

Studying “Selfies”

ISLA 320: Topics in Values, Media, & Culture

Spring 2016, MW 12:10—2:00PM

Building 186-C101 (Constructions Innovation Center)

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Office Hours: MW 9:30-11 am, and by appointment

Course Description and Objectives:

In November 2013, the Oxford English Dictionaries named “selfie” the international word of the year. That this form of photographic self-representation has become a topic of popular interest is clear. Selfies seem to be everywhere. You’ve seen them on your phones, in the news, as advertisement for political campaigns, and even evidence upheld in court. What they mean and why they’ve become so popular is less clear-cut. For scholars, selfies represent a paradox. As objects, they lend themselves to cultural scorn and shaming. At the same time, their circulation and influence continues to grow.

This course takes the selfie as a jumping off point to examine questions of identity, representation, technology and power. Together, we will explore questions such as what are selfies really? Why do we take them? What do they tell us about ourselves? And our values as a society? Importantly, we will not take a side but rather look at selfies as cultural objects. Through weekly readings, writings, and a quarter-long project, you will develop the skills you need to critically read and respond to a phenomenon in pop culture.

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Discuss the relationship(s) between media, art, society and technology
- Understand how this relationship relates to popular culture
- Critically read written and visual arguments (both scholarly and popular)
- Synthesize ideas across multiple perspectives and texts
- Build your own argument based on evidence
- Creatively present what you have learned in a multi-media format

Activities and Assignments:

In-Class Activities / Discussion	Think of this as your participation. You are expected to take an active role in your learning. Points will be based on your completion and contribution to in-class activities and discussions. Simply being present is not enough.	20 pts
Weekly Blogs	Weekly blogs are short assignments designed to give you the space to record and reflect upon your ideas following each week's material. They are informal, meaning they can be written in a casual style and will often ask you to be creative. What you say, however, is expected to be based on concrete evidence.	50 pts
Literature Circles	I will assign each of you to a lit circle. Your group will be responsible for presenting a reading or group of readings to the class on one occasion during the quarter. Lit circles will also serve as your peer review and discussion groups. Expect to get to know your peers, their ideas, and their work well.	20 pts
Exhibition	This final project represents the culmination of your work over the quarter. You will be asked to design a museum exhibition using the skills and perspectives you have learned in class. Don't freak out. Designing an exhibition is a big task, but you will have multiple assignments due throughout the quarter to help you achieve this. Each assignment will count for a portion of the total points.	110 pts (total)
More detailed assignment descriptions, specifics, and time lines are located in our PolyLearn class page	Total = 200pts	

Course Logistics and Requirements:

Course Materials: There are no required textbooks for this class. All course materials will be made available through PolyLearn. This is your one-stop shop for all things related to this course (including this syllabus). Any updates or pertinent information will be posted there. I may occasionally contact you via email, so be sure to regularly check your school account.

Attendance and Participation: You are expected to take an active role in class activities and discussions. Simply being present is not enough. At the most basic level, this means coming to class prepared and having read the material for that day **in advance**. The majority of what we talk about in class is tied to specific readings. We cannot effectively discuss different arguments, perspectives, or ideas if you have not introduced yourself to the material before hand. Being an active participant also means engaging in discussions with the entire class and in smaller groups.

Failure to attend or participate on a regular basis will adversely affect your grade. That being said, things happen. You have 2 excused absences to use as you wish. Any further absences must be arranged with me **in advance**.

Grading:

In-Class Activities / Discussion	10%
Weekly Blogs	25%
Literature Circle	10%
Exhibition Proposal	5%
Exhibition Plan	10%
Text Draft	15%
Final Portfolio	25%

Assignments will be assessed based upon how well they meet the criteria outlined in their descriptions. All assignments must be completed in order to receive a passing grade for the course.

Late or Missed Work: It is important that you complete all of your assigned work on time since it often affects not just you, but other members in the class well. If you are not able to finish an assignment on time, please notify me **in advance** with a compelling reason. Legitimate reasons include personal or family illness, religious holidays, job interviews, and those listed on the Academic Planning and Programs website. Again, the **in advance** is key. I will be far more flexible negotiating alternative arrangements prior to the date the assignment is due. Otherwise, late work will be marked down a full grade for each day late. Missed peer critiques and/or in-class activities cannot be made up.

Policies & Administrative Details:

Classroom Conduct: The classroom is a safe space for active learning and discussion. You are expected to behave in a way that promotes this. Please respect your classmates, the instructor, and the facilities provided to you by the university. Do not yell, belittle or discriminate against anybody for their ideas or background. We will be talking about some politically and socially charged issues in this class and it is important that we look at these issues academically and not emotionally.

Academic Honesty: Integrity is an important part of being a contributing member of society. Human photocopiers will not be tolerated. Please do not cheat, plagiarize, or engage in any other form of dishonest activity. Doing so will be met with disciplinary action. For a comprehensive understanding of Cal Poly's position on academic dishonesty, visit the Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities web site at: <http://www.osrr.calpoly.edu/academicdishonesty/>.

Disability Resource Center: If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and the Disability Resource Center, Building 124, Room 119, at (805) 756-1395, as early as possible in the term.

Writing and Rhetorical Center: The University Writing & Rhetoric Center (<http://writingcenter.calpoly.edu/>) is an excellent resource for helping you with all stages of the writing process, from getting started to polishing your sentence structure and tone. I encourage you to make an appointment if you would like extra help in addition to the feedback that you will get from me and your peers. Note: Please realize that the center is not simply a last-minute "fix-it shop" where someone corrects your mistakes. You'll want to use this resource to help you develop as a writer. Plan your consultation accordingly so that you will have time to incorporate what you learn.