Welcome to Media Criticism: Critical Approaches to The Hunger Games. Over the course of this semester, you will experience the process of media criticism through The Hunger Games, as we explore the dominant critical approaches to analyzing media culture.

This class will offer students a holistic, critical perspective on media culture by analyzing the The Hunger Games transmedia franchise as a product of contemporary media industries, as a collection of powerful media representations, and as a series of cultural artifacts that are variously consumed by audiences in the contexts of their everyday lives. Our goals are twofold: first, to develop a multifaceted, critical perspective on this popular cultural phenomenon; and second, and most importantly, to become critical media scholars, that is, students of media culture capable of producing our own compelling works of media criticism.

Achieving these goals will require a lot of you. This is not a class about accumulating facts or learning to apply cookie-cutter methodologies. It is a class about mastering a complex, critical thought process, one that you will find to be intellectually demanding, annoyingly open, and, if you are willing to come along for the ride, ultimately, incredibly fun. I expect a lot from my students. In addition to reading, thinking, engaging, and participating, I expect to be surprised by you, by the insights and ideas you bring to class and to your writing. Don’t let me down, and we’ll have a fantastic semester together.

Required Work (100 total points)

Readings

- All readings are available on-line through Sakai.
- Students are expected to have assigned readings in class with them for each meeting.
- For each assigned reading beginning with Week 4, students should ask themselves (and come to class prepared to discuss): How does this reading help us to understand and critically analyze The Hunger Games? Please be sure to document your answers for each reading on the reading itself or in your class notebook.

Attendance and Participation (25 points): Students can earn points for attendance and participation by 1) attending class every day; 2) actively participating in writing workshops and group work; and 3) making productive and regular contributions to our Hunger Games class wiki.
Tributes: Some class meetings will begin with a reaping. Two students’ names will be drawn at random from the reaping bowl, and these tributes will be asked to answer questions about the assigned reading. If you are absent on a day when your name is called, you will lose 5 points from your attendance and participation score. Students may earn an extra 5 points once by volunteering to have their name entered into the reaping bowl an additional 5 times on or before October 12th.

Writing Workshops: Most Friday class meetings will be devoted to writing workshops. These will be led by Professor Wilson and teaching assistant Allison Nettnin, who is a senior writing consultant at the Learning Commons, and designed to deepen students’ relationship to the writing and critical thinking processes. Participation in writing workshops is mandatory for all students.

Class Wiki: Students should be researching *The Hunger Games* all semester. Together we will develop a class wiki where students share the resources they’ve uncovered with their classmates. These may include industry news reports, cultural commentaries, fan videos and sites, ads and other promotional texts, as well as relevant scholarly sources. Students are expected to make regular contributions to the wiki (on average, one contribution per week).

**Industry Paper (4-6 pages) (20 points: outline 5 points, final essay 15 points)** The first writing assignment will ask students to develop an argument that situates *The Hunger Games* within the industrial/historical context of contemporary Hollywood. Detailed instructions and guidelines will be provided in class.

**Representation Paper (8-12 pages) (30 points: outline 5 points; final essay 25 points)** The second writing assignment will require students to develop their own original and sophisticated critical argument that focuses on *The Hunger Games* and its cultural power to shape ideas, meanings, values, and/or material practices. Detailed instructions and guidelines will be provided in class.

**Audience/Fan Conference Paper (15 points):** The final week of class, we will hold a *Hunger Games* class conference where students present an original critical argument about *Hunger Games* audiences and/or fans. Detailed instructions and guidelines will be provided in class.

**Revision (10 points):** On or before the day of our scheduled final exam, students will turn in a revision of their Representation paper. You will be evaluated according to the quality of your revision.

**Course Schedule**

**Week 1: Introduction to Media Criticism**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8/29</td>
<td>Class/course introductions</td>
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<tr>
<td>8/31</td>
<td>Lecture, The Process of Media Criticism</td>
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**Week 2: The Circuit of Media Culture: Critical Approaches**

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<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>9/3</td>
<td>David Hesmondhalgh, “Introduction: Change and Continuity, Power and Creativity”</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/5</td>
<td>Stuart Hall, “The Work of Representation”</td>
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9/7 Valerie Walkerdine, excerpts from *Daddy’s Girls*

**Week 3: Immersion and Research**

9/10 Primary texts
9/12 Industry discourses, cultural commentaries
9/14 Existing scholarship

**Week 4: Contemporary Hollywood in Context**

9/19 Alisa Perren, “Last Indie Standing”
9/21 **Writing Workshop:** Brainstorming ideas, articulating critical questions

**Week 5: Branding and Marketing**

9/24 Eileen Meehan, “Holy Commodity Fetish, Batman!”
   Marco Cucco, “The Promise is Great: the Blockbuster and the Hollywood Economy”
9/26 Justin Wyatt, “A Critical Redefinition: The Concept of High Concept”
   Justin Wyatt, “Marketing the Image”
9/28 **Writing Workshop:** Turning questions into answers

**Week 6: Mobilizing Transmedia Audiences**

10/1 Joe Tompkins, “What’s the Deal with Horror Film Soundtracks?”
10/3 Henry Jenkins, “Searching for the Origami Unicorn”
10/5 **Writing Workshop:** Outlining

**Week 7**

10/8 Fall break!
10/10 Writing Workshop: Industry paper outline due
10/12 Industry paper due.

Week 8: Class, Spectacle, and Social Control
10/15 Frederic Jameson, “Class and Allegory in Contemporary Mass Culture”
10/17 Douglas Kellner, “Media Culture and the Triumph of Spectacle”
10/19 Writing Workshop: Your questions, your answers, your voice

Week 9: Reading Katniss Everdeen
10/22 Julie O’Reilly, “The Wonder Woman Precedent: Female (Super)Heroism on Trial”
10/24 Elana Levine, “Buffy and the New Girl Order”
10/26 Writing Workshop: Integrating other voices, working with sources

Week 10: Paratexts and Reception
10/29 Jonathan Gray, “From Spoilers to Spinoffs: A Theory of Paratexts”
10/31 Lisa Bode, “Transitional Tastes: Teen girls and genre in the critical reception of Twilight”
11/2 Writing Workshop: Writing a kick-ass introduction

Week 10: Brainstorming and Researching
11/5 Brainstorming day.
11/7 Researching day.
11/9 Writing Workshop: Representation paper outline due

Week 11: Meaning and the Audience
11/12 Representation paper due.
11/14 Stuart Hall, “Encoding/Decoding”
11/16 Writing workshop: The revision process

Week 12: Fandom and Affect
11/19  Lawrence Grossbery, “Is There a Fan in the House?”

11/21  Thanksgiving break!

11/23  Thanksgiving break!

**Week 13: Interactivity, Politics, and Labor**

11/26  Henry Jenkins, “Cultural Acupuncture: Fan Activism and the *Harry Potter Alliance*”

Essay available on-line at *Transformative Works and Cultures*

11/28  Marianne Martens, “Transmedia Teens: Affect, Immaterial Labor, and User-Generated Content”

11/30  Conference organizing.

**Week 14: The Hunger Games Student Conference**

12/3   Student presentations

12/5   Student presentations

12/7   Student presentations

12/10  Final day celebrations!