Research Paper Assignment
Introduction to Popular Culture
Spring 2013

Assignment description:
You’ll produce a minimum 6 page research paper on a popular culture phenomenon of your choosing. Your paper must be a critical analysis of your chosen topic, based in the appropriate theory and methodology, with summary and description kept to a bare minimum.
Start with something you are interested in. Ideally you will choose some emerging idea, product, trend, movement, etc. that you are into but the rest of us might not yet know about. Or you could put a new twist on something we all think we know enough about but are missing something critical. Or you can choose a historical approach that illuminates the underexamined influence of an older popular culture text. The topic is open.
Your job is to help create a deeper understanding of something most people engage uncritically. Your reader should understand what cultural work is being performed by the text. Whether you like it or not is virtually irrelevant as would be any attempt to convince the reader that they should or should not like the text.
Your research should be supported with a minimum of 3 scholarly sources (only one of which can be an assigned course reading) and 2 popular or primary sources. Chose a subject that you will be excited about, maybe something that you are fairly familiar with yet would like to know more about. For example, you might write a paper titled, “From Underground to Aboveground: Nirvana and the Co-optation of Subculture.” Or “Deconstructing Bodies: The Female Midriff.” Or “Can the Rich Authentically Sing for the Poor: Borrowed Social Capital in Springsteen’s The Ghost of Tom Joad.” Or…

There are several steps in the research production process, all of which must be completed for full credit. The component parts are the Proposal, Annotated Bibliography, Rough Draft, Peer Review, and Final Draft. While these writing assignments together represent a large portion of your grade, each step is an opportunity to address your strengths and weaknesses, and help to orient your progress throughout the process of your paper (hopefully, also helping you produce a better grade and get through the mire of procrastination!).

1) Proposal/Abstract Thesis statement due Tues 4/16:
For this initial part of the assignment, you will produce a thoughtful thesis statement on a topic of your choice. Remember that you will probably modify your thesis… your research and writing will help to guide your ideas.
Your proposal will be a page long and should detail what you hope to accomplish in your paper, outline the major themes, and identify the critical lens you propose to use. In popular culture terms, this is the “blurb” that describes your paper for your reader/audience. This stage of the project provides you instructor feedback and assistance before you start drafting.
Be sure to have a clear identifiable thesis. You will want to take a strong position on your topic… “The Pros and Cons of X Popular Culture Phenomenon” is not sufficient. Rather, you should take a position on the merits of the cultural work being done by the topic you
choose. Please ask your peers, your mentor, and your instructor if you are unsure of how to do this.

The proposal is not a contract. Your topic will and should change as your progress through your research journey. You will receive feedback on the appropriateness of your topic, whether the scale of the project is workable, and other practical matters.

2) Annotated bibliography due Tues April 23:
An annotated bibliography contains descriptive or evaluative comments on the sources you are working with in your research. Please follow correct MLA formatting as appropriate (YOU DO NOT NEED A COVER PAGE – save the paper). This source list follows the same form as the regular References list page, however your commentary follows the last period of the citation. Please provide at least three sentences of description for at least four sources. You will receive feedback on the appropriateness of your sources given your topic, and an assessment of how on track your project seems to be.

NOTE: Though the References list page that accompanies your rough and final drafts will obviously have many of the same works as your annotated bibliography, since your research is an evolving process there should be some differences. One difference is that the References list page that accompanies a draft of the paper will not be annotated.

An annotation is a summary and/or evaluation. [The following information on annotated bibliographies is taken from the OWL at Purdue: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl_annotatedbib.html]

"An annotated bibliography includes a summary and/or evaluation of each of the sources. Depending on your project or the assignment, your annotations may do one or more of the following:

1. Summarize: Some annotations merely summarize the source. What are the main arguments? What is the point of this book or article? What topics are covered? If someone asked what this article/book is about, what would you say? The length of your annotations will determine how detailed your summary is.

2. Assess [Analysis]: After summarizing a source, it may be helpful to evaluate it. Is it a useful source? How does it compare with other sources in your bibliography? Is the information reliable? Is it this source biased or objective? What is the goal of this source?

3. Reflect [Context/Reflection]: Once you’ve summarized and assessed a source, you need to ask how it fits into your research. Was this source helpful to you? How does it help you shape your argument? How can you use this source in your research project? Has it changed how you think about your topic?"

Example:

NewburyPark: Sage Publications, Inc. This is a linguistic study of the function of silence in spoken language. It focuses on silence as communication as relevant to social, political, and emotional aspects of human life. It provides useful evidence on how silence may be used as a form of resistance to power.
*Evaluating sources: Researchers need to be concerned about the sources they use as evidence. Some material you find might be based on incorrect or outdated information, or on poor logic. You should use evaluated books, scholarly journals, academic articles, etc. Be very careful about evaluating an Internet source.

Is the author you are reading an established voice in the field? For example, are you citing an established psychology journal to prove your point about marriage and intimacy or are you citing a source that has recently been on the bestseller list? Is the publisher reputable? How current is the material (if applicable)? Can you hold the author accountable for the information dispersed?

3) Rough Draft due Tues May 7 (Bring 3 copies, one for the instructor, 2 for peer review)
Good writing is a process. An integral part of a good writing process is drafting and revision. Getting and giving feedback on writing in progress helps develop your individual writing project as well as your overall writing skill.
The better developed your rough draft, the more useful the peer review will be. On Tuesday May 7, YOU MUST BRING 3 COPIES OF YOUR ROUGH DRAFT TO CLASS. Your instructor will take and evaluate one. The other two are to exchange with classmates who will help identify the strengths of your draft and point out areas needing more development. You can use this feedback to guide the revisions leading to your final paper.

4) Peer Review in mentor session (5/7 for Tues and 5/9 for Thurs.)
Bring in a rough draft of your paper. You will give and receive feedback on each other’s papers.

5) Final Draft (Thursday, 6/13)
Bring your final polished and well-edited paper to the final exam period.

Assignment Schedule

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<tr>
<th>What?</th>
<th>When?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Thesis statement and prospectus</td>
<td>Tuesday 4/16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Annotated bibliography</td>
<td>Tuesday 4/23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rough Draft (bring one copy)</td>
<td>Tuesday 5/7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Review in mentor session (bring 2 copies)</td>
<td>Tues 5/7 &amp; Thurs. 5/9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finished research paper and presentation</td>
<td>Thursday, June 13</td>
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Grading:
You will be graded on adherence to MLA formatting (*without a cover page*), mechanics (such as spelling, punctuation, correct quotations, grammar), clear and concise writing, legitimacy of sources, use of research, depth of analysis, and ability to make your topic important under the theme of the class, popular culture.

EXCELLENT writing resources on the Web: The Owl Online Writing Lab
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/
Also, utilize your PSU resource!!!
PSU Writing Center
Cramer Hall 188 (503) 725-3570
Walk in appointments only for the Summer Session
M-F 9-5, except T 1-2
www.writingcenter.pdx.edu

### Assessment Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Competence/Mastery (20-25)</th>
<th>Emerging (15-19)</th>
<th>Insufficient Attempt (0-14)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appropriate Use of Critical Perspective and Analysis (methodology)</strong></td>
<td>Chose the most appropriate lens for the text at hand. Applied thoroughly and accurately. Makes an appropriate, thorough, and convincing argument.</td>
<td>Chose a workable lens for the text at hand. Sufficiently thorough and accurate application. Makes an acceptable argument that may not be completely appropriate, thorough, or convincing.</td>
<td>Did not choose an appropriate lens or applied insufficiently. Does not make a cogent argument.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research</strong></td>
<td>Sources are appropriate to the topic, sufficient in number, and used to properly situate the topic within a larger body of scholarly work.</td>
<td>Sufficient number of sources. Most sources are appropriate to the topic and are used to begin situating the topic within the existing research.</td>
<td>Inappropriate or insufficient number of sources. Not used to situate topic within existing research.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
<td>Well organized at the paper, paragraph, and sentence level</td>
<td>Logically organized but uneven at either the paper, paragraph, or sentence level</td>
<td>Not logically organized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Details/Evidence</strong></td>
<td>Provides enough details and evidence to fully support analysis</td>
<td>Provides good evidence but may be lacking in detail</td>
<td>Does not provide enough details or evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Format, Mechanics, Grammar</strong></td>
<td>Properly formatted (MLA) and virtually error free (NO TITLE PAGE)</td>
<td>Some mistakes in formatting OR a few mechanical or grammar errors</td>
<td>Errors distract from content of the paper</td>
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