

Department of English & Writing Studies

Reading Popular Culture

I'm Right and You're an Idiot: Polarization and the Contemporary Culture Wars¹

English 2017 (001)

Fall/Winter 2022-23

Instructor: Dr. Jason Sandhar

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Course Location: Social Science Centre 3028

Course Day/Time: Mondays 6:30-9:30 pm


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Course Description

If popular opinion has anything to say about it, we are living in an age of polarization, misinformation, and outrage. Strangers abuse one another on Twitter; “news” websites like *Infowars*, *Breitbart*, and *Rebel* peddle racist conspiracy theories about migrants and refugees; self-appointed gatekeepers of the political left condemn those who disagree with them as racist, classist, or misogynistic. This course considers how the culture industry (mass communication in the form of news, streaming  figure into the contemporary culture wars? Do Twitter and TikTok help or hinder public debate? Have we lost the capacity to respect, or even hear,

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Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

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Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western: <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Proposed Timetable (subject to change)

Course Introduction	
Week 1	No readings assigned
Consumption	
Week 2	Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer. "The Culture Industry" Lipsitz. "Popular Culture: This Ain't No Sideshow"
Week 3	Carol Adams, "The Sexual Politics of Meat" (OWL) Daniel Welsh, "Lady Gaga's Meat Dress Turns 10" (OWL)
Race	
Week 4	Stuart Hall: "The Work of Representation" Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, "Stereotype, Realism, and the Struggle over Representation"
Week 5	In-class screening: <i>Get Out</i> Short essay due
Week 6	David Gilotta, "'Man, I Told You Not to Go in that House': The Humor and Horror of Jordan Peele's <i>Get Out</i> " (OWL)

Commodities	
Week 10	Karl Marx, "Commodity Fetishism" (OWL) Anne McClintock, "Soft-Soaping Empire: Commodity Racism and Imperial Advertising"
Week 11	<u>Videos (watch ahead of time):</u> McIntosh Plus, "Ü § Ç Û å ¡420 / #' æ b ¥ å Æube" (YouTube) Fancy's crappy mashups, "V A P I N G I N T H E H O O D" (YouTube) Saint Pepsi, "Cherry Pepsi" (YouTube) Lucien Hughes, "S U N D A Y S C H O O L" (YouTube) Laserdisc Visions, "Laserdisc Visions" (YouTube) <u>Readings:</u> Ken McLeod, "Vaporwave: Politics, Protest, and Identity" (OWL) Laura Glitsos, "Vaporwave, or music optimised for abandoned malls" (OWL)
Week 12	No readings assigned
Post-Truth	
Week 13	Harry G. Frankfurt, <i>On Bullshit</i>

