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American Popular Culture AN5202OMA	Teacher Training MA
Wed 14 – 15.40	Rm 106

“Fiction reveals truths that reality obscures.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

The aim of this course is to give an introduction to the theoretical background of Popular Culture and illustrate it through the discussion of some of the typical pop culture genres, like romance, science fiction or the western, as well as including aspects of contemporary culture, for instance, fandom studies. Putting theory into practice, the course will focus on how popular culture can be used in the classroom. Students will collectively build a repository of classroom activities based on pop culture genres (comics, music, film, video games, etc.) through the term. Classes will have a hands-on component, teaching materials will be researched and evaluated in small groups, therefore active participation will be required for the course to function properly.

Classwork, materials, and assignments will be managed via Google Classroom.

Evaluation: based on

- A collection of 5 to 7 tasks specifically organized around a genre or topic (you can find them in italics in the schedule starting from Oct 7) and a short description of the advantages and possible disadvantages when using this genre/topic in the classroom (30%)
- Classroom participation (20%)
- Short essay (1000-1100 words) introducing a pop culture phenomenon of your choice and your reasons for picking it for classroom use, and 3 lesson plans based on it. Two of them should be planned for face-to-face instruction but different language levels (for example, the same cartoon can be used with a beginner class as well as an intermediate level group), and the third lesson plan should transfer the topic to a digital asynchronous learning environment. (40%) **DEADLINE Dec 2**
- The formulation of your objectives for the course and the evaluation of your own progress during last class (10%)

More than 3 absences will result in no mark, just like plagiarism!

Students should be advised that the quality of their written and spoken linguistic performance will count significantly toward their final mark.

Under the current regulations, the course is planned to be a face-to-face, classroom-based course, HOWEVER, if due to the pandemic we have to switch to remote teaching, PLEASE be prepared to use the University of Debrecen E-Learning system at elearning.unideb.hu. In case of such a switch, the course evaluation methods (e.g., for class participation) and grading rules may be subject to change. You will be notified of these changes by the instructor if needed.

It is our shared responsibility to observe effective hygiene rules and follow the relevant government, university and faculty regulations regarding the pandemic. If you become ill or experience any symptoms, please stay home to protect others from infection.

Schedule

- Sep 9 Introduction: What is Popular Culture?
- Sep 16 High and low culture? The mass culture debate
Romeo + Juliet. (1996) dir. Baz Luhrmann
Gnomeo and Juliet. (2011) dir. Kelly Asbury
Strinati, Chapter 1, pp. 1-19
classics recycled in pop culture
- Sep 23 A typical American genre: the Western
Crane, “The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky”
The Searchers (1956) dir. John Ford
Into the Wild (2007) dir. Sean Penn
- Sep 30 Mass culture and Americanization?
Strinati, Chapter 1, pp. 19-45
Online resources, types of ESL tasks, digital pedagogy
Setting personal objectives for the course
- Oct 7 *Icebreakers and warmers* based on American culture
Songs, lyrics, music – in teaching
- Oct 14 *Films 1*. (listening and speaking)
- Oct 21 Disney, Pop Art, advertising and other iconic images
Various forms of visual input, memes, art, etc. in teaching
Using visuals for teaching grammar
- Oct 28 *Comics and graphic novels*
“American culture” as represented in various pop culture genres
- Nov 4 **Consultation Week**

- Nov 11 Lesson plans, face-to-face vs. online (synchronous and asynchronous) teaching
Online collections of ESL lesson plans
- Nov 18 Fandom Studies
Online resources created for and by fans
- Nov 25 Technology in pop culture: science fiction
Gibson, “Johnny Mnemonic”
Video games
- Dec 2 *Films 2. (speaking and writing)*
SHORT ESSAY AND LESSON PLANS DUE DATE
- Dec 9 **Evaluation of personal objectives**
Course evaluation

Set texts

Crane, Stephen. “The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky.” (1898)
Gibson, William. “Johnny Mnemonic.” *Burning Chrome*. (1986) London: Grafton Books, 1988. 14-36.

Films

Gnomeo and Juliet. Dir. Kelly Asbury. Perf. James McAvoy, Emily Blunt, Maggie Smith. Touchstone Pictures, 2011. Animation.

Into the Wild. Dir. Sean Penn. Perf. Emile Hirsch, Vince Vaughn, Catherine Keener. Paramount Vantage, 2007.

Romeo + Juliet. Dir. Baz Luhrmann. Perf. Leonardo DiCaprio, Claire Danes. 20th Century Fox, 1996.

The Searchers. Dir. John Ford. Perf. John Wayne, Jeffrey Hunter, Vera Miles. Warner Bros, 1956.

Theoretical background

Storey, John. “Chapter 1: What Is Popular Culture?” *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction*. 5th ed. London & New York: Pearson Longman, 2009. 1-15.

Strinati, Dominic. “Chapter 1: Mass Culture and Popular Culture.” *An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture*. 2nd ed. London & New York: Routledge, 2005. 1-45.

The Image in English Language Teaching. Edited by Kieran Donaghy and Daniel Xerri, ELT Council, 2017.