SOCIOLOGY 3

2025: TERM 1

SOCIOLOGY OF POPULAR CULTURE

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A: INTRODUCTION

Welcome to this module on the sociology of popular culture. The module focuses on five themes relating to popular culture as a means to explore social issues in modern society. Listed below are the module themes and learning outcomes.

Theme One: Overview of Cultural Studies Theory

We begin by considering cultural studies theory (giving special attention to sex, gender, race, ethnicity, and class). Theme One will act as a starting point to the deeper theoretical exploration required when approaching topical issues during the module. Theme One examines the evolution of the cultural studies tradition, with a strong emphasis on more recent post-Gramscian, post-colonial, and feminist influences (especially intersectionality) which have had a bearing on the direction of contemporary cultural studies enquiry.

- You will especially need to grasp the ideas of the Frankfurt School, British Cultural Studies and more recent post-Gramscian, post-colonial, feminist, and intersectional influences.

Theme Two: The Body in Popular Culture

Our focus on the body in popular culture begins with an emphasis on bodies as cultural texts, drawing on feminist and post-colonial thought. Starting with a consideration of the clothing/nudity binary, we explore two conceptual extremes: cultures make identity or reflect identity. This provides a useful foundation for considering representations firstly, of masculinity and femininity, and secondly, 'the west and the rest', in popular culture generally, including notions of a 'colonial gaze'. We will especially contemplate attempts to overcome binary approaches to representation.

- You will need to develop an understanding of the cultural significance of human bodies. An understanding of Foucault's notion of the docile body as a cultural text is needed. A grasp of Fanon's arguments about race, identity, and representation in colonial contexts is also essential, together with an overall sense of the feminist and post-colonial arguments influenced by the aforementioned theories. Importantly, you need to grasp the limitations of binary conceptions of sex and race and be able to supersede these with more complex explanations.

Theme Three: The Gaze within Popular Culture

Leading from a focus on the body in popular culture, Theme Three narrows the focus on bodies to a study of the gaze. An appropriate starting point for this section is Laura Mulvey's notion of 'the male gaze' within film narratives. Mulvey's approach fits broadly into a radical feminist perspective, and we consider the merits and problems of her viewpoint. We will explore more complex approaches to 'the gaze', not only in relation to gendered bodies but also by applying it to the growth of surveillance in modern-day society. Michel Foucault's ideas about surveillance are especially used to inform our ideas about such surveillance trends in our society. We consider dominant modes of masculinity, femininity, sexuality, and ethnicity. We also consider forms of resistance to dominant modes of body representations. We contemplate the extent to which attempts at transgression constitute a threat to the dominant order or are mere alternatives which offer little prospect of change.

- It is important that you have a grasp of what is meant by the 'male gaze' and 'female gaze' and the difference between the two concepts. You will also need to apply theories of the gaze to race and ethnicity, including the colonial context and in turn apply these to examples within film and advertising. Furthermore, you should have a grasp of the conformist pressures that exist in our society, how these

affect us, and some of the alternatives available to us. Reflect on why some people embrace these alternatives and the possibility they hold for a different way of being.

Theme Four: Resistance in Popular Music

Feminists have long criticised the male-oriented and dominated nature of popular music, resulting in most music providing a male soundtrack to people's lives. Theme Four begins by examining the arguments of those who say that popular music is generally sexist and that it promotes sexual violence, but quickly moves on to more intricate arguments about women musicians' response to this issue. What has been the history of women musicians' response to sexism within the industry and has the situation improved? Is there a way in which women should or should not present themselves? Furthermore, bell hooks has argued that the focus on sexism and misogyny within rap music has tended to be racist. This further complicates our exploration of sexism in music. We end this section by considering the manner in which black male rappers have increasingly become the targets of feminists, the media, and moral entrepreneurs when, in fact, the problem of sexism in the music industry is far more complex. African and Black feminist arguments about the western-centric bias of traditional feminist perspectives are drawn upon to add depth to this exploration.

- For this section, you will need to have a grasp of the arguments that expose the sexist nature of much of popular music. You will also require knowledge of the social history of men and women in popular music and be able to evaluate responses by women musicians who have confronted sexism within the popular music industry on different levels. You will also need to grasp the intersection of sex, gender, ethnicity and race in arguments about sexism in the music industry. You will need to be able to refer to relevant examples of musicians and their music, videos, performances and other actions to support your argument.

Theme Five: Reinforcing Militarized Masculinity through Popular Culture

Theme Five turns to representations of militarized masculinity and femininity in South African popular culture and media, more generally, during the apartheid era. We will also refer to global examples to connect the local to the global. We consider the implications of militarization and conscription for theories about gender oppression and sexual violence.

- By the end of this section, you need to understand the dynamics surrounding conscription in apartheid-era South Africa and other contexts such as the United States' involvement in the Vietnam War. Importantly, you should understand the way in which support for the military was constituted in strong gender terms and how this, in turn, informs practices of sexual violence. You should also be able to demonstrate that opposition to the military often undermined a heterosexist gender binary approach.

B: LECTURES

The lecture component of the module will take place in person in the Arts Major Lecture Venue. Lecture slides will also be posted on RUconnected. It is crucial that you read on a daily basis for this module. If you only refer to lecture notes, you will fail the module. Lecture notes need to be expanded on through your own additional notes based on readings relevant to the assignment topic you are working on. Relevant readings are listed in the module outline. These and additional recommended readings will be placed on RUconnected.

C: RECOMMENDED READINGS

Theme One: Overview of Cultural Studies Theory

De La Rey, C. (1997). South African feminism, race and racism. *Agenda*. No. 32, pp. 6-10.

Edwards, E. and Esposito, (2020). J. *Intersectional analysis as a method to analyze popular culture: clarity in the matrix.* London: Routledge.

Hall, S. (1980). Encoding/decoding. In: S. Hall, D. Hobson, A. Lowe and P. Willis (eds.) *Culture, media, language*, pp. 128-138. London: Hutchinson.

Hall, S. (1992). The west and the rest: discourse and power. In: S. Hall and B. Gieben (eds.) *Formations of modernity,* pp. 275-331. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Kellner, D. (2020). *Media culture* (second edition), chapters 1 and 2. London: Routledge.

Kellner, D. (2015). Cultural studies, multiculturalism and media culture. In: G. Dines and J. Humez (eds.) *Gender, race and class in media: A reader* (fourth edition), pp. 7-19. California: Sage Publications.

Shaw, A. (2017). Encoding and decoding affordances: Stuart Hall and interactive media technologies. *Media, Culture and Society*, Vol. 39 (4), pp. 592-602.

Strinati, D. (2004). *An introduction to theories of popular culture* (second edition). London: Routledge.

Tuchman, G. (1979). Women's depiction by the mass media. *Signs*, Vol. 4 (3), pp. 528-542.

Williams, L. (2009). Doing culture with girls like me: Why trying on gender and intersectionality matters. *Sociology Compass*, Vol. 3 (2), pp. 217-233.

Theme Two: The Body in Popular Culture

Dizayi, S. (2019). Locating identity crisis in postcolonial theory: Fanon and Said. *Journal of Advanced Research in Social Sciences*, Vol. 2 (1), pp. 79-86.

Erasmus, Z. (2000). Hair politics. In: S. Nuttall & C. Michael (eds.) *Senses of culture: South African cultural studies*, pp. 380-392. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

Fanon, F. (1967). *Black skin, white masks*. New York: Grove Press.

Featherstone, M. (2010). Body, image and affect in consumer culture. *Body & Society*, Vol. 16 (1), pp. 193-221.

Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and punish*. London: Penguin.

Greenway, J. 1997. Twenty-first century sex. In: J. Purkis and J. Bowen (eds.) *Twenty-First Century anarchism*, pp.170-180. London: Cassell.

Hall, S. (1997). The spectacle of the 'other'. In: S. Hall (ed.) *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices,* pp. 225-239. London: Sage.

hooks, b. (1992). *Black looks: Race and representation*. New York: Routledge.

Howson, A. (2004). *The body in society: An introduction*, Chapters 4 and 5. Cambridge: Polity.

Kanneh, K. (1995). Feminism and the colonial body In: B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths and H. Tiffin (eds.) *The post-colonial studies reader*, pp. 346-348. London: Routledge.

Majali, Z., Coetzee, J. & Rau, A. (2016). Everyday hair discourses of black African women. *Qualitative Sociology Review*, Vol. XIII, (1), pp. 158-172.

Theme Three: The Gaze and Surveillance within Popular Culture

Bartky, S. (1997). Foucault, femininity and the modernization of patriarchal power. In: K. Conboy, N. Medina & S. Stanbury (eds.) *Writing on the body: Female embodiment and feminist theory*, pp.129-154. New York: Columbia University Press.

Bordo, S. (1997). The body and the reproduction of femininity. In: K. Conboy, N. Medina & S. Stanbury (eds.) *Writing on the body: Female embodiment and feminist theory*, pp.90-112. New York: Columbia.

Diabate, N. (2020). *Naked agency: Genital cursing and biopolitics in Africa*. Duke: Duke University Press.

Duffy, B. & Chan, N. (2018). "You never really know who's looking": Imagined surveillance across social media platforms. *New Media & Society*, pp. 1-20.

Fanon, F. (1967). *Black skin, white masks.* New York: Grove Press.

Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and punish*. London: Penguin.

Hall, S. (1992). The west and the rest: discourse and power. In: S. Hall & B. Gieben (eds.) *Formations of modernity,* pp. 275-331. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Jansson, A. & Christensen, M. (2014) *Media, surveillance, and identity: Social perspectives*. New York; Peter Lang.

Koskela, H. (2003). 'Cam era' – the contemporary urban panopticon. *Surveillance and Society*, Vol. 1 (3), pp. 292-313.

Koskela, H. (2004). Webcams, TV shows and mobile phones: Empowering exhibitionism. *Surveillance and Society*, Vol. 2 (2/3), pp. 199-215.

Manokha, I. (2018). Surveillance, panopticism, and self-discipline in the digital age. *Surveillance & Society*, Vol. 16 (2), pp. 219-237.

Megarry, J. (2017). Under the watchful eyes of men: theorising the implications of male surveillance practices for feminist activism on social media. *Feminist Media Studies*, pp. 1-16.

Mulvey, L. (1975). Visual pleasure and narrative cinema. *Screen,* Vol. 16 (3), pp. 6-18.

Orth, Z., Andipatin, M. & van Wyk, B. (2021) These women are making a statement against rape and yet the only thing y'all can focus on is 'eww they're naked'": Exploring rape culture on Facebook in South Africa. *Gender Issues*, Vol. 38, pp. 243–247; 254-257.

Tamale, S. (2019). Nudity, protest, and the law in Uganda. *Feminist Africa*, Vol. 22, pp. 52-86.

Trottier, D. (2012). *Social media as surveillance: Rethinking visibility in a converging world*. London: Routledge.

Trottier, D. (2012). Interpersonal surveillance on social media. Canadian Journal of Communication, Vol. 37 (2), pp. 319-332.

Young, S.(2020). Feminist protest and the disruptive address of naked bodies. *Current writing: Test and reception in South Africa*, Vol. 32 (2), pp. 158-167.

Theme Four: Resistance in Popular Music

Adams, T. & Fuller, D. (2006). The words have changed but the ideology remains the same: Misogynist lyrics in rap music. *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 36 (6), pp. 938-957.

Carey, T. 2024. *The revolution will be Spotified: Music as a rhetorical mode of resistance*. London: Lexington Books.

Emerson, R. (2002). 'Where are my girls at?' Negotiating black womanhood in music videos. *Gender and Society*, Vol. 16 (1), pp. 115-135.

Fitts, M. (2008). 'Drop it like it's hot': Culture industry laborers and their perspectives on rap music video production. *Meridians,* Vol. 8 (1), pp. 211-235.

Fleetwood, R. (2012). The case of Rihanna: Erotic violence and black female desire." *African American Review*, Vol. 45 (3), pp. 419-435.

Hobson, J. & Bartlow, R. (2008). Introduction: Representin' women, hip-hop, and popular music. *Meridians*, Vol. 8 (1), pp. 1-14.

hooks, b. (1994). *Outlaw culture: Resisting representations*, Chapter 11. New York: Routledge.

Hunter, M & Soto, K. (2009). Women of color in hip hop: The pornographic gaze. *Race, Gender & Class*, Vol. 16 (1/2), pp. 170-191.

Hunter, M. (2011). Shake it, baby, shake it: Consumption and the new gender relation in hip-hop. *Sociological Perspectives*, Vol. 54 (1), pp. 15-36.

Jennings, K. (2020). City girls, hot girls and the reimagining of black women in hip hop and digital spaces. *Global Hip Hop Studies*, Vol. 1 (1), pp. 47-70.

McNally, J. (2016). Azealia Bank's '212': Black female identity and the white gaze in contemporary hip-hop. *Journal of the Society of American music*, Vol. 10 (1), pp. 54-81.

Rebollo-Gil, G. & Moras, A. (2012). Black women and black men in hip hop music: Misogyny, violence and the negotiation of (white-owned) space. *The Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol. 45 (1), pp. 118-132.

Sharpely-Whiting, T. (2007). Pimps up: Hip hop's hold on young black women. New York: New York University Press.

Zhang, Y., Dixon, T. & Conrad, K. (2009). Rap music videos and African American women's body image: The moderating role of ethnic identity. *Journal of Communication*, Vol. 59, pp. 262-278.

Theme Five: Reinforcing Militarized Masculinity through Popular Culture

Arkin, W. & Dolsfsky, L. (1978). Military socialization and masculinity. *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 34 (1), pp. 151-168.

Drewett, M. (2007). The construction and subversion of gender stereotypes in popular cultural representations of the border war. In: G. Baines & P. Vale (eds.) *Beyond the Border War*, pp. 94-119. Pretoria: UNISA Press.

Henry, M. (2017). Problematizing military masculinity, intersectionality and male vulnerability in feminist critical military studies. *Critical Military Studies*, Vol. 3 (2), pp. 182-199.

Hinojosa, R. (2010). Doing hegemony: Military, men, and constructing a hegemonic masculinity. *The Journal of Men's Studies*. Vol. 18 (2), pp. 179-194.

Morgan, D. (1993). You too can have a body like mine: reflections on the male body and masculinities. In: S. Scott and D. Morgan (eds.) *Body matters: Essays on the sociology of the body*, pp. 70-89. London: Falmer Press.

Morgan, D. (1994). Theatre of war: Combat, the military and masculinities. In: H. Brod and M. Kaufman (eds.) *Theorizing masculinities*, pp. 165-182. London: Sage.

Zurbriggen, E. (2010). Rape, war and the socialization of masculinity = why our refusal to give up war ensures that rape cannot be eradicated. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, Vol. 34 (4), pp.538-549.

D: TERM ASSIGNMENTS

Read these instructions carefully! Failure to follow all these instructions will, unfortunately, affect the mark you are awarded for your assignments.

- There will be one test and one essay which will each constitute half of your class mark.
- The two assignments collectively constitute 40% of your final mark for this module, and the June examination constitutes the remaining 60% of your final mark for this module.
- The test will take the form of one essay question under exam-type conditions.
- Guidance for the test (including the general scope of the test and readings) will be provided in lectures.

Assignment deadlines are as follows:

Test: Friday 28th February, 11h30 – 12h30 in the Arts Major.

Essay: Due date – Monday 24th March at 17h00.

Essay Question

Answer the following essay question using the stipulated readings.

Critically evaluate the effectiveness of the naked/semi-naked body as a form of protest in the Rhodes University *My Body My Choice* campaign and the 2016 RU Reference protest. While the broader contexts of these protests are an important part of your assessment, you need to remain focused on the 'effectiveness of naked protest' as the core issue in your essay. All your examples must come from these Rhodes University protests.

Readings

Diabate, N. (2020). *Naked agency: Genital cursing and biopolitics in Africa*. Duke: Duke University Press.

Macleod, C. et. al. 2017. Contesting sexual violence policies in higher education: the case of Rhodes University. *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research*. Vol. 10/ 2, pp. 83-92.

Orth, Z., Andipatin, M. & van Wyk, B. (2021) These women are making a statement against rape and yet the only thing y'all can focus on is 'eww they're naked'": Exploring rape culture on Facebook in South Africa. *Gender Issues*, Vol. 38, pp. 243–247; 254-257.

Sutton, B. (2007). Naked protest: Memories of bodies and resistance at the World Social Forums. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, Vol. 8 (3), pp. 139-148.

Tamale, S. 2019. Nudity, protest and the law in Uganda. *Feminist Africa* Vol 22: 52-86.

Young, S. 2020. Feminist protest and the disruptive address of naked bodies. *Current Writing: Text and Reception in Southern Africa.* Vol. 32 (2): 158-167.

Journalistic

https://spice4life.co.za/love/women-reclaim-their-bodies-my-body-my-choice-exhibition/

https://africanarguments.org/2016/06/anything-to-get-justice-the-rise-of-naked-protests-africa/

https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2016-06-01-we-will-not-be-silenced-rape-culture-rureferencelist-and-the-university-currently-known-as-rhodes/

https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2016-06-06-from-the-silence-a-response-to-deborah-seddon/
https://mg.co.za/article/2018-07-06-00-rureferencelist-the-fear-of-repercussions-still-lingers/?fbclid=IwAR3oEALSQAstMvRvLTn5eNJI_EmuSei7Xsqu_cz9nXFMQCxiEgtSiu_53Fo

https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/05/south-africas-topless-protesters-are-fighting-shame-on-their-own-terms?fbclid=IwAR3MMRtvU3FEEbppC-eDJeQhexBJJpjTVgWPN33a-4GM-GiyAAYbqfzBcMo

You might also find the Rhodes University Gender Action Project Facebook Page helpful in providing further information and resources:
https://www.facebook.com/GenderActionProject/posts/424706170964968

The Rhodes University Journalism student documentary called Disrupt provides very useful background and information:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YZqQdMhitgY

You may also use any other sources listed in this outline.

General advice

You may incorporate photos and screenshots to illustrate your examples if you think these will strengthen your essay. These do not form part of your word count.

Some advice about the readings

For this essay you may refer to the readings provided, ANY readings referred to in the module outline, the additional resources (links) provided, and any articles you find about the Rhodes University protests referred to in the question. You may NOT quote from or refer to lecture slides but can refer to sources included in lecture slides.

Further assignment instructions

Read these instructions carefully! Failure to follow all these instructions will, unfortunately, affect the mark you are awarded for your assignment.

- The word limit for this essay is between 2250 and 2500 words (excluding appendixes if applicable).
- Assignments must be typed.
- You must submit essays via Turnitin on RUconnected on or before the due date.
- Essays must be well-referenced, theoretically informed and based on stipulated reading.
- You will be expected to write your essay using ONLY the stipulated readings and additional sources as outlined above.
- Refer to the Department Handbook and the section below for instructions about referencing and plagiarism.

Essay referencing and plagiarism

Read this section below carefully so as to avoid failing the module or being the subject of disciplinary action. This is taken from The Department of Sociology Handbook with slight moderations.

For the assignments you need to check the essay guidelines in the Department of Sociology Handbook and especially take note of the regulations concerning plagiarism and attach a signed copy of the stipulated form regarding plagiarism to the front of your essay. Also take note of the department's rules regarding formatting, referencing and late submission of assignments.

In preparing your assignments, you must consult the stipulated sources. You should use these sources to support and expand and deepen your argument or position with respect to the topic. However, you must acknowledge the sources of your information correctly. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism. Published material contains 'intellectual property' and you cannot 'appropriate' it without giving credit to the person/s who first expressed the words or idea. Plagiarism is the misappropriation of others' words and/or ideas by presenting them as your own. It includes both verbatim copying and summaries of paragraphs without acknowledging the author/s. It amounts to literary theft since you are misappropriating another person's words and/or ideas. Misappropriating, buying, or copying an essay from another student or the Internet also amount to plagiarism.

Given the ease of cutting and pasting from the internet, student plagiarism has become an issue of great concern at academic institutions. However, students are often unsure of exactly what constitutes plagiarism and how it may affect them. The practice of citing and referencing the work of others is the best way of protecting yourself from committing and being found guilty of plagiarism. Plagiarism is treated very seriously in the academic world. At the very least, students found guilty of plagiarism could be failed, or at worst, face expulsion from their academic institution.

There can be no valid defence for presenting the work of others as your own. Neither ignorance nor carelessness will be accepted as an excuse. There are sophisticated websites and techniques aimed at tracking down all kinds of plagiarism. The University has invested in software, known as Turnitin, which is designed to detect plagiarism. You are therefore required to submit your work electronically, so that it may be tested.

Tips on how to avoid plagiarism in this module:

1. Your essay relies on your knowledge of the lecture material, and so if you follow and keep up with lectures you will be able to begin work on your essay with the basic foundational knowledge for the essay topic.

2. Prepare for your essay well in advance by doing the required reading in the week prior to the assignment due date. Do not leave it until there is too little time left to write a substantial essay. Set aside at least 16 hours to work on the essay.

3. Write your essay using ONLY the recommended sources, and every time you refer to anything from one of those sources ensure that you reference it. If you quote directly – even a few words in a row – use quotation marks to indicate that it is a direct quote and not your own words. If you paraphrase, you do not use quotation marks but you still need to provide a reference. Whether you are quoting directly or paraphrasing, page numbers must be included in your in-text reference.

4. Under NO circumstances should you use a paraphrasing app.