

**International Summer School 2010**

**BRITISH POPULAR CULTURE**

Course Code: ISO19A

Level 1; Session 1

COR, ESS, PRE

Lecturer: Dr Edwina Griffith

This course aims to contextualise the study of British popular culture within a Cultural Studies framework. We will explore the ways in which relationships between national identities, age, class, race, gender and sexuality play out in the making and consuming of popular cultural forms. What have been the most important and influential debates that have shaped the study of popular culture? How do we deal with the apparent contradiction between the 'difficulty' of theory and the 'ease' of popular culture? Why is popular culture so despised within traditional academic circles? Is popular culture, as the product of capitalist industry, imbued with conservative ideologies, which through their dissemination serve to maintain the political and ideological status quo? Is resistance to the controlling powers-that-be an inherent function of popular culture, which by its nature will subvert, critique and liberate? Or is the true nature of popular culture somewhere between the two?

The aim of the course then is to develop a critical working knowledge of the approaches used in the study of popular culture. This will include the development of skills necessary to apply theory to the analysis of a range of visual texts and cultural practices. So, alongside theory and critical commentary, we will be using such popular 'texts' of television, film, magazines, and the city of Brighton itself.

**Background Texts for Course.**

**Core text:**

John Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture, An Introduction* ((Pearson 2008)

This text provides essential context and references for the themes and concepts addressed on this course, it presents a clear and thorough review of the historical and critical development of Cultural Studies within academia and the role of Popular Culture.

Also useful, but not mandatory, for a broad overview of British Cultural Studies, is

Dominic Strinati, *An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture* (Routledge 2004)

A study pack containing specified reference readings for each session will be provided,

### **Assessment**

There are three modes of assessment for this four-week course. In brief, they are as follows:

- Group presentation: using visual aids and various examples of popular culture, your group will lead the discussion (20%). See guidance notes below.
- Course report on your contribution to seminars – written by your tutor (20%)
- Essay 2,000 words. Due THURSDAY Week Four (60%)

## **Outline of Course**

### **Week 1**

Session 1: Introducing the Course and Outlining the Modes of Assessment

Session 2: British Popular Culture – Outlining a Critical Approach

Session 3: The Gendering of British Popular Culture

### **Week 2**

Session 1: British Lifestyle Magazines – ‘Women’s Worlds’ Vs. ‘Loaded’ Men?

Session 2: Class: What is the Big Deal?

Session 3: A Question of Taste – Theorising our Cultural Choices

### **Week 3**

Session 1: Class in British Popular Culture

Session 2: The Politics of the Carnival

Session 3: “Carry On” Crazy: A History of British ‘Silliness’

### **Week 4**

Session 1: Brighton as Carnival Capital

Session 2: Representing ‘Englishness’ in Film

Session 3: Field Trip: Afternoon ‘High Tea’ in Brighton.