

English 151  
Fall 2002  
Prof. J. Haas

Palmer 406, x3076, HAASJ  
Office hrs: T,W,Th 1:30-3  
or by appt.

## **Reading and Writing Popular Culture**

### **The Course**

The purpose of this course is to develop the skills needed to produce college-level writing. However, this course takes as a given that in order to be a good writer, you need to be a good reader, both of conventional texts (e.g. literature, history, philosophy) as well as the texts that surround us all the time and that we constantly “read” without even being aware that we’re doing so. These “texts” of popular culture range from movies and TV sitcoms to music, advertisements and the architecture of the shopping mall. The premise of this course is that all these signs of popular culture have meanings that go far beyond simply attracting paying customers. We will read and discuss a series of essays by cultural critics who present arguments about the meanings of different aspects of popular culture. In your writing you will be engaging with these writers—agreeing, disagreeing, or modifying their arguments—and you will also be learning from them how to read and write about the signs of popular culture.

### **Required Texts**

John T. Gage, *The Shape of Reason*, Third edition  
Maasik and Solomon, *Signs of Life in the USA*, Third edition  
Diana Hacker, *A Writer's Reference*

### **Requirements and Expectations**

**Formal Writing:** All formal papers must be in standard college format: typed (10 or 12 point), double-spaced, with standard (1" to 1.25") margins. You will write four papers for this course. Three of them will be short (3-5pp) essays related to the course readings, and one will be a research project of 6-8 pages. For each of these papers you will be required to hand in a first draft which you will then revise. Only your final draft will be graded, but it will not be considered complete without a first draft. Late final revisions will be marked down one third of a grade for each day past due. If I need to return a paper to you for proof-reading, it will be considered late until I get it back. Papers more than a few days late will not be accepted at all. If you fail to turn in any paper entirely, you will not be able to pass the class.

**Informal Writing:** You will write four Response papers. These are one-page, single-spaced, typed responses to the reading due in class that day. I will not accept late Response papers. There will also be occasional, impromptu writing in class. In-class writing assignments cannot be made up.

**Presentations:** At least once during the course you will work together with one other person to present one of the readings and guide the class discussion on it. I will go over standards for these presentations. During the week that your research paper is due, you will also give a brief presentation on your research.

**Participation:** You will be expected to share your ideas and questions in the discussion of readings and to work collaboratively with other members of the class on your own writing and theirs. Your participation in class should show that you have done the reading and thought about it. Make sure you come to class prepared with the day's reading in hand (as well as brain) in addition to a pen and notebook. If you show up for class without the necessary materials, I will mark you absent.

**In-Class Workshops:** In addition to discussing readings, we will spend time talking about papers written by members of the class. These will be photocopied, and the name of the author will be removed. You can expect to have one of your papers discussed at least once during the semester. The writer will remain anonymous.

**Conferences:** You are required to meet with me in conference at least once during the course of the semester to discuss a paper in progress.

**Attendance:** Much of the work of this course will take place in the classroom, in discussion and writing exercises. You are allowed two absences without an effect on your grade. Three absences will adversely affect your grade, and **more than three absences is grounds for failing the course**. If you do miss a class, it is your responsibility to find out what you may have missed from a trustworthy classmate and to confirm the assignment for the next class. If you are repeatedly late or unprepared for class, you will be counted as absent.

**Grades:** First drafts and reading response papers will receive grades of Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory and will be figured in your grade for class participation. Each final revised essay will receive a letter grade, and overall grades for the semester will be totalled as follows:

Essay 1	15%
Essay 2	20%
Essay 3 (Research Project)	25%
Essay 4	25%
Overall participation, including presentations, drafts, peer editing work, and responses	15%

### **Schedule of Assignments (subject to change as needed)**

**Thurs. 8/29:** Introductions

**Tues. 9/3:** (S) "Popular Signs," 1-19; Gage, Chap. 1; RESPONSE PAPER #1 DUE

**Thurs. 9/5:** (S) "Consuming Passions," 45-54; (S) Norton, 62-68; (S) Hine, 69-78; (bring package from a body care product to class)

**Tues. 9/10:** (S) Ewen, 79-85; (S) Davis, 86-93; Kron, 94-104; RESPONSE PAPER #2 DUE

**Thurs 9/12:** Gage, Chap. 4 and 6; "Brought to You B(u)y," 117-128

**Tues. 9/17:** FIRST DRAFT PAPER #1 DUE; Gage, chap. 7

**Thurs. 9/19:** Marchand, 129-136; Solomon, 137-148; WRITING WORKSHOP

**Tues. 9/24:** Calfee, 180-188; Williams, 188-194

**Thurs. 9/26:** FINAL DRAFT PAPER #1 DUE

**Tues. 10/1:** "We've Come a Long Way, Maybe," 437-448; (S) Devor, 447-452;  
(S)Blum, 453-459; RESPONSE PAPER #3 DUE

**Thurs. 10/3:** (S) Wolf, 481-490; Tannen, 490-496; Douglas, 260-265

**Tues. 10/8:** (S) Gibson, 496-504; (S) Messner, 460-471, (S) Stark, 236-240

**Thurs. 10/10:** FIRST DRAFT PAPER #2 DUE; brainstorm research topics

**Tues. 10/15:** Writing Workshop; Gage, chap. 8

**Thurs. 10/17:** FINAL DRAFT PAPER #2 DUE

**Tues. 10/22:** FALL BREAK

**Thurs. 10/24:** RESEARCH QUESTION DUE; Library activity

**Tues. 10/29:** FIELD SURVEY DUE; Read MLA section in Hacker

**Thurs. 10/31:** TBA

**Tues. 11/5:** ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE (10 SOURCES)

**Thurs. 11/7:** Bring 2 copies of a draft of one source essay to class

**Tues. 11/12:** TBA

**Thurs. 11/14:** RESEARCH PROJECT DUE (final versions of source essays and annotated bibliography); Begin research presentations

**Tues. 11/19:** Continue presentations; (S) "Constructing Race," 515-525; (S) Omi, 526-538; (S) DeMott, 538-549

**Thurs. 11/21:** (S) Anzaldua, 575-582; (S) Shen, 583-593;

**Tues. 11/26:** (S) Willis, 744-757; Gladwell, 757-764; RESPONSE #4 DUE

**Thurs. 11/28:** Thanksgiving Break

**Tues. 12/3:** FIRST DRAFT PAPER #4 DUE

**Thurs. 12/5:** Writing Workshop

**Tues 12/10:** FINAL DRAFT PAPER #4 DUE

**\*\*You may pick up final papers from me at my office at the beginning of Spring semester.**