear explanation of when they anticipate completing those quizzes. The proposed extensions should be no later than 9/16/26 at 8PM Eastern Time.

To account for the inevitability of illness so severe that coursework cannot be attempted, students should inform the professor of said illness when possible. The professor will then make a note to possibly drop the lowest quiz grade at the end of term to provide a grading cushion - ONLY if all other coursework has been satisfactorily attempted. In the case of illness which precludes the student from attempting coursework for more than 10 business days, DRS and academic advising should be contacted if the student wishes to complete the course, as the professor will likely recommend course withdrawal at that point.

### Professionalism

College education should prepare you for a fulfilling professional and personal life. Your ability to maintain a work life balance is crucial for that goal. Therefore, you are encouraged to read, write, and communicate with classmates and the professor *only between 9am and 5pm (Eastern Standard Time), Monday through Friday*. The professor will respond to emails only during these times, and may take 3-5 business days before responding. Your time is your own however, but to maintain professionalism standards, if you choose to write an email outside business hours, you are *highly encouraged* to schedule the email to send during business hours.

### Email etiquette

The ability to communicate respectfully and effectively over email is a major factor in your success in school and in the workforce. Disrespectful, vague, or unactionable emails harm your reputation and disincline professors from assisting you. Therefore, to support students in getting the best possible help via email, please follow these guidelines when emailing the professor:

- First review the syllabus and Canvas page in that order to ensure your question has not already been covered in those locations
- Reach out to a classmate to see if they have run into a similar issue and how they have resolved it
- Only after verifying that a solution to your problem is not listed on the syllabus, Canvas, or by a colleague, begin drafting an email to the professor as follows:
  - Label your email subject with [MSP 2421] and a succinct (3-6 words) header

- Begin the email with “Dear Prof. Chatterjee,”
- Explain clearly exactly what you need from the professor in 1-3 sentences, and what steps you have taken and plan to take to address whatever problem you may be emailing about
- Avoid oversharing personal details unless they are absolutely relevant.
- End the email with “Thank you, [your name]” or some equivalent salutation, e.g. “Best,” “Warmly,” “Sincerely,” etc.

For example, a common reason folks email a professor is because they cannot complete an assignment by the deadline. Below is an appropriate email in that situation.

Subject: [MSP 2421] Extension for Video 1

Body:

Dear Prof. Chatterjee,

I am unable to complete Video 1 by the deadline. I will be able to submit it by 9/24 at 2pm.

Thank you,  
[Your name]

Another common reason to email a professor is because a student may have reason to believe a quiz question was graded incorrectly. Below is an appropriate email for that scenario.

Subject: [MSP 2421] Quiz 2 Question 7

Body:

Dear Prof. Chatterjee,

I believe this question was phrased ambiguously. Based on the reading from last week, perhaps it should have read as [text], instead of [text]. Would you consider adding back a point for that question or removing it from the graded questions?

Thank you,  
[Your name]

Incomplete grade policy



Incomplete grades will be granted only in rare circumstances and require the approval of the professor. Students who have not completed all the requirements prior to the last day of class will need to talk with the professor about how this will be rectified.

### Academic honesty and plagiarism

You are expected to do your own work and any form of academic dishonesty—plagiarism and cheating—is as unacceptable in this course as it is across the University and throughout higher education. Plagiarism is defined in the Bulletin as “the unacknowledged use of another person's labor, another person's ideas, another person's words, and another person's assistance.”

### Use of generative artificial intelligence

While Gen-AI will definitely be a part of the modern workflow, this course is intended to develop your critical thinking and argumentative skills - therefore **in this class there are no acceptable uses of generative artificial intelligence in developing any submitted work** (e.g. ChatGPT, Grammarly, Grok, Claude, Canva AI, etc.). This policy includes the use of AI in developing slides or graphics, or using AI to spellcheck or review any written work, specifically because **these use cases can still change the author's original thinking and intention**. Any suspected use of such technologies will be cause for an Academic Dishonesty referral. Such referrals are made on the basis of the professor's expert judgment, and will be handled by established University protocols from there.

### Disability disclosure statement

Any student who has a need for accommodation based on the impact of a documented disability, including special accommodations for access to technology resources and electronic instructional materials required for the course, should contact the professor privately to discuss the specific situation by the end of the second week of classes or as soon as practical.

If you have not done so already, please contact Disability Resources and Services (DRS) at 215-204-1280 in 100 Ritter Annex to learn more about the resources available to you. We will work with DRS to coordinate reasonable accommodations for all students with documented disabilities.

### Student and faculty academic rights and responsibilities

Please refer to Temple University's Recommended Statement. The University's policy on Student and Faculty and Academic Rights and Responsibilities (Policy #03.70.02) can be accessed through at: <http://policies.temple.edu/getdoc.asp?policyno=03.70.02>.

### Technology usage policy

Read Temple University's Technology Usage policy which includes information on unauthorized access, disclosure of passwords, and sharing of accounts. The Temple University Technology Usage Policy can be accessed at <http://policies.temple.edu/PDF/84.pdf>

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*last updated 8/2/26 - please note this syllabus is subject to change and all updates will be communicated to students via email and canvas in a timely manner*