



English 3953 WDE: Cultural Studies

Winter 2023 Jan 9 - Apr 11

Course Location: Zoom and D2L

Class Times: MW 8:30AM -10:00AM

Office Hours: by appointment

Prerequisites: 2 FCEs in English, including 0.5 FCE at the second-year level

To our Student: Should you require information or documents from our office in **another format, please let us know. We are happy to help you. Contact your instructor or our Department of English Administrative Assistant.**

Instructor Information

Instructor: TBD

Office: N/A

Telephone: N/A

Email: TBA

Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description/Overview

We live at a time in which “culture” is a source of both obsession and conflict. This course will introduce students to the key theories of Cultural Studies as a discipline, and then examine these concepts in regards to topical case studies so as to assess, and critically engage with, the idea of culture as text.

Course Objectives and/or Learner Outcomes

Students who complete this course should be able to:

Analysis:

- ✓ Think independently and critically about culture and the issues raised by cultural texts
- ✓ Work in group discussions to produce responses and analysis of culture
- ✓ Examine cultural texts of all kinds critically, and assess their rhetorical, ideological and aesthetic strategies
- ✓ Understand how a text is produced by, and produces, its historical and/or cultural contexts
- ✓ Identify and assess the social, environmental and other ethical themes presented in texts
- ✓ Recognize the role of culture in articulating and creating categories of identity
- ✓ Analyze texts from a variety of cultural theoretical perspectives



- ✓ Formulate and explain arguments about cultural texts and their meaning.

Writing and Researching:

- ✓ Write well (grammatically correct, clear, effective prose)
- ✓ Communicate ideas effectively and coherently, with an understanding of writing for specific audiences
- ✓ Use library and digital resources to research a topic and use what they discover to illuminate some aspect of culture
- ✓ Disseminate knowledge in both traditional (i.e. the essay) and non-traditional (i.e. video essay, listicle, blog, etc.) formats

Note: Readings, lectures, class discussion, and groupwork will provide the knowledge and skills necessary for these outcomes, and students will demonstrate them in written work and in class participation.

Course Resources

Required Course Text

No required course texts; all readings and videos linked through D2L online

Course Website

Desire2Learn
Zoom

Course Schedule

Key Theories

Week One:

“Introductions” and “Folk Culture vs. Mass Culture” (D2L)

Watch: “Stuart Hall: Defining Culture”

Read: “Cultural Studies”

Week Two:

“The Pessimists” and “The Optimists” (D2L)

Discuss: “Pessimist or Optimist”

“Semiotics,” “Signification,” and “Second-Order Signification” (D2L)

Watch: “Second-Order Signification”

Read: “Case Studies on Interpretation” and “Coffee as Popular Culture”

Discuss: “Stock Photos”

Key Concepts Paragraphs Due



Week Three:

“The Nature of Representation,” “The Politics of Representation,” and “Hyper-Representation” (D2L)

Read: Mitchell, “Representation”

“Social Tropes,” “Individuality vs. Type vs. Stereotype,” “Cultural Production of Type/Stereotype” (D2L)

Type and Stereotype: Dyer, “Stereotyping” (D2L)

Reflection Paper Due

Week Four:

“History and Cultural Studies,” “History as Story,” and “New Historicism”

Read: Tyson, “New Historical and Cultural Criticism”

“Dominant,” “Residual,” and “Emergent” (D2L)

Read: Williams, “Dominant, Residual, and Emergent”

Discussion: “Dominant or Emergent?”

Reflection Paper Due

Case Study: “The Body”

Week Five:

“The Body as the Site of Power,” “Disciplinary Power,” “The Political Technology of the Body,” and “Biopower” (D2L)

Read: “Michel Foucault: Biopolitics and Biopower”

Watch: “Foucault: Biopower, Governmentality and the Subject”

“Foucault and the Plague,” “Bio-Power: Mask and Anti-Mask Resistance” (D2L)

Read: “Biopower in the Age of Covid-19 (D2L)”

Groupwork (zoom): Close Reading of Masks

Reflection Paper Due

Reading Week

Week Six:

“Animals and the Politics of Representation,” “Forms of Animal Representation,”

“Reading: Cudworth” (D2L)

Read: Cudworth, “Most Farmers Prefer Blondes”

Discuss: Intersectionality and Animal Rights

“Gender and Sex as Material, Performative, and Cultural,” “Transgender: History and Theory,” “Reading: Call Me Caitlyn” (D2L)



Read: Lovelock, "Call Me Caitlyn"

Week Seven:

"Critical Weight Studies," "'Fitness' and the Idealized Body," "Morality and the Body Beautiful" (D2L)

Read: Contois, "Guilt-Free and Sinfully Delicious: A Contemporary Theory of Weight Loss Dieting"

Discuss: Body Culture Media

"Social Media and the Self," "Vlogging and Parasocial Relationships"

"YouTube Beauty Community (D2L) Groupwork (zoom)

Reflection Paper Due

Week Eight:

"The Body as the Site of Resistance," "Body Modification," "Orlan" (D2L) Watch: "French Artist Orlan: Narcissism is Important"

Discuss: Body Modification: Transgressive?

"Technology and Body Modification," "The Body Online" (D2L)

Reflection Paper Due

Case Study: "Space and Places"

Week Nine:

"The City in Theory and Practice," "Defining a City," "Urban Planning"

Watch: "Cities Skylines: Power, Politics, and Planning"

"Planning and Politics" (D2L)

Groupwork (zoom): Cities Planning and Politics

Week Ten:

"The Middle Class Home," "Design and the Home," "Utopian Home Spaces," (D2L)

Read: Jacobs, Naomi. "Utopian Home Spaces in Shelter Media."

Discuss: You and Shelter Media

Narratives of the Unhoused: "'They Don't Let us Look after Each Other Like We Used To': Reframing Indigenous Homeless Geographies" (D2L); hostile architecture

Capstone Proposal Due

Week Eleven:

"Tropes, Rhetoric, and Ideology," "Ecocriticism," and "The Land as a Person"



(D2L)

Read: “Land and Personhood”

Discuss: “The Land as a Person”

“Land Acknowledgements,” “Parody as Political Commentary” (D2L)

Read: “Land Acknowledgement”

Walking Eagle News, "Provincial Leaders..."

Walking Eagle News, "Land Acknowledgement Spirals ..." "Land Acknowledgement Malfunctions..."

Watch: Baroness Von Sketch, "Land Acknowledgement”

Reflection Paper Due

Week Twelve:

“Online Spaces,” “Social Media,” and “Community in the Abstract” (D2L)

Read: Wilson, Michelle. “Community in the Abstract”

Online Learning as Community (D2L) **Groupwork (zoom)**

3-Minute Thesis (D2L, Zoom)

Capstone Project Due

Assignments and Evaluation

Assignment	Value	Length
Response Paragraphs to Key Concepts	5%	150-200 words per paragraph (2 in total)
Reflection Papers	30% (3 X 10% each) (can write a 4 th to replace one with a lower grade)	300-500 words each, throughout term
Discussion Forums	20%	See rubric
Groupwork	10%	Participation
Capstone Project Proposal	10%	2-3 pages
Capstone Project	5% for presentation; 20% for submitted project	TBD (based on medium – see assignment description)

Assignment Policies

- ✓ All assignments are individual assignments and cannot be completed collaboratively, **with the exception of the capstone proposal and project, which students can choose to do**



collaboratively.

- ✓ Assignments should be submitted to the appropriate D2L folder. If the format does not allow the assignment to be submitted via D2L, make arrangements with the professor for other modes of submission.
- ✓ Discussion posts / responses should all be made before the discussion closes in order to receive grades
- ✓ Unless you ask for (and receive) an extension, late work will be penalized by 2% per day (to a maximum of 20%).
- ✓ If appropriate to the medium of the assignment, please use MLA format, double spaced, with 1” margins, and in 12 point font.

Details of Assignments

Grades in this course will be based on two major components: short, reflective, and critical writing on a variety of topics in both short reflection papers and online discussion forums; and one larger capstone project, that can be completed individually or as part of a larger group. The aim of these assignments is to **encourage both individual, curiosity-based research and collaborative, discussion-based engagement in cultural studies.**

1) Response Paragraphs to Key Concepts (5%)

These are short (150-200 word) paragraphs that respond to the discussion questions posted on the Key Concept powerpoints. Write 3 out of the 4 given concepts.

2) Reflection Papers (10% each – 3 to complete throughout term, at least 2

These are short, 2-3 page reflections on a specific topic. Aim for coherent, unified paragraphs with clear topic sentences, and a focused point that you want to make. They can be informal in tone, but should still be critical, polished, and **refer directly back** to the reading/topic for that day.

3) Discussion Forum (posts and replies):

Throughout the term, there will be focused questions for you to discuss in the forums. You can either post a comment, or reply to previous comments. The following rubric demonstrates what I am looking for in discussion forum participation:

	Excellent (5 points)	Very Good (4 points)	Good (3 points)	Fair (2 points)	Poor (1 points)
Writing	Strong, persuasive, clear writing that uses full, grammatically-	Coherent, grammatically- correct sentences.	Clear sentence structure, but possibly some grammar errors / typos.	Full sentences, but some problems with	Point form or incomplete sentences, with some serious issues



	correct sentences.			grammar and clarity or typos.	with grammar and clarity, or clear lack of proofreading.
Relevance	Readings were understood and incorporated into discussion as relates to topic (appropriate citations and references).	Readings were understood and incorporated into discussion as relates to topic (incomplete citations and references).	Readings were partially integrated into discussion (no direct or clear references).	Little use made of readings.	Readings clearly misunderstood and/or does not relate to topic.
Critical Thought	Postings added significantly to the discussions (e.g. identifying important relationships, offering a fresh perspective or critique of a point; offers supporting evidence).	Postings add to the discussion.	Postings supplement or support the discussion.	Postings have questionable relationship to discussion question and/or readings; they are non-substantive . Postings do little to advance discussion.	Postings provide no indication of having read the materials; they are non-substantive . Postings do not move the discussion forward.

4) Groupwork (5% per session/ 10% in total):

As scheduled, there will be a few zoom sessions throughout the term in which you will be expected to work as a group on focused questions. Come prepared by having reviewed the required material.

There are 3 groupwork sessions. Sign up in the appropriate forum for at least 2 of them; you will be expected to submit your prep for the session at the beginning of class that day for assessment).

5) Capstone Project Proposal:



This is a 2-3 page outline that presents your topic and research question, your working thesis, and a working outline of your final capstone project. Include references to secondary sources and other evidence within your outline. Use complete, grammatical sentences – you can utilize bullet points, but include enough detail that I can follow your ideas.

This project can be completed collaboratively.

6) Capstone Project (and 3-minute thesis):

Utilizing at least 2 reliable secondary sources, construct an argument about a cultural studies topic of your choice, incorporating at least one of the major theoretical frameworks – ideology, semiology, biopower, performativity, etc. – discussed in the course.

You can choose any format you like for this project, including a YouTube video, website, podcast, essay, or creative work. If you are doing a creative work or short-form format (listicle, BuzzFeed style quiz, whatever), you will need to submit a short write-up that explains how you used secondary sources / theoretical concepts in your project.

The “3-minute thesis” presentation is as follows: you get one, static slide, and you get to talk for 3 minutes in which you describe and explain your project. We will be doing this on the final class.

This project can be completed collaboratively.

Marking Standards

All assignments will be marked in accordance with the [English Department Marking Standard 1](#). If any of your assignments have different marking standards, they should also be indicated here.

Collaboration/Plagiarism Rules

Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of someone else's words and/or ideas. Not acknowledging your debt to the ideas of a secondary source, failing to use quotation marks when you are quoting directly, buying essays from essay banks, copying another student's work, or working together on an individual assignment, all constitute plagiarism. Resubmitting material you've submitted to another course is also academic dishonesty. All plagiarized work (in whole or in part) and other forms of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean, who is responsible for judging academic misconduct and imposing penalties. The minimum penalty for academic

misconduct is a 0 on the assignment in question. It might also be subject to more severe academic penalties. See the Student Code of Conduct².



Incidents of academic dishonesty (plagiarism and cheating) will be dealt with through the Code of Student Behaviour and Disciplinary Procedures approved by Senate and the Board of Governors. The process is as follows:

If the professor is going to make a complaint, s/he must do so within 20 working days of the case coming to the attention of the professor. S/he forwards the complaint to the Judicial Officer, who will then inform the student within 10 working days that the complaint against him or her has been filed: “The Judicial Officer will ascertain the facts surrounding it and will afford the student a reasonable opportunity to be heard regarding any relevant evidence about the facts. Having satisfied himself/herself of the validity or non-validity of the complaint, and with due regard to Lakehead University's Policy concerning Accommodation for Students With Disabilities, the Judicial Officer shall within 20 working days of informing the student of the complaint:

- a) dismiss the complaint; or
- b) uphold the complaint and apply an appropriate sanction or sanctions, or
- c) in cases involving expulsion or rescission of a degree, diploma or certificate, report his/her findings, with recommendation, to the President or Vice-President (Academic) who may apply the expulsion or rescission of degree, diploma or certificate.
- d) A Judicial Officer shall give the student a written decision, including written reasons for the decision. A copy of this will be filed with the Vice-Provost (Student Affairs) and the Office of the Director of Risk Management and Access to Information . If a sanction has been applied, the student will be informed by the Judicial Officer, in writing, of his right of appeal.

University Policies

Students in this course are expected to conform to the [Student Code of Conduct](#)²:

Accommodations: Lakehead University is committed to achieving full accessibility for persons with disabilities. Part of this commitment includes arranging academic accommodations for students with disabilities to ensure they have an equitable opportunity to participate in all of their academic activities.

¹ <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/academics/departments/english/marking-standards>

² <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/students/student-life/student-conduct>

If you think you may need accommodations, you are strongly encouraged to contact [Student Accessibility Services \(SAS\)](#)³ and register as early as possible.

- In accordance with the terms of the [Ontario Human Rights Code](#)⁴. This occurs through



a collaborative process that acknowledges a collective obligation to develop an accessible learning environment that both meets the needs of students and preserves the essential academic requirements of the course.

- This course outline is available online through the [English Department homepage](#) ⁵ and/or the Desire2Learn site for the course.

³ <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/students/student-life/student-services/accessibility>

⁴ <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/ontario-human-rights-code>

⁵ <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/academics/departments/english>