DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES

BIRLA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, MESRA, RANCHI, JHARKAHND

COURSE INFORMATION SHEET

Course code: HS 415
Course Title: Popular Cultural Theory
Pre-requisite(s): NIL
Co-requisite(s): NIL
Credits: L:04 T:00 P:00
Contact Hours: 40-45
Class schedule per week: 04
Class: PhD
Semester: I
Branch: HSS

Course Objective

Objective-1	Critically Engage with Key Theoretical Frameworks: Doctoral students will explore and critically evaluate foundational theories in popular cultural studies to develop a nuanced understanding of the field's theoretical landscape.
Objective-2	Interrogate Power Dynamics and Ideologies: Students will examine how popular culture reflects, reinforces, and contests dominant power structures and ideologies, including those related to gender, race, class, and nationality, through close analysis of cultural texts, practices, and discourses.
Objective-3	Explore Transnational and Global Perspectives: Doctoral candidates will investigate the circulation, reception, and adaptation of popular culture across diverse cultural, geographical, and linguistic contexts, critically analyzing processes of globalization, localization, and cultural hybridity in contemporary media landscapes.
Objective-4	Conduct Original Research and Theoretical Synthesis: Students will develop advanced research skills, including formulating research questions, designing methodologies, and forming hypotheses, to produce original scholarship that contributes to theoretical debates and advances knowledge in the field of popular cultural theory.
Objective-5	Reflect on the Ethical, Social, and Political Implications of Cultural Analysis: PhD candidates will engage in reflexive and ethically informed research practices, considering the ethical responsibilities and political implications of their scholarly interventions in the study of popular culture, particularly in relation to issues of representation, power, and social justice.

Course Outcomes

	Modules
CO-1	Students will recall and summarize key theoretical frameworks and concepts in popular cultural theory, demonstrating mastery of foundational knowledge through annotated bibliographies, literature reviews, and class discussions.
CO-2	Doctoral candidates will demonstrate a deep understanding of the theoretical underpinnings and methodological approaches in popular cultural studies, interpreting and explaining complex ideas through critical essays, seminar presentations, and theoretical syntheses.
CO-3	Students will apply theoretical frameworks and methodological tools to analyze and interpret diverse forms of popular culture, such as media texts, fan practices, subcultural movements, and digital platforms, to generate new insights and perspectives in their research projects.
CO-4	Doctoral scholars will critically analyze cultural texts, practices, and discourses using advanced analytical techniques, such as semiotics, discourse analysis, and cultural criticism, to deconstruct representations, ideologies, and power dynamics embedded within popular culture artifacts.
CO-5	Students will evaluate the strengths, limitations, and ethical implications of different theoretical approaches and research methodologies in popular cultural theory, synthesizing and critiquing scholarly literature to develop informed and nuanced perspectives on contemporary issues in the field.

SYLLABUS

Module	Contents	BL
1	**What is 'Popular'?** Unpacking the elusive concept of "the popular," exploring its cultural, social, and economic dimensions. Through case studies and theoretical readings, investigating how the idea of the	2

	"popular" is constructed, contested, and commodified across different contexts, from mainstream media to grassroots subcultures.	
2	**Understanding "Popular"** Delving deeper into the theories and methodologies of popular cultural studies. Examining how to conceptualize and analyze popular culture, considering approaches such as cultural hegemony, cultural capital, and reception theory. Critically engaging with key texts and debates shaping the field.	2,3
3	**The Diverse "Popular"** Exploring the intersectionality of popular culture, examining how representations of race, gender, sexuality, and class intersect and diverge across media forms. Investigating the politics of representation, cultural appropriation, and resistance in diverse popular cultural texts and practices.	2,3,4
4	**The "Popular" and the Digital** Navigating the digital landscape of popular culture, from social media platforms to digital fandoms. Analyzing the impact of digital technologies on the production, distribution, and consumption of cultural content.	2,3,4
5	**Graphically "Popular": Comics Studies** Immersing into the dynamic world of comics and graphic storytelling, tracing their evolution from pulp magazines to multimedia franchises. Examining the formal and thematic conventions of comics, including visual storytelling techniques, genre conventions, and the interplay between text and image.	2,3,4

Textbooks

1	Williams, R. (2005). Keywords: "Culture" and "Masses". Raiford Guins and Omayra Zaragoza Cruz (eds.), *Popular Culture: A Reader*. London, Thousand Oaks CA, New Delhi: Sage.
2	Shiach, M. (2005). "The Popular". Raiford Guins and Omayra Zaragoza Cruz (eds.), op. cit.
3	Benjamin, W. (2005). "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction". Raiford Guins and Omayra Zaragoza Cruz (eds.), op. cit.
4	McLuhan, M. (1964). Part I, of *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
5	Baudrillard, J. (1993). "The Work of Art in the Electronic Age" (TV interview with La Sept, Autumn 1988). trans. Lucy Forsyth, in Mike Gane ed., *Baudrillard Live: Selected Interviews*. London and New York: Routledge.
6	Berger, J. (1990). *Ways of Seeing*. New York: Penguin Classics, (Based on the BBC lecture series).
7	Lewisohn, C. (2010). "Introduction: Street Art or Graffiti?". *Street Art: The Graffiti Revolution*, London: Tate Publishing, pp. 15-25.
8	Mukherjee, S. (2015). *Video Games and Storytelling: Reading Games and Playing Books*. Houndmills & New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
9	Flegel, M. and Jenny Roth, (2016). "Writing a New Text: The Role of Cyberculture in Fanfiction Writers' Transition to 'Legitimate' Publishing". *Contemporary Women's Writing*, Vol. 10, Issue 2, pp. 253-272.
10	Jenner, M. (2018). "Introduction". *Netflix and the Re-invention of Television*. Palgrave New York: Macmillan, pp. 1-31.
11	McCloud, S. (1999). *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*. New York: Paradox Press.
12	Bryce, M., Barber, C. & Plumb, A. (2012). Manga and Anime: Fluidity and Hybridity in Global Imagery. Iles, T. & Matanle, P. (Eds.) *Researching Twenty-first Century Japan: New Directions and Approaches for the Electronic Age*. Plymouth: Lexington Books, 323-342.
13	Chatterji, R. (2020) *Graphic Narratives and the Mythological Imagination in India*. London & New York: Routledge.
14	Azuma, H., Abel, J. E., & Kono, S. (Eds.) (2009). *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
15	Johnson-Woods, T. (Eds.). (2010). *Manga: An Anthology of Global and Cultural Perspectives*. New York: Continuum Books. (Selections)
16	Cohn, N. (2013). *The Visual Language of Comics: Introduction to the Structure and Cognition of Sequential Images*. London: Bloomsbury.

Reference books

1	Adorno, T. & Max Horkheimer (1973). "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception". *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming, London: Allen Lane.

2	Adorno, T. (2005). "Culture Industry Reconsidered". Raiford Guins and Omayra Zaragoza Cruz (eds.), op. cit.
3	Baudrillard, J. (1994). 'The Precession of Simulacra'. *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
4	Appadurai, A. 'Global Ethnoscapes: Notes and Queries for a Transnational Anthropology'. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. University of Minnesota Press, pp. 48-65.
5	Davison, P. (2012). "The Language of Internet Memes". Michael Mandiberg (ed.), *The Social Media Reader*. New York & London: New York University Press, pp. 120-136.
6	Bhaduri, S. (2016). "Gaming", in Benjamin Peters (ed.), *Digital Keywords: A Vocabulary of Information Society & Culture*. Princeton, NJ & Oxford: Princeton University Press, pp. 140-148.
7	Eisner, W. (1985/2000) *Comics & Sequential Art*, Tamarac, FL: Poorhouse Press.
8	Beaty, B. (2012). *Comics versus Art*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
9	Berninger, M., Ecke, J., & Haberkorn, G. (Eds.) (2010). *Comics as a Nexus of Cultures: Essays on the Interplay of Media, Disciplines and International Perspectives*. Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Incorporated Publishers.
10	Galbraith, P. (2014). *The Moe Manifesto: An Insider's Look at the Worlds of Manga, Anime, and Gaming*. Singapore: Tuttle Publishing.
11	Groensteen, T. (2007). *The System of Comics*. Beaty, B., & Nguyen, N. (Trans.) Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi.
12	Hatfield, C. (2006). *Alternative Comics: An Emerging Literature*. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi.

Direct Assessment

Tools	% Contribution of Assessment
Quiz-01	10
Quix-02	10
Quiz-03	10
Assignment	10
Presentation	10
End-semester	50

Mapping

Course Objective	Course Outcome				
	Module-1	Module-2	Module-3	Module-4	Module-5
1	L	L	L	L	L
2	M	M	M	M	M
3	H	H	H	H	H
4	H	H	H	H	H
5	H	H	H	H	HS

H=3, M=2, L=1