

The Chinese University of Hong Kong

MA in Cultural Management

Term 2, 2024-2025

CULS5301 Concepts of Contemporary Culture (tentative)

Instructor: Dr LI Mei Ting

Office: Room 311, Leung Kau Kui Building, The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Email: meitingli@cuhk.edu.hk

Time & Venue: Wed 6:45 – 9:30 p.m.; ELB 308 (will change classroom later)

Office Hours & consultation: By appointment

Course Description

This course, tailored for students pursuing an MA in Cultural Management, investigates the intricate dynamics of culture and its profound impact on our daily lives. It aims to answer pivotal questions such as: How does culture shape our everyday existence? In a world where the cultural milieu is constantly changing, how should we comprehend, scrutinize, and reflect upon contemporary culture? All these questions lead us back to the core: What are we truly managing when we navigate diverse cultural landscapes?

Our journey to contemporary culture is structured around three primary components:

The Production of Culture: This section explores the mechanisms and processes involved in creating and disseminating culture. We explore cultural production in the aftermath of globalization and glocalization. We examine problems of the cultural industries that create hegemonic influences on third-world countries like an ideological apparatus.

Representation Politics in Cultural Artefacts: This part examines the politics of representation embedded within cultural artefacts, providing students with a deeper understanding of the power dynamics at play. We explore the work of representation in popular culture through their coding process, and the spectacle they created on the one hand, take the spectatorship seriously and critically in order to decode the cultural politics the cultural artefacts connotated.

Cultural Politics of Everyday Life: The final segment investigates how cultural politics permeate various facets of our daily lives, offering insights into how culture influences our perceptions and actions and how we could critically respond to these cultural politics. We explore the power dynamic in popular culture, digital media infrastructure and cyberspace. To identify the cultural issues such as gender, queer and sexuality, affective economy, and the tangible and intangible archives within communities.

By the end of this course, students will have gained a comprehensive understanding of key concepts and methodologies in cultural studies, equipping them with the tools necessary to

engage with cultural practices critically. This course is an essential journey for those seeking to understand and manage the complexities of culture in today's rapidly changing world.

Learning outcomes

- **Recognize and develop** a comprehensive understanding of the intricate dynamics of culture and its impact on contemporary world.
- **Acquire and list** necessary tools and methodologies in cultural studies to engage with cultural practices critically, enabling students to navigate and manage the complexities of culture.
- **Analyze and evaluate** the politics and ideological implications of different forms of cultural productions contextually.
- **Theorize** how cultural politics permeate various facets of daily life, offering insights into how culture influences perceptions and actions, and empowering students to engage with critical thoughts.
- **Reflect and create** their cultural practices through the lens of critical theories.

Class Activities

- Lectures and interactive tutorials (1.5 hours lecture, 1.5 hours interactive tutorial with group activities)
- Guest lecture and sharing
- Multimedia classrooms
- Field trips

Contents

Part 1 Introduction

Lesson 1

Key Questions: What culture matters? What methods we use to study culture? In this week, we take a decolonizing approach to understand the concept of “culture.”

Keywords: Culture is a way of life, text and image, positionality, discourse, ideology

Readings:

Chris Barker & Emma A. Jane (2016) “The Parameters of Cultural Studies,” *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice*, Sage, pp.6 – 9; “Key Concepts in Cultural Studies,” pp.9 – 14; “Questions of methodology,” pp. 35 – 43.

Part 2 The Production of Culture

Lesson 2 – 4 (1st discussion panel in lesson 4)

Key Questions: How does the industrialization of cultural production process in creating and disseminating culture? How does the production of culture influence the

formation, transmission and reception of cultural meanings and representations in the contemporary world?

Keywords: Globalization, Hegemony, Ideological Apparatus, Cultural Industries

Readings:

Mouffe, Chantal. "Hegemony and Ideology in Gramsci." *Gramsci and Marxist Theory*. 1st ed. vol. 3. Routledge, 1979. 168–204.

Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy," *Modernity at large: cultural dimensions of globalization*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota press, 1996, 25-46.

Arif Dirlik, "The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism," *Critical Inquiry* 20:2, 1994, 328-356.

Case Studies: HYBE and Ador; BLACKPINK; Newjeans; Netflix and Disney+

Part 3 The Representation Politics

Lesson 5 – 7 (2nd discussion panel in lesson 7)

Key Questions: How are power dynamics manifested and perpetuated through the processes of representation in cultural artifacts, media, and communication? In what ways do representations influence and shape societal perceptions, values, and ideologies?

Keywords: Representation politics; Coding/decoding; Spectacle; Spectatorship; Visual Culture, Mass Culture.

Readings:

Stuart Hall, "The Work of Representation," in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall, London: Sage, 1997, 15-64; "The Spectacle of Other," in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying*, 223-290.

Stuart Hall, "Encoding/Decoding.," in *Media and Cultural Studies: Key Works*, eds. Meenakshi Gigi and Douglas Kellner, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 2000.

Donna Haraway, "The persistence of vision," in *The Visual Culture Reader*, Nicholas Mirzoeff ed. (London: Routledge, 1998), 677 – 684.

Nightingale, Virginia. "An audience perspective and media criticism," *Studying Audiences: The Shock of the Real*. London: Routledge, 1996. 1-22.

Case Studies: Oscar Ho Hing-Kay, Ha Bik-Chuen, Ellen Pau; Experimental films (陳巧真、勞麗麗); Posthuman and cyberpunk.

Part 4 Cultural Politics I: Digital Media, Popular Culture, and Everyday life

Lesson 8 – 10 (3rd discussion panel in lesson 10)

Key Questions: How do new media technologies shape and influence cultural practices, identities, and interactions in contemporary society?

Keywords: Popular Culture, Digital Media, Cyberspaces, Fandom, Affective Economy

Readings:

Jenkins, H. (2008). *Convergence culture: where old and new media collide*. New York: New York University Press. (Chapters 1, pp. 25-58; Chapter 3 & 4 pp.93-168)

Caroline Bassett, “Cultural Studies and New Media,” in Gary Hall & Clare Birchall ed., *New Culture Studies: Adventures in Theory*. Edinburgh University Press. 2006. pp. 220–237.

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.

Paul Booth, “Fan Spaces as Media Parody,” *Negotiating Fandom and Media in the Digital Age*, Iowa: University of Iowa Press, pp.101—122.

Case Studies: social media platforms; digital arts, NFT, and AI; cyberspace fan community and participatory culture

Part 5 Cultural Politics II: Public Culture and Community

Lesson 11 – 13 (4th discussion panel in lesson 13)

Key Questions: Why communities matter to our public culture? How can we build care and inclusiveness into cultural practices? Can we open-up the possibilities of documents and archives in contributing communities?

Keywords: Race, Gender, Queer & Sexuality, Communities, Archives

Readings:

Helen Hok-sze, Leung. “Queerscape in Contemporary Hong Kong Cinema”, positions: east asia cultures critique 9.2, 2001, 423-447

Cook, T. (2013) “Evidence, Memory, Identity and Community: Four Shifting Archival Paradigms.” *Archival Science* 13: 2-3 (2013): 95-120.

潘律主編：《藝術檔案庫的可能與不可能：亞洲的理論和經驗》(selected chapters)

Case Study: Queer Asia Film Festival, Asian Art Archive, CUHK library digital repository

Assessment methods

Class participation (10%) –attendance and in-class contribution

Course works (30%)

- Attending **four sessions of discussion panel** with constructive inputs (20%, with 5% per panel)
- Co-opt with AI to conduct **ONE reflective exercise** (10%)

**** Use of AI tools is allowed with explicit acknowledgement and proper citation when conducting discussion panel and reflective exercise in class.**

Term reflective paper (30%)

Students are required to write **no more than 8 pages, double-spaced term paper in English** on **ONE** media artefact or product, exhibition(s), specific artist's work which in your view represents issues in relation to topics and key concepts of this course.

****Please be reminded all use of AI tools is prohibited in the term reflective paper.**

Group project (30%)

Choose **ONE collection** or **no more than 10 objects** from one of the archives below and plan a knowledge transfer proposal to re-work the archive materials.

- Asia Art Archive: <https://aaa.org.hk/en/collections>
- CUHK Digital Repository: <https://repository.lib.cuhk.edu.hk/en/collection>
- Queer Reads Hong Kong: <https://qrlib.net/>
- Hong Kong Literature Database: <https://hklit.lib.cuhk.edu.hk/>

Each group need to conduct an oral presentation in 15-20 mins to present their thoughts. Detailed guideline will be announced in-class.

**** Please be reminded all use of AI tools is prohibited in group project.**

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.

Use of AI tools is allowed with explicit acknowledgement and proper citation

Students may use some AI tools in some class activities and assignments on the condition that they make explicit acknowledgement and proper citations of the input from AI tools.

Acknowledging support from AI tools

Students are required to acknowledge all functional uses of a generative AI tool and cite it when they paraphrase, quote, or incorporate into their own work any content (whether it is text, image, data, or other format) that was created by it.

- i. An example of acknowledgement

'I acknowledge the use of (name of AI tool – e.g. ChatGPT (<https://chat.openai.com/>) to (specify the support, e.g. plan my essay, generate some ideas for the content, ask for examples of data collection instruments, get the dates of historical events, etc.).

- ii. An example of citation

OpenAI. (2023). *ChatGPT* (Mar 20 version). <https://chat.openai.com/chat>

(Students are reminded that due to the rapid developments of generative AI tools, some citation formats may be updated regularly.)

- iii. An example of including texts generated by an AI tool in their work

"The following text was generated by an AI tool / language model (ChatGPT):"
[Insert the text generated by ChatGPT here.]

- iv. An example of including texts generated by an AI tool and the prompts that were used to elicit the text from the AI tool

"[The prompt], as generated by an AI language model (ChatGPT):"
[Insert the text generated by ChatGPT in response to the prompt.]

Students are reminded to learn and use the AI tools responsibly and ethically and be aware of the limitations.

Students are reminded to clarify with the course teacher and obtain permission if necessary when in doubt.