American Idol(s): How Stories shape Culture and Identity

Meeting Days and Times: Tuesday & Thursday 1:15-3:15 & 3:30-5:30 in UWBB 240

Course Website: [http://ameridols.wordpress.com/](http://ameridols.wordpress.com/)  Twitter Tag: #ameridols

Diigo Group: [http://groups.diigo.com/group/american-idols/](http://groups.diigo.com/group/american-idols/)

Instructors:
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Office Hours: Thu 11am-1pm  Office Hours: Tue 11am-1pm

Course Description:
We understand ourselves and others through the stories we hear and tell. Such stories are found everywhere -- including CNN, religious sermons, Facebook status updates, and “American Idol”: all tell stories about our imagined place in the world. But not all stories are created equal: Why do some stories gain more social power than others? How does the social status of the messenger and the cultural, economic, and political context impact the influence of any given story? Furthermore, how can we thoughtfully and competently construct and tell our own stories using digital tools?

We will explore these questions by drawing on academic work in sociology, communication, and cultural studies, by comparing and contrasting examples of popular cultural stories, and by producing our own stories using digital and social medias. We will critically reflect upon the relationship between self-identity and the stories told in a variety of institutions and cultural sites, including mainstream media (CNN, Oprah, MTV, Hollywood), religion, politics, academic disciplines (sociology, anthropology, communications, global health, geography), live art (theater, performance art) and alternative medias (pirate radio, graphic novels) We will engage in a series of production assignments, learning how to tell compelling stories through photography, film, and other forms of creative production and scholarly writing.
CUSP Learning Goals:
Critical and Creative Inquiry; Communication; Quantitative and Qualitative Literacy; Inclusive Practices; Ethics and Social Responsibility.

Discovery Core Sequence: The DC Sequence includes a DC I in the Fall, a DC II in the Winter, and a DC III in the spring. Each course emphasizes student creativity and analysis, interdisciplinarity, integrated learning, undergraduate research skills, and self-reflection. The sequence is capped by the spring DC III course in which you create a Portfolio that is both reflective and projective, looking back at what you have learned and ahead to the directions you’d like to explore. Read more about the Discovery Core and Advising issues at http://www.uwb.edu/cusp/courses/the-discovery-core.

“American Idol(s)” Course Learning Goals:
Students should leave this course with the ability to:
1. Understand what constitutes a “scholarly” source of knowledge
2. Identify major US institutions and explain their roles in shaping American and Global cultures
3. Employ principles of Media Literacy (including both analysis of media as well as media production)
4. Move from opinion to thoughtful critique and analysis
5. Understand and appreciate the ethics of research and documentation, and how this varies by occupational sector (e.g. journalism vs. academia)

Required Texts, media, and e-reserves:
- Also, select readings available on electronic reserves (http://library.uwb.edu/reserve.html)
Reading: In addition to the required texts (available at the UW book store), readings for this course are available online via the Electronic Reserves site [http://library.uwb.edu/reserve.html] as individual pdf files. It is highly recommended that you secure some method of printing course readings. Important reading strategies like highlighting, underlining, and making notes in the margins are more difficult when reading on a screen, and can impact comprehension and analysis of the texts. If you chose to read digital copies you will be expected to use digital reading tools like notes and highlighting within the program that you are using. Readings are to be done before the day that they are listed and copies should be brought to class (or a digital device like a laptop, iPad, Kindle, Nook, etc. with your notes if you chose to read digitally) so that you will be ready to discuss them, apply them in skills-based activities, and build your collective understanding of the topic and methods used.

Multimedia: This course is about media production as well as media analysis, so you will be expected to listen to and view examples of multimedia. Multimedia will be assigned for each week, along with the readings. While some of it will be viewed in class, there will be many items (videos, websites, audio stories) that should be done prior to the class period that they are assigned for so that you will be ready to discuss the examples in class. While listening/watching, pay attention to how the stories are crafted, and think about how you might be able to replicate some of the practices in your own work. All multimedia will be available online on the schedule page, and may require software installation or plug-ins from players that can read audio, video, or flash files. Some files will only be available in streaming formats and may not be available for download. Please see the course website for an up to date listing of course viewing and listening as the quarter progresses.

Grading Criteria: % of final grade Due

Production Track (45% total)

- Visual Alphabet 5 Oct 6
- Graphic novel/zine 15 Oct 25
- Digital film 25 Nov 22

(Film festival Tue Nov 29)

Analysis Track (45% total)

- Reflective and analytic writings 20 Weekly
- Midterm exam 15 Nov 1
- Final paper on cultural representation 10 Dec 8

Participation (10% total)

- Regular class attendance Ongoing
- Substantive feedback in small groups Ongoing
- Quality of class involvement Ongoing
- Active participation in online conversations (Diigo, Twitter) Ongoing
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<th>Production Track (45% of total grade)</th>
<th>Analysis Track (45% of total grade)</th>
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<td>This section of the course will help you to build your transmedia storytelling skills using photographs, graphic novels, and short videos. These assignments will help you to achieve: <strong>attention to the complexities of culture and identity in multimedia representations, proficiency in multimedia storytelling using digital technologies.</strong></td>
<td>This section of the course will help you to build your knowledge of how social theory can help explain the social world through reflective and analytic writing, a midterm exam, and a final analysis paper. These assignments will help you to achieve: <strong>an understanding of basic concepts in the study of culture, identity, and social structure, ability to analyze media texts in light of social theory and research, proficiency in critical thinking and academic writing skills.</strong></td>
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<td>Visual Alphabet. (5%) In this assignment you will work in a small group to design a photograph that will represent a letter in the alphabet. Then you will work in an image editing program to alter the photograph.</td>
<td>Reflective and analytic writings. (20%) These assignments will consist of weekly in-class and take-home writings, reflecting on the readings or films for the day, or applying concepts to example media texts for analysis.</td>
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<td>Graphic Novel. (15%) Students will author original graphic novels, focused on some aspect of autobiography, culture and identity. This assignment will focus on developing a clear narrative story arc, and effective use of basic graphic art strategies.</td>
<td>Midterm Exam. (15%) There will be a midterm in week 6 that will consist of multiple choice questions, short answer questions and essay questions, and it will cover all course material prior to the testing date.</td>
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<td>Digital Film. (25%) Each student will have the opportunity to produce their own short digital film, based on the Digital Storytelling model, and present their work in a film festival at the end of the quarter.</td>
<td>Final Paper. (10%) The quarter will end with a 4 page analysis paper that integrates the course concepts through the presentation of a clear thesis statement related to storytelling, culture, and identity.</td>
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*Specific details about each assignment will be provided in separate documents, which will be made available in class and on our class website.*
Other things you need to know, from A-T:
(Academic Integrity to Technology in the Classroom)

- **Academic Integrity:** See [http://www.uwb.edu/studentservices/academicconduct](http://www.uwb.edu/studentservices/academicconduct) for crucial information regarding academic integrity. The library also has an extremely useful website with resources at [http://libguides.uwb.edu/ai](http://libguides.uwb.edu/ai). You are responsible for knowing what constitutes a violation of the University of Washington Student Code, and you will be held responsible for any such violations whether they were intentional or not.

- **Americans with Disabilities Act:** If you believe that you have a disability and would like academic accommodations, please contact Disability Support Services at 425.352.5307, 425.352.5303 TDD, 425.352.5455 FAX, or at dss@uwb.edu, [http://www.uwb.edu/studentservices/dss](http://www.uwb.edu/studentservices/dss).

- **Attendance Policy:** Since participation is vital for a successful experience, please arrive on time for class. Late arrivals interrupt our in-progress activities and discussions. If you must miss a class session, let the instructor know as soon as possible.

- **File storage** There are no software or hardware purchases required for this course, although it is HIGHLY recommended that you purchase a USB thumb drive/flash drive (or a larger media storage device) for storing and transporting your image, audio and video session files. Audio and video files are typically too large to be sent as email attachments, and storage on campus computers is unreliable and may result in loss of files. If purchasing an external drive is not possible, it is sometimes possible to store files on a campus server using your student account, although bandwidth limitations may make this difficult or impossible when accessing the account off-campus. If you cannot purchase a USB drive, please contact either of the instructors about other options.

- **H1N1 and Other Communicable Diseases Action Steps:** As part of the campus community’s shared responsibility for minimizing the possible spread of H1N1 virus and other diseases, it is critical that all students are familiar with the symptoms of H1N1 Flu described on the UW Bothell website at [http://www.uwb.edu/flu](http://www.uwb.edu/flu). Any student or instructor with flu-like symptoms is encouraged to stay at home until at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever without the use of fever-reducing medications.

- **Inclement Weather:** Students can learn of campus operations status from the website or by calling the Campus Information Hotline 425.352.3333. You may also sign up with an alert system that will contact you via email or text message if classes are canceled. For more information on the alert process, please see [http://www.uwb.edu/alert](http://www.uwb.edu/alert).

- **Incompletes:** University rules state that “an incomplete is given only when the student has been in attendance and has done satisfactory work until within two weeks at the end of the quarter and has furnished proof satisfactory to the instructor that the work cannot be completed because of illness or other circumstances beyond the student’s control.” We strongly discourage incompletes.
Media production: Capturing and editing multimedia work is a major component of this course. We will be learning how to take photographs and record audio using equipment that can be borrowed from media services at UW-Bothell. We will be working in images with Photoshop, and working in audio and video with Final Cut Pro (both in the Digital Media Lab in UW2 121). While we will be learning recording and editing skills in class, you will be expected to schedule additional time at the media lab to practice, work on your projects, and get help from media lab staff. You can find media lab staff here: [http://www.uwb.edu/learningtech/spaces/dml121](http://www.uwb.edu/learningtech/spaces/dml121). You can check out media equipment (microphones, recorders, headphones) here: [http://media.uwb.edu/](http://media.uwb.edu/).

Participation: At a minimum, participating in class requires that you come to class having done the required readings and assignments, with those readings in hand, and be ready to engage in a range of in-class activities and works based on those readings. Participation in the course also builds leadership through in-class skills sharing activities and editorial meetings with classmates.

Respectful Behavior: By enrolling in this course you are agreeing to help create a safe and supportive environment in which everyone can learn. This means that you agree to be respectful and compassionate for your classmates. You are expected to come to class ready to examine your own preconceptions – be they based in class, race, gender, sexuality, age, ability, religion or any other category that we put people in. Part of doing this means that characterizations or generalizations of groups of people as all one way or another are inappropriate (i.e., poor people are lazy), as are categorical slurs (i.e., white trash). You are also expected to come to class ready to be respectful and open to other’s views. If you disagree with someone else in class, I encourage you to say so, but I ask that you do so in a way that identifies the thing that is said as problematic rather than the person that said it. If something that you say is questioned by another classmate, than you will be asked to do your best to understand the substance of the questioning and examine your statement critically. If you are unable or unwilling to conduct yourself in a manner that is open and respectful than you will be asked to leave the classroom immediately. Repeated behavior that threatens the safety of others in the classroom may lead to you being asked to leave the course entirely.

Student Support Services:
- IT Helpdesk: [IT@uwb.edu](mailto:IT@uwb.edu), 425-352-3456
- Library: [http://library.uwb.edu/](http://library.uwb.edu/) 425-352-5340
- Writing Center: [www.uwb.edu/WritingCenter/](http://www.uwb.edu/WritingCenter/) 425-352-5253
- Quantitative Skills Center: [http://www.uwb.edu/qsc](http://www.uwb.edu/qsc) 425-352-3170
- Student Success and Career Services [http://www.uwb.edu/studentservices/success-services](http://www.uwb.edu/studentservices/success-services) 425-352-3776
- Student Counseling Services: [http://www.uwb.edu/studentservices/counseling](http://www.uwb.edu/studentservices/counseling) 425-352-3183

Technology in the Classroom: While technology is profoundly integral to this course, please turn off all laptops, cell phones, iPods, etc before the start of class and we will let you know when we will make use of them. (There are exceptions for students with specific note-taking and other needs.)
Course Schedule:

**Week 1 Introductions to the course, each other, and the art of storytelling**

*Thursday: Sept 29 - Introduction to the course and to each other.*

**CONCEPT of the day: Society**

**Readings:**
- Come to class having read (and be ready to discuss): the “Preview” chapter of Gender Circuits (by Eve Shapiro). (Pp. 1- 32).

**In-class Activities:**
- To orient us toward thinking visually, we will do a short visual alphabet project in class. Groups of participants will be asked to create a list of meaningful terms, then stage and photograph those terms. We will view selections of Wendy Ewald’s “Alphabet” project to ground our own exercise and relate it to the work we will be doing this quarter. In preparation for this project review the following two websites:
  - [http://cds.aas.duke.edu/ltp/spanishalphabet.html](http://cds.aas.duke.edu/ltp/spanishalphabet.html)
  - [http://www.opendemocracy.net/arts/ewald_3346.jsp](http://www.opendemocracy.net/arts/ewald_3346.jsp)
- Field trip to Information Technology (must have Husky card to check out cameras)

**Week 2 Culture and identity in visual media**

*Tuesday: Oct. 4*

**CONCEPT of the day: Identity**

**Assignment:**
- Bring a digital copy of your group’s alphabet photograph (each group member needs to have their own copy to complete the next part of this assignment).

**Readings:**
- Gender Circuits, Shapiro, Chapter 1 (Pp. 43-81).

**In-class Activities:**
- Strategies for reading academic texts, by Karen Rosenberg (1:15-3:15)
- Workshop on Twitter & Diigo (3:30-4:00) in the DML (UW2 121)
- Workshop on Photoshop (4:00-5:30) in the DML (UW2 121)

*Thursday: Oct 6*

**CONCEPT of the day: Representation**

**Assignment:**
- Bring a print-out of 1 page analysis and photo

**Assigned Readings:**
- Gender Circuits, Shapiro, Chapter 2 (Pp. 87-127).

In-class Activities:
- Gallery walk + discussion: Share with class your photo (photos will displayed in groups); discuss your group's process of creating the original photo, the "meaning" of your photo, and how the meaning changes with your individual Photoshop alterations.
- Film: Tough Guise: Violence, Media and the Crisis in Masculinity http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-9632437500432634#

**Week 3 Storytelling in a multimedia world**

*Tuesday: Oct 11*
CONCEPT of the day: “Coming out”

**Assignment:**
- Come to class with questions for Shapiro

**Assigned Readings:**
- Gender Circuits, Shapiro, Chapter 3 (Pp. 137-166).

**In-class Activities:**
- Skype chat with Eve Shapiro, author of *Gender Circuits*. 1:30-2:15 pm.

*Thursday: Oct 13*
CONCEPT of the day: Art

**Assigned Readings & Multimedia:**
- Sharon Daniel:
  - UC Santa Cruz page: http://film.ucsc.edu/faculty/sharon_daniel. “Daniel's work is based on the belief that advanced information and communications technologies can be made accessible, useful, and empowering, especially for under-served and marginalized communities, through public art.”
  - “Public Secrets” http://vectors.usc.edu/issues/4/publicsecrets/
  - "Blood Sugar" - http://bloodandsugar.net
  - 23rd and Union http://kuow.org/23rdandunion/

**In-class Activities:**
- Susan Vinson from 1:15-1:40 on student success and best practices in university
- Sharon Daniel lecture at 4:00 in the North Creek Events Center
Week 4 Storytelling in graphic novels

Tuesday: Oct 18
CONCEPT of the day: Research
Assigned Reading:


Field Trip & Activities:

- Class meets at ZAPP (the Zine Archive and Publishing Project) from 1:45-4:00 pm. Students are responsible for arranging their own carpooling/transportation. ZAPP is located on the top floor of the Richard Hugo House, in Seattle’s Capitol Hill neighborhood. The Richard Hugo House faces Cal Anderson Park, with ample (metered) street parking. Address: 1634 11th Avenue; Seattle, WA 98122; Phone: (206) 322-7030. [http://hugohouse.org/content/zapp](http://hugohouse.org/content/zapp).
- Students Arrive at ZAPP, 1:45 pm
- Heath Davis (UWB MA in Cultural Studies student), will lead a tour of ZAPP and discussion from 2-4 pm
- Archival research assignment, to be completed at ZAPP

Thursday: Oct 20
CONCEPT of the day: Genre
Assignment:

- Bring in Outline of graphic novel

Assigned Reading:


In-class Activities:

- Workshop on graphic novel development
- In class quiz (Analysis of *Persepolis* using McCloud’s framework of “5 Choices”)

Week 5 Storytelling in film

Tuesday: Oct 25
CONCEPT of the day: Objectivity/Subjectivity
Assignment:

- Graphic novel due

Assigned Readings:

- Goldberg, Michael L. "How to Read a Film." Online: [http://faculty.washington.edu/mlg/students/readafilm.htm](http://faculty.washington.edu/mlg/students/readafilm.htm)
- Read Satrapi’s online explanation of why she wrote *Persepolis*, and the relationship between graphic novels and films: [http://www.randomhouse.com/pantheon/graphicnovels/satrapi2.htm](http://www.randomhouse.com/pantheon/graphicnovels/satrapi2.htm) (Social reading with Diigo)
In-class Activities:
- **Film**: Persepolis [film based on the complete series (Part 1 and 2)]
- Analysis of film using concepts from Goldberg.

**Thursday: Oct 27:**
CONCEPT of the day: Theory

**Assigned Readings:**

In-class Activities:
- Review for midterm.
  - Review readings to date
  - Analysis day (as a way to study for the midterm – this will apply all the concepts thus far, perhaps introduce a couple new ones. This is a synthesis day in prep for midterm).
  - Review guide and workshop it in small groups

**Week 6 Stories that sell**

**Tuesday: Nov 1**
Readings: No readings assigned for today

In-class Activities:
- **MIDTERM EXAM**
- **Film**: Control Room [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Control_Room_(film)]

**Thursday: Nov 3**
CONCEPT of the day: Ideology

**Assigned Readings:**

In-class Activities:
- **Film**: Afghan Star [http://www.afghanstardocumentary.com/]
Week 7 Digital storytelling

Tuesday: Nov 8
CONCEPT of the day: Structure

Assigned Readings:
- Read the Digital Storytelling Cookbook. Available at: [http://www.storycenter.org/cookbook.html](http://www.storycenter.org/cookbook.html)

In-class Activities:
- Workshop: Script writing and Storyboarding
- Beschdel test

Thursday: Nov 10

Assignment:
- Outline due, bring in images

Assigned Readings & Multimedia:
- Sonke Gender Justice [http://www.genderjustice.org.za/digital-stories/sharing-these-stories](http://www.genderjustice.org.za/digital-stories/sharing-these-stories) (browse website and watch at least 3 example videos)
- Llano Grande Center. *Digital Storytelling Toolkit*. [http://captura.llanogrande.org](http://captura.llanogrande.org) (browse website and watch at least 3 example videos)

In-class Activities:
- Watch/discuss select digital stories from Sonke Gender Justice & Llano Grande Center.
- Workshop: Overview on learning final cut pro Film production in the DML (1:15-5:30)

Week 8 Identity Production in a Mediated Society

Tuesday: Nov 15
CONCEPT of the day: Network

Assignment:
- Draft of story narrative due
- Bring in photos to scan and import for films.

Assigned Readings & Multimedia:
- Digital Tattoo [http://digitaltattoo.ubc.ca/](http://digitaltattoo.ubc.ca/)
- **Film:** Digital Nation: Life on the Virtual Frontier (Frontline, PBS) [http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/digitalnation/](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/digitalnation/)
In-class Activities:
- Workshop story draft in editorial groups
- Workshop: Working with Images and Text in film in the DML (3:30-5:30)

**Thursday: Nov 17**
CONCEPT of the day: Intellectual Property (IP)

**Assignment:**
- Brief response to *Sita Sings the Blues* in light of intellectual property and copyright

**Assigned Readings & Multimedia:**
- Explore the website for *Sita Sings the Blues* [http://www.sitasingstheblues.com/](http://www.sitasingstheblues.com/)
  (watching the entire film is optional)
- **Film:** Copyright Criminals (53 mins)

**In-class Activities:**
- Workshop on copyright in the DML - use [http://libguides.uwb.edu/copyrightfriendly](http://libguides.uwb.edu/copyrightfriendly)
- Workshop: Working with Music and Voice in film in the DML (1:15-5:30)

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**Week 9 Globalization and communication rights**

**Tuesday: Nov 22**
CONCEPT of the day: Digital Divide

**Assignment:**
- DRAFT -- DIGITAL FILMS DUE. (You will have a chance to "revise" your film after getting peer critiques.) Please save your film to a compressed format and bring it to class on a flash drive or CD. Name your film with your last name and first initial, e.g., JonesA-Film.

**Assigned Readings:**

**In-class Activities:**
- Watch films in editorial groups and provide feedback; Workshop on creating youtube accounts and uploading files (DML 121 3:30-5:30).
- **Film:** This is Nollywood [http://www.thisisnollywood.com/](http://www.thisisnollywood.com/)

**Thursday: Nov 24** NO CLASS: Thanksgiving Holiday
Week 10 Changing the Story

Tuesday: Nov 29

FILM SCREENING (Open to the public; location TBA)

All films MUST be uploaded either to youtube or to the lecture podium at least 1 hour prior to the screening.

Thursday: Dec 1

CONCEPT of the day: Cultural activism

Assigned Readings:


In-class Activities:

- Library session in LB1-222 for 3:30-5:30pm with Jackie Belanger and Dave Ellenwood – students need to leave with their sources for final paper in hand.

Week 11

Tuesday: Dec. 6

Assignment:

- Draft due in editorial groups

Assigned Readings:

- Read the articles/books that you find for your final paper

Thursday: Dec 8

Concept of the day: Completion

Assignment:

- Final Paper due: Bring in hard copy (4 pages + bibliography)

In-class Activities:

- Workshop with Ian on Google portfolio. In this workshop you will learn how to keep material from all of your courses archived on the Catalyst/Google site in order to have access to them for your Spring DCIII Portfolio project. http://www.uwb.edu/learningtech/help/how-to/eportfolios
- Class evaluations.

The End.