Social and Behavioral Sciences
Texas A&M University

Core Curriculum Cover Sheet

Initial Request for a course to be considered for the Fall 2014 Core Curriculum

1. This request is submitted by (department name): Sociology

2. Course prefix and number: SOCI 212

3. Texas Common Course Number: Click here to enter text.

4. Complete course title: Sociology of Popular Culture

5. Semester credit hours: 3

6. This request is for consideration in the following Foundational Component Area:
   - ☐ Communication
   - ☐ Mathematics
   - ☐ Life and Physical Sciences
   - ☐ Language, Philosophy and Culture
   - ☐ Creative Arts
   - ☐ American History
   - ☐ Government/Political Science
   - ☐ Social and Behavioral Sciences
   - ☑ Current Core: No
   - ☑ Current ICD: No

7. This course should also be considered for International and Cultural Diversity (ICD) designation:
   - ☑ Yes
   - ☐ No

8. How frequently will the class be offered? Every other year

9. Number of class sections per semester: 2

10. Number of students per semester: 100

11. Historic annual enrollment for the last three years: N/A

   This completed form must be attached to a course syllabus that sufficiently and specifically details the appropriate core objectives through multiple lectures, outside activities, assignments, etc. Representative from department submitting request should be in attendance when considered by the Core Curriculum Council.

12. Date: 4/14/2013

   Course Instructor: Sarah N. Gatson

   Approvals:

   Department Head: Date: 4/2/2013

   College Dean/Designee: Date: 4/2/2013

For additional information regarding core curriculum, visit the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board website at www.thecb.state.tx.us/corecurriculum2014

See form instructions for submission/approval process.
Texas A&M University

Core Curriculum

Initia Request for a Course Addition to the Fall 2014 Core Curriculum

Foundational Component Area: Social and Behavioral Sciences

In the box below, describe how this course meets the Foundational Component Area description for Social and Behavioral Sciences. Courses in this category focus on the application of empirical and scientific methods that contribute to the understanding of what makes us human. Courses involve the exploration of behavior and interactions among individuals, groups, institutions, and events, examining their impact on the individual, society, and culture.

The proposed course must contain all elements of the Foundational Component Area. How does the proposed course specifically address the Foundational Component Area definition above?

This course focuses on the sociological understanding of popular culture (including the arguable distinction between “popular” and “mass” culture). The course will begin with an examination of the classic and contemporary social scientific definitions and theories of culture, and popular versus “high” or elite culture(s). In the remainder of the course, we will deal with 1) various forms and arenas of popular culture, such as television, film, and music; 2) Institutions and popular culture, such as the law; and 3) Identity (race, class, gender, and sexuality) and popular culture.

Core Objectives

Describe how the proposed course develops the required core objectives below by indicating how each learning objective will be addressed, what specific strategies will be used for each objective and how student learning of each objective will be evaluated.

The proposed course is required to contain each element of the Core Objective.

Critical Thinking (to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information):

This element will be evaluated through instructor’s assessment of 1) several short pieces of analytical written work (concept papers and written discussion responses), 2) several short analytical media presentations (PowerPoint slides); these assignments assess students’ demonstration of critical engagement with various formats of popular culture in a media-literate fashion.

Communication (to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication):

This element will be evaluated through instructor’s assessment of several short analytical papers, several short PowerPoint presentations, and several interactive discussion sessions addressing their own interpretations of course materials, and linking those interpretations with the empirical world. The goal is to develop their media literacy as well as their ability to present their own ideas in a nuanced and clear fashion.

Empirical and Quantitative Skills (to include the manipulation and analysis of numerical data or observable facts resulting in informed conclusions):

This element will be evaluated through instructor’s assessment through in-class exercises of students’ ability to reflect upon past participation in local cultures, observe current cultural interactions, products, and values, and create sociologically analytical materials demonstrating understanding of & ability to apply theoretical frameworks. Quantitative and qualitative skills will be assessed by student’s performance on reading and creating tables that convey and analyze important aspects of different research projects.
Texas A&M University
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Social Responsibility (to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities):

Understanding how cultural expression is related to civic participation is a key component of understanding social responsibility. This element will be evaluated through instructor’s assessment of students’ written and oral work that analyses the multicultural and intersectional landscape of popular culture, which includes an understanding that all subgroups, identities, and communities participate in making this complex, interconnected, and often volatile landscape.

Please be aware that instructors should be prepared to submit samples/examples of student work as part of the future course recertification process.
Department of Sociology
SOCI 212: Sociology of Popular Culture
Request for International and Cultural Diversity designation

This course focuses on the sociological understanding of popular culture (including the arguable distinction between “popular” and “mass” culture), and presents the students with a diverse array of claims to meaning making. While the course lecture focuses on the American context, this context is explicitly recognized as a multicultural space, co-created by its members who have come, and continue to come, from a wide spectrum of the globe. The course begins with an examination of the classic and contemporary social scientific definitions and theories of culture, particularly focusing on the tension between popular versus “high” or elite culture(s). In the remainder of the course, we will deal with 1) various forms and arenas of popular culture, such as television, film, and music; 2) Institutions and popular culture, such as the law; and 3) Identity (race, class, gender, and sexuality) and popular culture. Students specifically are assigned to bring in their own community, ethnic, racial, religious, etc. cultural experiences in to the classroom space in order to learn to approach their own experiences critically, and to engage in potentially contentious space with their peers in a literate and respectful way.
SOCI 212: Sociology of Popular Culture

TR 2:20-3:35 p.m., Spring 2014
Professor Sarah N. Gatson
Office: 427 Academic; 845-7267; gatson@tamu.edu
Office hours: 11-1, T; 11:30-1:30 W; and by appointment

Course Description: Examination of the classic and contemporary social scientific definitions and theories of culture, and popular versus “high” or elite culture(s), various forms and arenas of popular culture, such as television, film, and music, institutions and popular culture, identity (race, class, gender, and sexuality) and popular culture.

This course focuses on the sociological understanding of popular culture (including the arguable distinction between “popular” and “mass” culture). The course will begin with an examination of the classic and contemporary social scientific definitions and theories of culture, and popular versus “high” or elite culture(s). In the remainder of the course, we will deal with 1) various forms and arenas of popular culture, such as television, film, and music; 2) Institutions and popular culture, such as the law; and 3) Identity (race, class, gender, and sexuality) and popular culture.

Learning Outcomes:
- Communicate through analytical written work (concept papers and written discussion responses)
- Communicate through analytical audiovisual media presentations (PowerPoint slides)
- Engage critically with various formats of popular culture and develop multicultural media literacy.

Pre-requisites: None

Required Readings:
Books:
Popular Culture: A Reader, eds. Raiford Guins & Omayra Zaragoza Cruz (Sage, 2005) – Selected Readings
Connecting Social Problems and Popular Culture: Why Media is Not the Answer, Karen Sternheimer (Westview, 2010)
Readings:
Course Requirements & Evaluation [200 points total; 180-200 (A), 160-179.5 (B), 140-159.5 (C), 120-139.5 (D), Below 120 (F)]: IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO MAKE SURE I HAVE ALL YOUR ASSIGNMENTS IN, AND ON TIME. Additionally, please note that I WILL NOT RE-GRADE assignments in order to round up to a higher grade. For example, 179 and 179.5 are Bs, and will not be rounded up to a 180/A. Grade changes will be made ONLY due to calculation errors on my part.

CLASS PARTICIPATION & ABSENCE POLICY: I do not take attendance; it is your responsibility to come to class on time and to be responsible for the material covered therein. While I am happy to answer questions pertaining to the course, I will not re-provide lectures or produce my lecture notes for you – THE POWERPOINTS USED IN CLASS AND AVAILABLE ONLINE ARE NOT FULL NOTES, THEY ARE OUTLINES. If you miss class for any reason, your best option for getting back up to speed is to communicate with other students, whom you may ask to share their notes. Please see Rule 7 under Part I (http://student-rules.tamu.edu/search/rule7.htm) for details on excused absences, which I only need to be notified of in the event of missing an assignment or exam deadline, so that make-up work may be scheduled.

ASSIGNMENTS – All assignments should be uploaded to corresponding assignment areas on eLearning. Make sure to save a copy of all assignments. ALWAYS MAKE SURE TO MAKE A BACK-UP COPY; NEVER ERASE YOUR PAPER FROM DISK UNTIL AFTER THE SEMESTER ENDS, TO AVOID “LOST” PAPERS. If you ever have trouble uploading an assignment, MAKE SURE TO EMAIL A COPY to me either through eLearning or to my regular TAMU account by the deadline – emails are automatically time-stamped, and you will not be sanctioned for missing the deadline. When the assignment is one that other students need to review and give feedback on, I will upload it for you when necessary.

CONCEPT PAPERS (CPs): 30%/60 points (2 X 30 points). These are short, 1-2 page papers used to assess your grasp of concepts and materials discussed in class. They are based on discussion prompts that I will either present in class or post online. The graded CPs should be saved and referred to when constructing other assignments. Please refer to the schedule on pages 3-4 below for due dates for each CP.

POPULAR CULTURE OBSERVATIONS (PCOs): 50%/100 points (4 X 25 points) These are 1-2 slide PowerPoint presentations explaining an example of popular culture. These are based on your understanding of the overall concept of popular culture, and of the particular examples you choose. Please refer to the schedule on pages 3-4 below for due dates for each CP.

For this assignment, you must produce one each of the following:

1) Autoethnographic/Community: Based on your own life, you will present an example of popular culture from your home community in which you have participated.

2) Audio Visual: You will present on a film or television series that you think is an example of popular culture.

3) Audio: You will present on a piece of music, musical artist, or band that you think is an example of popular culture.
4) **Textual:** You will present on a book, magazine, or other text-based format that you think is an example of popular culture.

NOTE: The Autocthonographic/Community presentations may cover formats outlined in the other three assignments, BUT YOU MAY NOT USE THE SAME EXAMPLES IN ANY OF THE ASSIGNMENTS. Both the assigned readings from the textbooks AND the remainder of these books should be considered your secondary source material for your papers and presentations.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:** 20%/40% points (4 X 10 points). These are online responses to discussion questions posted on e-learning. They have deadlines attached to them. They are not on the schedule, and serve as a way to make sure you are engaged with the course materials, and with one another – 7 points will be awarded for the original response you make to the question, and 3 points for a response you make TO ANOTHER STUDENT’S RESPONSE.

Schedule (*"*" highlights weeks when an assignment is due):

**Week 1:** 1/13-17:
- T: Introductory discussion: Course objectives and Discussion of Concept Paper and Presentation requirements.
- R: *What is popular culture?* Cullen, pp.1-9; Guins & Cruz, pp. 1-18

**Week 2:** 1/20-24: Marking boundaries, marking identities
- T: Guin & Cruz, 19-38; Sternheimer, I-20
- R: Cullen, pp.57-77 (Minstrelsy & Blackface; lecture will also discuss Racebending.com)

* **Week 3:** 1/27-1/31: Reading alone, reading together – the creation of mass media
  - T: Cullen, pp. 10-29; Guin & Cruz, 449-461
  - R: Cullen, pp. 78-94; Guin & Cruz, pp.249-262
  - **CP # 1 due by 5p.m., Friday, Jan. 31 – Topic: What is the difference between popular culture and mass culture?**

**Week 4:** 2/3-7: Performing Identity in Public: Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality
- T: Cullen, 55-128; Guin & Cruz, pp. 355-371;
- R: Cullen, 270-294; Guin & Cruz, pp. 285-293

* **Week 5:** 2/10-14: Performing Identity in Public: Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality
  - T: Guin & Cruz, pp. 372-416
  - R: Guin & Cruz, pp. 429-440; 462-479
  - **CP # 2 due by 5p.m., Friday, Feb. 14 – Topic: What is popular and cultural about identity?**

**Week 6:** 2/17-21: Performing Identity in Public: Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality
- T: Guin & Cruz, 324-337
- R: Guin & Cruz, pp.479-503

**Week 7:** 2/24-2/28: Mass medias
- T: Cullen, pp.129-202
- R: Cullen, pp.234-293

* **Week 8:** 3/3-7:
  - T: Guin & Cruz, pp.504-533
  - R: Making a PowerPoint presentation
PCO #1 due by 5p.m., Friday, Mar. 7

3/10-14: SPRING BREAK

* Week 9: 3/17-21: “Everything bad is good for you” – moral panic and popular culture
  T: Sternheimer, pp.21-46
  R: Sternheimer, pp.47-74

PCO #2 due by 5p.m., Friday, Mar. 21

Week 10: 3/24-28: “Everything bad is good for you” – moral panic and popular culture
  T: Sternheimer, pp.75-122
  R: Sternheimer, pp.123-156

* Week 11: 3/31-4/4: “Everything bad is good for you” – moral panic and popular culture
  T: Sternheimer, pp.157-178
  R: Sternheimer, pp.179-210

PCO #3 due by 5p.m., Apr. 4

Week 12: 4/7-11: “Everything bad is good for you” – moral panic and popular culture
  T: Sternheimer, pp.211-230
  R: Sternheimer, pp.231-256

Week 13: 4/14-18: “Everything bad is good for you” – moral panic and popular culture
  T: Sternheimer, pp.257-284
  R: Sternheimer, pp.285-300

* Week 14: 4/21-25: “Everything bad is good for you” – moral panic and popular culture
  T: Gatson readings; In-class discussion.
  R: Gatson readings; In-class discussion.

PCO #4 due by 5p.m., Friday, Mar. 25
Format for Papers

All papers must conform to the following guidelines:

**Cover page:** This page should have your name, course and section number, and any other identifying information. Do NOT repeat any of this information in the text of your paper, unless it is in a header or footer (i.e. it should not be used to take up space in the body of the paper).

**Margins:** All margins (top, bottom, right and left) must be 1 inch. If you are using Microsoft Word, click on File; click on Page Set up; under Margins, enter the number “1.” If you have trouble doing this, SEE ME prior to turning in the paper.

**Spacing:** Double-spaced, except for any lengthy (taking up more than four lines of text) quotations, which should be indented and single spaced. Do NOT put an extra space between paragraphs.

**Font:** You must use 12-point font. Size matters. Style (as long as it isn’t one of the fancy or symbol fonts) doesn’t. Personally, I prefer Times New Roman.

**Length:** Adhere to the page-length requirement in the syllabus for each paper assignment – these length requirements are meant to highlight the need for editing to make your paper more concise and clear. If, before you turn in the paper, you find that you are more than a line or two under or over the required length, this is a signal to you that you need to do some re-writing.

**Grammar and Proofreading:** Adhere to standard American English spelling and grammar requirements. Proofread your papers, as spell-checking with a computer program is not the same thing as using language properly, and spell-check will not alert you to typographical errors other than misspelled words. If you have concerns about your proof-reading skills, ask a classmate to proof your paper for you, as it is often easier to catch someone else’s mistakes. You may also go to the Writing Center in the Evans Library – for more information: [http://writingcenter.tamu.edu/](http://writingcenter.tamu.edu/).

**Sources/Works cited/Bibliography:** If the paper is a research rather than a short response paper (i.e., you are required to outside research of primary and/or secondary materials), please include a full bibliographic section, in alphabetical order, of the sources you used. Within the text itself, you may use whatever citation format with which you are most comfortable. If you are unfamiliar with citation formats, you may check out the online *Chicago Manual of Style* for commonly used formats: [http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools.html). The parenthetical method of citation within the text – (Gatson, 1997: 56) or (Gatson, 1997, p 56) is generally more concise and easy to read. Online sources are fine for general research, but must be cited as such, and you must be able to explain why they are relevant when a research article was just as available as a source. News articles may be used as sources if they are being used to illustrate the existence of a phenomenon or cultural concept, but NOT as independent research sources like law review articles or scholarly journal articles or books.
All of the above are meant to be read as requirements aside from the content requirement of critical engagement with the course materials. These requirements may seem nit-picky to you, but they are required because the various ways students have of getting around length and style requirements often make the papers vastly unequal and difficult to grade on an acceptable standard.

*The papers will be graded on the following percentage system: 40% for content, and understanding and application of the material; 30% for clarity and structure of your argument; and 30% for the grammar and style/format and proofreading rules.*

Making the same guidelines errors will result in more points off than that occurrence in the first paper.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Sample Grading Rubric</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use of sociological concepts</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Presentation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Grammar</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Overall score</strong></td>
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</table>
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for a reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Department of Disability Service in Room B118 of Cain Hall. Phone/TTY: 979-845-1637 • Fax: 979-458-1214 • E-mail: disability@tamu.edu, http://disability.tamu.edu/

Aggie Honor Code

“An Aggie does not lie or cheat or tolerate those who do.” http://aggiehonor.tamu.edu
Our conduct in this class should embody the spirit as well as the letter of the Aggie Honor Code. If you have any questions about the code or Honor Council and its Procedures, please consult the “Know the Code” website found at http://compliance.tamu.edu/CodeConduct.aspx.
Texas A&M University
Departmental Request for a New Course
Undergraduate • Graduate • Professional
• Submit original form and attach a course syllabus.

Form Instructions

1. Request submitted by (Department or Program Name): Sociology

2. Course prefix, number and complete title of course: SOCI 212: Sociology of Popular Culture

3. Catalog course description (not to exceed 50 words): Examination of the classic and contemporary social scientific definitions and theories of culture, and popular versus "high" or elite culture(s), various forms and areas of popular culture, such as television, film, and music, institutions and popular culture, identity (race, class, gender, and sexuality) and popular culture.

4. Prerequisite(s): None

Cross-listed with: N/A Stacked with: N/A

Cross-listed courses require the signature of both department heads.

5. Is this a variable credit course? ☐ Yes ☒ No If yes, from ________ to ________

6. Is this a repeatable course? ☐ Yes ☒ No If yes, this course may be taken ________ times.

Will this course be repeated within the same semester? ☐ Yes ☒ No

7. This course will be:
   a. required for students enrolled in the following degree programs(s) (e.g., B.A. in history)
      N/A
   b. an elective for students enrolled in the following degree program(s) (e.g., M.S., Ph.D. in geography)
      General academics

8. If other departments are teaching or are responsible for related subject matter, the course must be coordinated with these departments. Attach approval letters.

9. Prefix Course # Title (excluding punctuation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lec</th>
<th>Lab</th>
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<th>CIP and Fund Code</th>
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Approval recommended by:

Michael Spinrad
Chair, College Review Committee

Jose Bermudez
Dean of College

Submitted to Coordinating Board by:

Associate Director, Curricular Services

Questions regarding this form should be directed to Sandra Williams at 845-8201 or sandra.williams@tamu.edu

Curricular Services – 3/10