

**Politics of Popular Culture (HH3037)**  
**Semester 2 2019-20**

**Assistant Professor Justin Clark**

**Email:** justin.clark@ntu.edu.sg

**Office:** HSS-05-13

**Consultation Hours:** W 12:00-2:00

**Class Time and Location:** Wednesday, 14:30-17:30 @ TR+113

**Course Description:** What do Olympic protests, Nazi fashion, Cultural Revolution operas, and *The Art of Charlie Chan Hock Chye* have in common? All are examples used in this upper-division World History course to probe the global intersections of popular culture and politics since the 19th century. By examining theatre, television, film, artworks, literature, broadcast media, sports, fashion, and other popular cultural expressions through the lens of critical theory, you will gain a better appreciation of how states, revolutionary movements, citizens, consumers, and emerging media have originated, shaped, and resolved contentious debates over popular culture. Topics include such issues as cultural appropriation, boycotts, propaganda and censorship. In the process, you will gain a deeper understanding of global social, cultural and political history and critical approaches to culture, while developing skill in the use of historical sources and in written and oral expression. This course will thus prove useful to anyone involved not only in public history but communication and the arts.

**Assessment:**

1. Two Essays (50%): See below.
2. Midterm (25%)
3. Participation (10%)
4. In-class reading quizzes (5%)
5. Group presentation (10%)

**Course Policies**

**Attendance:** Attendance is mandatory. You are expected to attend all class meetings barring illness or other emergency. Your final grade will be deducted by one third (e.g. B+ to B) if you have three or more absences (including illnesses and University-approved extracurricular activities). Being late to class three times counts as an absence.

**Class readings:** The required texts are indicated on the schedule below. Some can be found on Blackboard; others are available on two-hour reserve at the Humanities and Social Sciences Library. The PDF texts in Blackboard are for your personal use, and not for broader distribution. Additional readings will be assigned at my discretion.

**Two Essays:**

Essay 1 (15% of your total course grade) is a 3-4 page review of a historical monograph on popular culture, chosen in consultation with the instructor. The essay will explain the main argument of the work and evaluate its merits. This essay should be 750-1000 words, *excluding* title page, bibliography, and footnotes.

**COURSE OUTLINE IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE AT INSTRUCTOR'S DISCRETION**

Essay 2 (35% of your total course grade) is a 7-8 page research paper that makes substantive use of at least 10 primary and secondary sources to analyze, in *historical terms*, a work or genre of popular culture from the 19th century onward. The topic, to be chosen in consultation with the instructor, must lie at the intersection of politics and popular culture. This essay should be 1750-2500 words, *excluding* title page, bibliography, and footnotes.

Both essays *must*:

- Use Chicago Style. (If necessary, consult the Chicago-Style Guide at [www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html).)
- Use footnotes, not endnotes. Include a bibliography.
- Use Times New Roman 12 and double-space.
- Use margins at 1" and don't "justify" your right-hand margin.
- Include page numbers.
- Be free of typographical, grammatical, and punctuation errors. If you consistently make these kinds of errors, your grade will drop.
- Be typed and submitted to the correct i-NTU Learn dropbox.

**Group Presentation:** Each assigned group will choose a work of popular culture and spend an analysis (roughly 20 minutes) of its relevance to the course's topics or themes.

**In-class reading quizzes:** These will be administered unannounced at the beginning of class, at my discretion. So long as you have done the reading, these short, fact-based quizzes should be easy to pass. Quizzes missed due to tardiness and absence (even if excused) cannot be made up.

**Active learning:** Because of the interactive nature of the seminar, the use of hand phones during class is *strictly prohibited*. Before coming to class, please make sure your cell phone is set to silent mode and put away. Students who violate this policy will be asked to leave and will receive no credit for the session.

**Academic integrity:** Your submitted work must uphold the standards of academic integrity articulated in the student handbook. All written work submitted to me must be completely your own. Rewriting or paraphrasing information from online sources is a violation of [NTU's academic integrity policy](#). Familiarize yourself with this policy.

**Announcements:** Please check i-NTU Learn regularly for announcements.

## Schedule

Week 1 (16 Jan): What's Popular Culture, and What Does It Have to Do With Politics?

Week 2 (23 Jan): Theories of Popular Culture

Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"

John Storey, ed. *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader* (excerpts)

**Screening: *The Pervert's Guide to Ideology* (2102)**

Week 3 (30 Jan): Class, Hierarchy, and Uplift in the 19th Century

Matthew Arnold, "Culture and Anarchy"

Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (excerpts)

Week 4 (6 Feb): The Politics of Museums

Tony Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex"

Guest Speaker

Week 5 (13 Feb): Cultural Appropriation

Eric Lott, "Love and Theft" (excerpts)

**Group 1 Presentation**

Week 6 (20 Feb): State Patronage, Regulation, and Censorship

Rosenbloom, Nancy J. "From Regulation to Censorship: Film and Political Culture in New York in the Early Twentieth Century"

Sonny Liew, *The Art of Charlie Chan Hock Chye* (excerpts)

Lee Tong Soon, "Chinese Theatre, Confucianism, and Nationalism: Amateur Chinese Opera Tradition in Singapore"

**Group 2 Presentation**

**\*ESSAY 1 DUE IN DROPBOX BY 23 FEBRUARY AT 11:59 P.M.\***

Week 7 (27 Feb): Midterm

Recess Week (1-7 March): No Class

Week 8 (12 March): Propaganda

Lynn Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (excerpts)

Mittler, Barbara. "Popular Propaganda? Art and Culture in Revolutionary China"

**Group 3 Presentation**

Week 9 (19 March): The Politics of Consumption

Liz Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic* (excerpts)

**Group 4 Presentation**

Week 10 (26 March): Fashion and Sports

Guenther, Irene. *Nazi Chic: Fashioning Women in the Third Reich* (excerpts)

**COURSE OUTLINE IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE AT INSTRUCTOR'S DISCRETION**

Alan Tomlinson, Christopher Young, (eds.) *National Identity and Global Sports Events: Culture, Politics, and Spectacle in the Olympics and World Cup* (excerpts)

Week 11 (2 April): Culture and Geopolitics

Lynn Spigel, "Innocence Abroad: The Geopolitics of Childhood in Postwar Kid Strips" in *Welcome to the Dreamhouse: Popular Media and Postwar Suburbs*

**Group 5 Presentation**

Week 12 (9 April): Film and Cultural Hegemony

Vanessa Schwartz, *It's So French!:* Hollywood, Paris, and the Making of Cosmopolitan Film Culture

Aynne Kokas, "Policy and Superheroes: China and Hollywood in Sino-US Relations" in *Hollywood Made in China*

**Group 6 Presentation**

Week 13 (16 April): Taking the Culture Wars Online

Nagle, Angela. *Kill All Normies: Online Culture Wars from 4chan and Tumblr to Trump and the Alt-Right* (excerpts)

**Group 7 Presentation**

**\*ESSAY 2 DUE IN DROPBOX BY 24 APRIL AT 11:59 P.M.\***

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

- John Storey, ed. *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*. University of Georgia Press, 2006.
- Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. London: Penguin UK, 2008.
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- Sonny Liew, *The Art of Charlie Chan Hock Chye*. New York: Pantheon, 2016.
- Lee Tong Soon, "Chinese Theatre, Confucianism, and Nationalism: Amateur Chinese Opera Tradition in Singapore," *Asian Theatre Journal* 24, no. 2 (2007): 397-421.
- Liz Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Consumption in Postwar America*. New York: Vintage Books, 2003.
- John Kasson, *Amusing the Million: Coney Island at the Turn of the Century*. New York: MacMillan, 1978.
- Guenther, Irene V. "Nazi "Chic"? German Politics and Women's Fashions, 1915–1945." *Fashion Theory* 1, no. 1 (1997): 29-58
- Alan Tomlinson, Christopher Young (eds.) *National Identity and Global Sports Events: Culture, Politics, and Spectacle in the Olympics and World Cup*. New York: SUNY Press, 2006.
- Mittler, Barbara. "Popular Propaganda? Art and Culture in Revolutionary China." *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 152, no. 4 (2008): 466-489.
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- Eric Lott, "Love and Theft: The Racial Unconscious of Blackface Minstrelsy," *Representations*, No. 39. (Summer, 1992), pp. 23-50.
- Vanessa Schwartz, *It's So French!: Hollywood, Paris, and the Making of Cosmopolitan Film Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.
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- Nagle, Angela. *Kill All Normies: Online Culture Wars from 4chan and Tumblr to Trump and the Alt-Right*. New York: Zero Books, 2017.
- Rosenbloom, Nancy J. "From Regulation to Censorship: Film and Political Culture in New York in the Early Twentieth Century." *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 3, no. 4 (2004): 369-406.