

The Chinese University of Hong Kong
MA in Intercultural Studies Programme
2024-25, Term 1
CULS5227 Fandom and Participatory Culture
(tentative)

Instructor: Dr LI Mei Ting

Email: meitingli@cuhk.edu.hk

Time and Venue: Fri 6:45-9:30pm FYB 405

Office hour and Consultation: by appointment

Course Description

Fandom, or fan culture, is a term that accompanies lots of stigma in the past and is now a fancy entry into cyberspace subculture in the web 2.0 (or even web 3.0) era. It describes communities built by like-minded people in any aspect of popular culture, such as sports, movies, television dramas or music, who actively produce creative content for their uses. As Henry Jenkins once suggested, most fan cultures show elements of participatory culture, as fan communities enjoy their own readings of popular culture and encourage artistic creations and expression. While scholars of popular culture criticise consumers of popular content as "disciplined readers" who are being manipulated by the culture industry and follow suit the mass culture, scholars who underpinned the participation of fans consider popular culture consumers as poachers who appropriate ideas from the media text and reinterpret them in creative ways. Therefore, by focusing on fan activities, this field of study provides gateways for further investigation of both individual and collective human agency in media and popular culture through community building, mass consumption, subculture in mediascape and participatory culture. Through this course, students will learn the relationship between fan cultures concerning identity, consumer culture, community building, affect studies etc., in contemporary mediascapes.

Learning Outcomes

- **Trace and Recognise** the history of fan culture from the 19th Century to its recent developments.
- **Clarify and situate** fan culture and its community's practices in trans/national bases and global trends towards social media, online communities, and web 2.0 or web 3.0 culture.
- **Employ** a range of theoretical tools and methodologies to critically examine the impact of fandom on socio-political, economic and cultural participation.
- **Reflects and critically comment on** fan practices and community-building issues under the manipulation and articulation of web 2.0 platform capitalism and its possibilities in the web 3.0 era.

Course Components & Learning activities

1. Lectures and tutorials (1.5 hours lecture and 1.5 hours interactive tutorial)
2. Guest sharing
3. Fieldtrips

Course Content

Part I Introduction to Fandom Studies

Lesson 1 – 3

Key Questions: How do we define a fan and a fan community? Why does fan culture matter to our society, and in what ways?

Keywords: cultural industries, mass production, consumerism, subcultural model, audience reception

Readings:

- Brian Longhurst & Danijela Bogdanovic (2014) “Effects, Audiences and Subcultures,” *Popular Music & Society*, Cambridge: Polity, pp. 211–222.
- John Fiske, “The Cultural Economy of Fandom,” in Lisa A. Lewis ed., *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, New York: Routledge, 1992.
- SANDVOSS, CORNEL, et al. “Introduction: Why Still Study Fans?” *Fandom, Second Edition: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World*, edited by Jonathan Gray et al., 2nd ed., NYU Press, 2017, pp. 1–26.
- Virginia Nightingale, “Chapter 1. An audience perspective and media criticism,” *Studying Audience: The shock of the real* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 1-39.

Part II Fandom and Identity

Lesson 4 – 6

Key Questions: How do issues of identity, such as gender, race, sexuality, and class, influence participation in fan communities and the representation of fans in media?

Keywords: identity politics, performativity and embodiment, intersubjectivity, intercultural identity, stigmatisation, queer fandom

Readings:

- Henry Jenkins, Mizuko Ito, and Danah Boyd, “Defining Participatory Culture,” in *Participatory Culture in a Networked Era*, 2016, pp. 1–31.
- Azuma, Hiroki. “Hyperflatness and Multiple Personality,” *Japan’s Database Animals*. [English ed.]. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2009.
- Kam, Lucetta Y. L. (2020) “Fandom—Transcultural Desires and Lesbian Fandom.” In *Keywords in Queer Sinophone Studies*, edited by Howard Chiang and Alvin K. Wong, New York: Routledge. 132–152.

Part III Fandom and Community

Lesson 7 – 9

Key Questions: How do fan communities form and evolve over time, and what factors contribute to the cohesion, governance, and dynamics within these communities?

Keywords: community studies, imagined community, gift economy, digital spaces, online media fandom, fan activism

Readings:

- Hitchcock Morimoto, Lori and Chin, Bertha. "10. Reimagining the imagined

community: online media fandoms in the age of global convergence". *Fandom, Second Edition: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World*, edited by Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss and C. Lee Harrington, New York, USA: New York University Press, 2017, pp. 174-188.

- Paul Booth, "Fan Spaces as Media Parody," *Negotiating Fandom and Media in the Digital Age*, Iowa: University of Iowa Press, pp.101—122.
- Matt Hills, "Fan Cultures Between Community and 'Resistance'," *Fan Cultures*. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Cho, Michelle. "BTS for BLM: K-Pop, Race, and Transcultural Fandom." *Celebrity studies* 13.2 (2022): 270–279.

Part IV Fandom and Emotion

Lesson 10 – 13

Key Questions: What role do shared emotional experiences within fan communities play in the formation and maintenance of fan cultures? How do these emotions constrain as well as enable fan's agency under the manipulation of institutional powers?

Keywords: emotional labour, participatory pleasure, gift economy, cultural politics of emotion, affects, institutional manipulations, participatory censorship

Readings:

- John Banks and Mark Deuze, "Co-Creative Labor," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 12(5), 2009.
- Tisha Turk (2014) "Fan Work: Labor, Worth, and Participation in Fandom's Gift Economy." In "Fandom and/as Labor," edited by Mel Stanfill and Megan Condis, special issue, *Transformative Works and Cultures*, no. 15.
- Diane Penrod, "Writing and Rhetoric for a Ludic Democracy: YouTube, Fandom, and Participatory Pleasure," in Heather Urbanski ed., *Writing and the Digital Generation: Essays on New Media Rhetoric*, McFarland, 2010.
- Wang, Yiming, and Jia Tan. "Participatory Censorship and Digital Queer Fandom: The Commercialization of Boys' Love Culture in China." *International journal of communication* 17:2023.

Assessment Methods

1. Class participation (10%)

Class attendance, responding to questions from instructor and contributing to class discussions and giving constructive feedbacks to students' presentations during tutorials. Students are encouraged to share their ideas and experiences through class discussions, class/group activities in the context of the teaching plan.

2. Group Presentation (30%)

Students are required to conduct a group research project as well as giving a group presentation. The group project will be assessed through two main components:

- (1) An in-class oral presentation within 20 minutes
- (2) Presentation slideshows (not less than 20 pages)

3. Creative Project (20%)

Students are required to conduct a group fan creation (posters and fan products, shipping fiction, short video etc.) with a critical reflection following (group paper, 1500 words). The reflection should employ and respond to key theories and concepts taught in class.

A pitching section will be held during class, and the group that successfully sells their idea and get the most votes from peers will be given extra marks.

4. Final paper (40%)

Students are required to write a critical socio-cultural review on fan culture in Asia context with a specific research focus that is aligned with this course:

- (1) A one-page outline with tentative paper topic (on or before lesson 10)
- (2) A final paper in English with a proper reference list included. The length of the submission should be a minimum of 8 pages and a maximum of 15 pages with double-line spacing (excluding references and appendices).

*The instructor reserves the right of not grading any late submission, or to mark down the late submission for one point grade. No paper will be accepted after grade submission.

Recommended Readings

- Henry Jenkins, *Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers: Exploring Participatory Culture*. New York: New York University Press, 2006.
- Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse, *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet*, Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2006.
- Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss, and C. Lee Harrington, *Fandom: Identities and Communities in A Mediated World*. New York: New York UP, 2007.
- Henry Jenkins, Sangita Shresthova, Liana Gamber-Thompson, Neta Kligler-Vilenchik and Arely Zimmerman, *By Any Media Necessary: The New Youth Activism*. New York: New York University Press, 2016.
- Susan J. Douglas, "Popular Culture and Populist Technology: The Amateur Operators, 1906-1912," *Inventing American Broadcasting, 1899-1922*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1989.
- Sean Griffin, "'You've Never Had a Friend Like Me': Target Marketing Disney to a Gay Community," *Tinker Bells and Evil Queens: The Disney Company from Inside Out*. New York: New York University Press, 2000.
- Alexander, Jade, and Katarzyna Bronk. *(Extra)ordinary? the Concept of Authenticity in Celebrity and Fan Studies*. Ed. Jade Alexander and Katarzyna Bronk. Leiden;: Brill Rodopi, 2018. Print.
- Itō, Mizuko., Daisuke. Okabe, and Izumi Tsuji. *Fandom Unbound: Otaku Culture in a Connected World*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012.
- Marc Steinberg, *The Platform Economy: How Japan Transformed the Consumer Internet*, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2019.
- Srnicek, Nick, and Laurent De Sutter. *Platform Capitalism*. Cambridge, England: Polity, 2017.
- Gerrard, Ysabel. "Groupies, Fangirls and Shippers: The Endurance of a Gender Stereotype." *The American behavioral scientist (Beverly Hills)* 66.8 (2022): 1044–1059.

Academic honesty and plagiarism

Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/>.

With each assignment, students will be required to submit a signed **declaration** that they are aware of these policies, regulations, guidelines and procedures.

- In the case of group projects, all members of the group should be asked to sign the declaration, each of whom is responsible and liable to disciplinary actions, irrespective of whether he/she has signed the declaration and whether he/she has contributed, directly or indirectly, to the problematic contents.
- For assignments in the form of a computer-generated document that is principally text-based and submitted via VeriGuide, the statement, in the form of a receipt, will be issued by the system upon students' uploading of the soft copy of the assignment.
- Students are fully aware that their work may be investigated by AI content detection software to determine originality.
- Students are fully aware of the AI approach(es) adopted in the course. In the case where some AI tools are allowed, students have made proper acknowledgment and citations as suggested by the course teacher.

Assignments without a properly signed declaration will not be graded by teachers.

Only the final version of the assignment should be submitted via VeriGuide.

The submission of a piece of work, or a part of a piece of work, for more than one purpose (e.g. to satisfy the requirements in two different courses) without declaration to this effect shall be regarded as having committed undeclared multiple submissions. It is common and acceptable to reuse a turn of phrase or a sentence or two from one's own work; but wholesale reuse is problematic. In any case, agreement from the course teacher(s) concerned should be obtained prior to the submission of the piece of work.

The copyright of the teaching materials, including lecture notes, assignments and examination questions, etc., produced by staff members/ teachers of The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) belongs to CUHK. Students may download the teaching materials produced by the staff members/ teachers from the Learning Management Systems, e.g. Blackboard, adopted by CUHK for their own educational use, but shall not distribute/ share/ copy the materials to a third-party without seeking prior permission from the staff members/ teachers concerned.

All use of AI tools is prohibited in assignments and assessment tasks

For assignments and assessment tasks that count towards the final course grades, students are not allowed to submit work which is produced with the collaboration of or supported by the use of any generative AI tools (e.g. ChatGPT)*.

Any breach of the regulations will be considered an act of academic dishonesty and will be handled according to the University's *Procedures for Handling Cases of Academic Dishonesty*.

In case of queries, students should seek advice from the course teacher.