COURSE STRUCTURE AND OBJECTIVES

This course is designed to be an in-depth study of the linkages between industry and culture from the Sociological perspective. Specifically, the nature of film/movies/cinema will be examined via the use of both classic sociological theories and modern research. The course is organized around five general topics: the history of the industry, its economic/organizational structuring, the nature of regulation and censorship in popular culture, patterns of consumer behavior, and the constructed definition of genre. Readings will be derived primarily from modern social science journals and texts that focus on the sociological perspective.

The distance between economic, organizational and cultural sociology has narrowed rapidly in recent years such that there is notable overlap at the boundaries of these fields. These linkages represent some the most vibrant areas of research in social science and are frequently featured in the journals and newsletters that reflect and guide Sociology. In addition to the specific topics at hand, this course is designed to provide insight into this general linkage in order to focus attention on these modern developments in the field.

Grades in the course will be derived from participation, weekly written memos addressing the immediate materials, two short test papers, and one longer paper – I will also discuss the collection and analysis of quantitative data which may be used to answer questions related to the specific topics of the course.

THE MOVIES

In addition to the regularly scheduled course time and required readings, there will be approximately fifteen required movie-viewings during the semester. There will be a regularly scheduled viewing that all students are encouraged - and occasionally required - to attend, and these movies will also be available on limited reserve at the library. Each semester, the course will focus on one or two general themes or structures of film in order to focus attention on genre. For example, the movies might focus on one or more of the following: “horror,” “crime,” “teen film,” “film noir,” and/or “musicals.” Many of these movies will contain adult themes and material. This is an essential part of understanding the nature of censorship and socially constructed value. To that end, films with the MPAA rating of “R” – or its equivalent – are required in the course and students should be prepared to address these in a serious and academic manner.

It is important to note that this is not a course wherein the stories presented in the movies will be deconstructed to reveal sociological principles. Instead, movies are a product of a vast industry and tell stories that are part of a socially constructed reality. By viewing and comparing movies, and linking them to the literature of the course, the complexities of production, consumption, and defining genre within a historical context will be examined.

COURSE PREREQUISITES

There are no specific prerequisites for this course.