Glasgow School of Art Course Specification
Course Title: Popular Culture and Creative Practice

Please note that this course specification is correct on the date of publication but may be subject to amendment prior to the start of the 2023-24 Academic Year.

Course Code:	HECOS Code:	Academic Session:
		2023-24

1. Course Title:
Popular Culture and Creative Practice

2. Date of Approval:	3. Lead School:	4. Other Schools:
PACAAG April 2022	School of Design	This course is available to students on PGT programmes which include a Stage 2 elective.

5. Credits:	6. SCQF Level:	7. Course Leader:
20	11	Dr David Sweeney

8. Associated Programmes:
This course is available to students on PGT programmes which include a Stage 2 elective.

9. When Taught:
Stage 2, Taught online only

10. Course Aims:
The overarching aims of the Stage 2 Electives are as follows: • Encourage interdisciplinary, critical reflexivity from within an open set of choices; • Foster deep investigative approaches to new or unfamiliar areas of practice and theory; • Cultivate self-directed leadership and initiative-taking in both applied and abstract modes of practice/ study not necessarily associated with a student's particular creative specialism; • Enable flexible, ethical exploration and connection of diverse knowledge and understanding within a specialist programme of study. Strange as it may seem today, in the aftermath of the 'culture wars' of the mid to late twentieth century, the study of popular culture is still treated with suspicion and derision not only by 'ordinary' people but even by some academics. Partly this is a problem of perception: to outside observers (the uninitiated) the practice of popular culture research e.g. watching films and television programmes, reading comic books, listening to pop music can seem far too much like fun rather than rigorous scholarship. And because pop culture is often dismissed as trivial, including by those who regularly participate in it, researchers are frequently accused of 'reading

too much' into their area of study, with the result that they find themselves in the unenviable position of having to justify the academic value of their endeavours.

The purpose of this course, 'Popular Culture and Creative Practice', is to assert the legitimacy of pop culture research and, in the process, to equip researchers with the means of defending their studies from those who fail to understand that trivia lies in the eye of the beholder and that the 'lowest' form of popular entertainment can reveal as much, if not more, about the society that generates it as the 'highest' work of art.

The course shows not only that pop culture can be studied in a legitimate scholarly manner, it also shows how such scholarship should be undertaken, drawing attention to the methodological mistakes researchers often make and the pitfalls they face as a result.

This course aims to:
- Introduce students to a range of theories and practical applications of popular culture studies;
- Encourage the student to frame deep investigative approaches to new areas of practice and theory through verbal reasoning, practice, and empirical research;
- Facilitate interdisciplinary debate, critical reflexivity, and practical connections, by bringing together students on different programmes of study;
- Cultivate self-directed leadership and initiative-taking in both applied and abstract modes of practice/ study not necessarily associated with a student's particular creative specialism;
- Interrogate the relationships between popular culture theory and methodologies and creative practices;
- Explore and interrogate established assumptions and practices through flexible, ethical considerations of other contemporary fields of culture.

11. Intended Learning Outcomes of Course:

By the end of the course students should be able to:
- Develop a rationale for applying selected popular culture analysis methods to art or design studio practices;
- Debate and analyse a number of approaches to the critical analysis of popular culture and explore cross-disciplinary approaches within creative research;
- Demonstrate how ideas, methods and practices interrelate in this area;
- Develop and defend a practical/theoretical research project proposal within the subject area based on independent research;
- Consider new approaches to creative practices beyond established western traditions;
- Evaluate the contribution made to art and design research and practice through the study of alternative non-textual sources .

12. Indicative Content:

The course will explore some of the following topics:
- Introduction: Why Study Popular Culture?
- Popular Culture and Food
- Popular Culture and Clothes
- Popular Culture and Shelter
- Popular Culture and High Culture
- Popular Culture and Leisure
- Subcultures and the Mainstream

Additionally, students will receive two individual tutorials, one for formative assessment, the other to prepare them for their assessment.

13. Description of Summative Assessment Methods:

Attendance at lectures, seminars and group discussions will be mandatory. In addition to this, students will be required to submit an assignment that presents an analysis of an idea or concept, artwork, practitioner or debate, which they consider is at the cutting edge of their field of enquiry. This submission may take one of two forms:

Assessment Method	Description of Assessment Method	Weight %	Submission week (assignments)
Essay	3500 word written essay (this should include examples of visual work, where appropriate, and a bibliography)	100	Week 11, Stage 2
Or			
Practical Submission	Creative submission accompanied by a 1000 word positioning statement	100	Week 11 Stage 2

13.1 Please describe the Summative Assessment arrangements:

For this course, students will be required to produce and submit one assignment. This may take either of the following forms:

- Written submission: an essay of 3500 words, correctly presented and referenced, relating to a topic pertinent to the course. Students intending to write an essay should have the topic approved in advance by the course tutor.

OR

- Practical Submission*: Students may submit a creative piece such as an illustration, sound piece, comic book etc which must be agreed in advance with the course tutor. Creative submissions should be accompanied by a 1000 word positioning statement and full list of references.

*If a student wishes to make use of equipment and technical support from Technical Services, including the use of GSA's media studio, they must first consult with their tutor who will in turn liaise with Technical Services to consider what level of support and technical provision might be available - due to restricted capacity.

Assessment Criteria
- Students on this course will be assessed on their ability to:
- Conceptualise and present a research problem;
- Utilize appropriate methods and tools when conducting a research project;
- Situate their projects of research within a research context;
- Critically reflect on the success and effectiveness of their own projects of practice and research;
- Demonstrate a level of depth in the analysis of works, practitioners, ideas and/or debates appropriate to postgraduate level

Please also refer to the course handbook for further specific guidance about the assessment criteria.

14. Description of Formative Assessment Methods:
Engagement with formative assessment is a mandatory requirement. Formative Assessment takes place.
14.1 Please describe the Formative Assessment arrangements:
Please refer to the handbook for details about the formative assessment arrangements.

15. Learning and Teaching Methods:	
Formal Contact Hours	**Notional Learning Hours**
20	200
15.1 Description of Teaching and Learning Methods:	
Timetable: 2 hours weekly for 10 weeks, Wednesdays or Fridays	

16. Pre-requisites:
Successful completion of PGT Stage 1

17. Can this course be taken by Exchange/Study Abroad students?	Yes
18. Are all the students on the course taught wholly by distance learning?	Yes
19. Does this course represent a work placement or a year of study abroad?	No
20. Is this course collaborative with any other institutions?	No
20.1 If yes, then please enter the names of the other teaching institutions:	
N/A	

21. Additional Relevant Information:
N/A

22. Indicative Bibliography:
Adam, Abdirahman, *Little Boy: A Study of Postwar Japanese Comics* (GSA Dissertation Manuscript)
Adorno, Theodor, *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture* (Routledge, 2001)
Barker, Chris, Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice (Sage, 2000)
Barthes, Roland, *Mythologies* (Vintage, 1993)
Baudrillard, Jean, *Revenge of the Crystal: Selected Writings on the Modern Object and its Destiny 1968 – 1983* (Pluto, 1990)
Baudrillard, Jean, *Selected Writings* (Polity, 1998)
Benjamin, Walter, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' in *Illuminations* (Pimlico, 1999)
Bourdieu, Pierre, *Distinction: a social critique of the judgement of taste* (Routledge, 1984)
Bracewell, Michael, *The 1990s: When Surface Was Depth*, (Flamingo, 2003),
Bracewell, Michael, *Perfect Tense*, (Vintage, 2002)
Coupland, Douglas, *Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture*, (Abacus, 1996)

Coupland, Douglas, *Shopping in Jail: Ideas, essays and stories for the increasingly real 21st century*, (Sternberg, 2013)

Debord, Guy, *The Society of the Spectacle*, (Zone Books, 1984)

Dyer, Richard*, Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society* (Routledge, 2004)

Farren, Mick, *The Black Leather Jacket*, (Plexus, 1985)

Foulis, Ruth, *Dumbledore's Army: Fan Cultures, Communities and the Future of the Harry Potter Generation*, (GSA Dissertation Manuscript)

Hall, Stuart, Evans, Jessica, Nixon, Sean (eds.), *Representation*, (The Open OpenUniversity, 2013)

Huyssen, Andreas, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism*, (Indiana University Press, 1986)

Jenkins, Henry, *Convergence Culture: Where old and new media collide*, (NYU Press, 2006)

Jenkins, Henry, *Fans, bloggers, and gamers: exploring participatory culture*,(NYU Press, 2006)

Jones, Rhian E., *Clampdown: Pop Cultural Wars on Class and Gender*, (Zero, 2013)

Miller, Daniel*, The Comfort of Things*, (Polity, 2009)

Miller, Daniel, *Stuff*, (Polity, 2010)

Robbins, D, *Bourdieu and Culture* (Sage, 2000)

Shaviro, Steven, *Doom Patrols: A Theoretical Fiction About Postmodernism*, (Serpent's Tail, 1997)

Sweeney, David, 'I-Spy: Mike Leigh and Britpop' *in Devised and Directed by Mike Leigh*, Bryan Cardinale-Powell and Marc DiPaolo (eds), (Bloomsbury Academic, 2013)

Webster, Helena, *Bourdieu for Architects* (Routledge, 2010)