

## Course Syllabus: Writing 4B—The Critical Essay: Popular Culture

### TEXTS:

1. Maasik, Sonia and Jack Solomon. *Signs of Life in the USA: Readings on Popular Culture for Writers*. 4<sup>th</sup> edn. Boston and NY: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2003.
2. Rowling, J.K. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. NY: Scholastic Inc., 1997.

### Week 1:

M	Class Period	Activities
6/28	Morning	Icebreaker: silent interviews; student, instructor, and class introductions; rules and regs, honor code. In groups, define "popular" and "culture." Discuss meanings and influences.
	Afternoon	Rd. Storey's "What is Popular Culture" (handout) and take notes, complete questions. Discussion and tie-in to morning's definitions.
	Evening	Being an active thinker and reader. Rd. Ruskiewicz and Lunsford's "On Reading and Thinking Critically" (handout). Discuss individual reading practices and methods for course. Rd. Kron's "The Semiotics of Home Décor" (pp. SOL pp. 101-11). Begin deconstruction essay on student rooms.

T	Class Period	Activities
6/29	Morning	Complete and share student room analyses. Introduction to semiotics; Rd. (SOL pp. 6-13); Discuss Diller and Scofidio people signs handout. What's Your Sign? Personality interpretation activity. Introduction to Rhetoric lecture.
	Afternoon	Rhetorically analyzing images. Rd. and discuss "Brought to You B(u)y" (SOL pp. 141-49); Marchand's "The Parable of the Democracy of Goods" (SOL pp. 150-57); Solomon's "Masters of Desire" (SOL pp. 160-70).
	Evening	Practicing ad analysis. Go through sample adverts (consumer flag handout, Tommy H. and adbusters version, H2O ads).

W	Class Period	Activities
6/30	Morning	Prewrite and draft essay 1: Ad Analysis
	Afternoon	Rd. and discuss Lutz's "Weasel Words" (handout); weasel word relays. Rd. and discuss. Steinem's "Sex, Lies, and Advertising" (SOL pp. 186-204); Barthel's "A Gentleman and a Consumer" (SOL pp. 171-80).
	Evening	Workshop Essay 1.

R	Class Period	Activities
7/1	Morning	Revise Essay 1. Student conferences.
	Afternoon	Introduction to marketing—space and consumerism. Rd. and discuss Hine’s “What’s in a Package” (SOL pp. 84-92); Gladwell’s “The Science of Shopping” (SOL pp. 403-09). Field trip to T-hill for observation and product acquisition.
	Evening	Begin conglomerate essay/project 2: Product analysis and marketing portfolio.

F	Class Period	Activities
7/2	Morning	Continue work on project. Presentations.
	Afternoon	Style exercises: cliché hot potato. Final revision of essay 1.
	Evening	Intro. to American values. What does it mean to be an American? Constructions of nationality. Rd. and discuss Jennings’s “American Dreams” (SOL pp. 489-94); Algranati’s “Being and Other” (SOL pp. 608-612); and p. 553 SOL on “myth of melting pot”; Pres. Bush’s Sept. 11 address to the nation (handout); Atwood’s “A Letter to America.” (handout). Poems “Spic” and “All-American Girl” by Julia Alvarez.

**Week 2:**

M	Class Period	Activities
7/5	Morning	Stereotypes! Take stereotypes quiz and discuss. Screen SNL skits and discuss. Rd. and discuss Barry’s “Guys vs. Men” (handout); the Onion’s “Fairy Princesses” (handout); Devor’s “Gender Role Behavior” (SOL pp. 484-88).
	Afternoon	Continue discussion on essays. Intro Essay 3—Cultural Stereotypes in Film Analysis. Screen <i>Grease</i> .
	Evening	Finish <i>Grease</i> . Discuss and prewrite. Begin draft of Essay 3.

T	Class Period	Activities
7/6	Morning	Draft Essay 3 continued.
	Afternoon	Goal listing; practice peer review commenting; skit. Workshop Essay 3.
	Evening	Revise Essay 3.

W	Class Period	Activities
7/7	Morning	American Icons, American Heroes. Rd. and discuss “American Icons” (SOL pp. 721-28); Bader’s “Larger Than Life” (SOL pp. 785-94). Fame collages: collect and discuss images and definitions of celebrity, hero, icon, and has-been. What makes people famous or “popular”? How does the media market them?
	Afternoon	Introduction to popular music, video culture. Britney vs. Avril: pop princess and the “anything but ordinary” girl. Image evaluation. Music video and song analyses.
	Evening	Read and discuss Rushkoff’s “The MTV Revolution: Warfare in the Simulacre” (handout). Rd. Ali’s “Same Old Song” (handout). Gender issues, economic issues, “selling out.”

R	Class Period	Activities
7/8	Morning	Continue study of popular music and video analyses. What is popular music today? How do we define it? What does it say about our current society and cultural values?
	Afternoon	Song analysis of Jewel’s “Intuition.” Students complete own song analyses.
	Evening	Rd. Rodriguez’s “Crossing Pop Lines” (handout). Discuss crossover artists, music, genres. Finish song analyses.

F	Class Period	Activities
7/9	Morning	Final revision of Essay 3.
	Afternoon	Intro. to Reality TV (R-TV). View CBS Sunday Morning clip “Reality Check”; Discussion of r-tv sub-genres (handout). Optional: read Elber’s “Become Famous, No Talent Necessary” (handout) and the <i>Onion</i> ’s “New Fox Reality Show” (handout). Discuss conventions and appeals of R-TV. Screen show and perform rhetorical analysis of audience, contestants, judges, host, music, lighting, set/graphics, and camera angles/shots.
	Evening	Future of r-tv—new genre? Trend? What does it say about current values, audience appeals? Read and discuss Dorsey’s “There’s No Substitute...” (handout); Willdorf’s “Reality’s Fight” (handout); and Moore’s “What’s News?” (handout). Introduction to the Internet. Internet Familiarity Test. Is the Internet a “real” community? Discuss Internet identities and constructions of social interaction. Introduce Internet debates.

**Week 3:**

M	Class Period	Activities
7/12	Morning	Internet culture continued. Read and discuss Chapman's "Web of Deceit" (handout). Complete Essay 4: Web Analysis and discuss strategies for web page construction and deconstruction.
	Afternoon	Complete Essay 4: web analysis. Preparation for Internet Debates: Is the Internet gender-biased? Is the Internet a "democratic" technology? Rd. and discuss Miller's "Women and Children First: Gender and the Settling of the Electronic Frontier" (SOL pp. 539-48), Hancock's "The Haves and Have-Nots" (SOL pp. 623-26), Dyson's "Cyberspace: If You Don't Love It, Leave It" (handout), Perry & Perry's "Gender Differences in Internet Use" (handout), and Ford's "School, Girls, and the Information Age" (handout).
	Evening	Cultural Evaluation, Social Projection: Our heroes, ourselves. Rd. and discuss Engle's "What Makes Superman So Darned American?" (SOL pp. 738-765) and Seger's "Creating the Myth" (SOL pp. 316-25). Begin reading <i>Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone</i> . Harry as hero. Cultural and archetypal myths.

T	Class Period	Activities
7/13	Morning	Conduct Internet Debates. Is the Internet a gender-biased community? Is the Internet a "democratic" technology?
	Afternoon	Harry Potter as literary and social phenomena. Rd. and discuss Gupta's "Children and Adult" and "A Thought About 'Open and Closed Texts'" (handouts), and Borah's "Apprentice Wizards Welcome" (handout)
	Evening	Read <i>Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone</i> .

W	Class Period	Activities
7/14	Morning	"Otherness" in <i>Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone</i> . Race, class, and other oppositional identity categories. Read, complete questions, and discuss Gupta's "Blood" and Park's "Class and Socioeconomic Identity in Harry Potter's England" (handouts).
	Afternoon	Screen <i>Harry Potter and The Chamber of Secrets</i> .
	Evening	Draft Essay 5: Harry Potter Cultural Analysis

R	Class Period	Activities
7/15	Morning	Finish essay discussion. Finish draft of Essay 5. Workshop/peer review of E5.
	Afternoon	Revise Essay 5. More <i>Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone</i> reading.
	Evening	Essay Soiree. An Evening of Sharing.

F	Class Period	Activities
7/16	Morning	Course evaluations, closing activity.
	Afternoon	P-T conferences, graduation.
	Evening	N/A. Students leave in afternoon.