

# Gossip, Scandal, and Celebrity

English S114 Section 6  
Summer Session B 2017, Yale University  
MWF 9-11:15  
Location: TBA

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Office Hours: Tuesday 1-2 pm *and by appointment*

## Introduction

In a society as obsessed with celebrity as ours is today, what does the urge to gossip about famous folk tell us about where we live and who we are—as a nation, as a community, and as people? In this ENGL 114 course, we'll ask ourselves why certain names, faces, and bodies are elevated above others, and how we ourselves participate in the consumption and performance of celebrity. We'll think about gossip and scandal: not just as a means of policing human behavior, but as two different strategies for the production and dissemination of information. And we'll consider whether or not social media has definitively altered our conception and consumption of fame. In other words, this is a class which celebrates and scrutinizes Instagram, web apps, and all things Kardashian, which will allow us to touch on topics as diverse as anthropology, sociology, art history and media studies. Along the way, we'll tackle the following questions: What *is* celebrity? Can it be disentangled from other features of our consumer economy—and where do we go from here?

## Course Objectives

In the process of exploring the weird and wacky world of modern celebrity, you will write three major papers and a less formal “op-ed” piece, the purpose of which is to prepare for the kinds of sophisticated thinking and writing you will be asked to do here at Yale and beyond. As in all sections of ENGL 114, we will focus on the four elements of a compelling, cohesive argument: identifying a *problem*, making a defensible *claim*, supporting claims with *evidence*, and providing a *motive* for writing. With these skills in mind, you will learn to read your own work—and that of your classmates—with a critical eye, with the ultimate aim of transforming these texts into sophisticated, refined, and persuasive final products.

## Required Texts

Hacker, Diana and Nancy Sommers. *A Pocket Manual of Style*. 7<sup>th</sup> Edition. (Spiral bound). ISBN: 978-1457642326.

Booth, Wayne C. et al. *The Craft of Research*. 4<sup>th</sup> Edition. ISBN: 1457642328

Course readings will be made available to you through the Canvas @ Yale portal, as well as a printed course packet available for purchase at TYCO Printing on 262 Elm Street. *You are required to bring a hard copy of each day's assigned reading to class.*

## SEMINAR CALENDAR AND DRAFT DUE DATES (subject to change):

### How to Read this Schedule:

#### Week #

|      |  |
|------|--|
| Date | Topics, readings, assignments and activities addressed in class  |
|      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Readings, writing exercises, and other assignments to be completed in preparation for <u>and in advance of</u> this class</li><li>• <b>Date due of written assignments</b></li></ul> |

### UNIT ONE: DEFINING CELEBRITY

#### Week 1

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| Monday, July 3    | Course Introduction/go over syllabus<br>Introduction to key rhetorical terms (handout)<br>Essay 1 assigned<br>Maureen O'Connor, "A Celebrity Divorce-Expert Tells All"   |
| Wednesday, July 5 | Introduction and claim   |
|                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Thomas J. Boorstin, "From Hero to Celebrity: The Human Pseudo-Event"</li><li>• <i>Craft of Research</i> Chapter 7—Making Good Arguments</li><li>• <i>Craft of Research</i> Chapter 9—Making Claims</li><li>• <b>Due: Preliminary claim for Essay 1</b></li></ul> |
| Friday, July 7    | Essay 1 writing workshop<br>Focus: Introductions, body paragraphs, conclusions   |
|                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Craft of Research</i> Chapter 9—Assembling Reasons and Evidence</li><li>• <i>Craft of Research</i> Chapter 16—Introduction and Conclusions</li><li>• <b>Due: Rough draft of Essay 1. Please bring two printed copies of your essay to class.</b></li></ul>    |

### UNIT TWO: SURVEILLING CELEBRITY

#### Week 2

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| Monday, July 10    | Essay 2 assigned<br>Placing sources in conversation  |
|                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Max Gluckman, "Gossip and Scandal"</li><li>• Joshua Gamson, "The Unwatched Is Not Worth Living: The Elevation of the Ordinary in Celebrity Culture"</li><li>• Watch Kanye West's music video, "Famous," available at <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p7FCgw_GlWc">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p7FCgw_GlWc</a></li></ul> |
| Wednesday, July 12 | Warrants, Evidence and Analysis  |
|                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema"</li></ul>   |

- Nicholas Schmidle, “The Digital Dirt: How TMZ gets the videos and photos that celebrities want to hide”
- *Craft of Research* Chapter 10—Acknowledgements and Responses
- **Due: Final draft of Essay 1**

Friday, July 14

Essay 2 writing workshop

Focus: integrating secondary sources

- **Due: Rough draft of Essay 2. Please bring two printed copies of your essay to class.**

### UNIT THREE: CELEBRITY AS CULTURAL ARGUMENT

#### Week 3

Monday, July 17

Essay 3 assigned

Brainstorming paper topics

- Richard Dyer, “Monroe and Sexuality”
- Sarah Marshall, “How Anna Nicole Smith Became America’s Punchline”

Wednesday, July 19

LIBRARY VISIT details TBD

- **Due: Final draft of Essay 2**

Friday, July 21

Essay 3 writing workshop

Focus: moving from research to outlining and writing

- Anne Helen Petersen. “How Jennifer Garner Went Full ‘Minivan Majority’”
- Anne Helen Petersen, “The Unbearable Sadness of Ben Affleck”
- *Craft of Research* Chapter 12—Planning
- **Due: Research Proposal and Working Bibliography. Please bring two printed copies of these documents to class.**

#### Week 4

Monday, July 24

Essay 3 writing workshop

Focus: moving from partial to complete drafts

- Anne Anlin Cheng, “Shine: On Race, Glamour, and the Modern”
- *Craft of Research* Chapter 13—Drafting Your Report
- **Due: Partial draft of Essay 2 (introduction with claim, at least three body paragraphs, and detailed outline with quotes). Please bring two copies of your essay to class.**

Wednesday, July 26

Celebrity and New/Old Media

- Natalie Jarvey, “Instagram’s CEO is Counting on Selena Gomez, Kevin Hart and 500 Million More to Win Digital Media’s New Game: Video”
- Stephen Burt, “Kim, Caitlyn, and the People We Want to See”
- Claudia Rosenbaum, “The Once Mighty Celebrity Tabloids Face An Uncertain Future”

Friday, July 28

In-class peer review of Essay 3 Draft 1

- **Due: complete draft of essay 3. Please bring two copies of your essay to class.**

**Week 5**

Monday, July 31

Celebrity and Politics

Presentations assigned

In-class work on preparing for and delivering a presentation

- Anne Helen Petersen, “Ivanka Trump and the Aesthetics of Denial”
- Olivia Nuzzi, “Kellyanne Conway is a Star”

Wednesday, August 2

Presentation on Research Topics-Panels 1 and 2

- **Due: Essay 3 Final Draft**
- **Due: Presentation Script (panels 1 and 2)**

Friday, August 4

Presentation on Research Topics—Panels 3 and 4  
Class Conclusion

- **Due: Presentation scripts (panels 3 and 4)**



**THE NUTS AND BOLTS**

**Grades**

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Paper 1: Close Reading of an Argument (3-4 pages)          | 15% |
| Paper 2: Controlled research Essay (4-5 pages)             | 20% |
| Paper 3: Research-Based Essay (8-10 pages)                 | 30% |
| Research proposal and preliminary bibliography for Essay 3 | 5%  |
| Presentation and script                                    | 15% |
| Participation  | 15% |

**Due Date of Papers**

First Draft Paper 1: Friday, July 7

Final Draft Paper 1: Wednesday, July 12

First Draft Paper 2: Friday, July 14  
Final Draft Paper 2: Wednesday, July 19  
Research Proposal and Working Bibliography for Paper 3: Friday, July 21  
Partial Draft Paper 3: Monday, July 24  
Full Draft Paper 3: Friday, July 28  
Final Draft Paper 3: Wednesday, August 2

## **Participation**

Come to class with something to write with and something to write on. It's not a bad idea to purchase a notebook solely devoted to ENGL 114 notes and assignments. You will occasionally be asked to hand in your in-class writing; for that reason, make sure your handwriting is *legible*, and that you can tear pages neatly from said notebook.

*Please note that I do not allow laptops, tablets, or cellphones in class.* (Unless they pertain to our in class discussion.)

## **In-Class Discussion**

To make discussion as effective as possible, you will be expected to come to class having done all the assigned readings and assignments. Most importantly, however, you are expected to treat your fellow classmates (and myself) with courtesy and respect. Discussion, debate, and even disagreement are strongly encouraged, but it is vital that our seminar room constitute a space where everyone's opinion is respected and heard.

## **Attendance**

Unless you have made other arrangements with me in advance, rough drafts and final essays will be penalized **by one-third of a letter grade** for each day (class day or otherwise) that they are late. Extensions must be requested at least 48 hours in advance of the assignment due date. Please also keep in mind that assignments are due on time via Canvas even if you are not present in class. If you miss a class, you are expected to find out the homework for the following class from a classmate.

## **Tardiness**

Class begins promptly at 9:00 am—be there! You may be late for class *two* times without penalty, but every third late arrival will count as a day of absence. (See the policy above.)

## **Seeking Help Outside of Class**

I'm here to help, and love to work with students on their writing. That said, you are encouraged to talk to me for *any* reason outside of class: just stop by during office hours or email to make an appointment. I also encourage you to make use of Yale's residential college writing tutors and the tutors in the Writing Center. More information about both can be found at <http://www.yale.edu/writing/>.

## **Emailing Etiquette**

Please don't email me as if you were sending a tweet or posting on Instagram! Start your

messages with “Dear...” and remember to sign-off with your name. Treat emails like short letters, and our exchanges will run smoothly.

## **Assignments**

### **Websites**

Canvas @ Yale will be used for signing up for office hours, retrieving homework assignments and course readings, and viewing grades.

### **Drafts**

We will write several drafts along the way to each final paper. These will progress from a proposal or a guided exploration, to the “final draft,” which will be handed in for a grade. All drafts will be given deadlines on your syllabus, most will be discussed in class, and completed first drafts will receive instructor comments (but no grade). The better quality your drafts, the better my feedback can be, so your writing should be as strong as possible, and absolutely polished. Late papers—either first drafts or revised essays—will receive few or no comments.

### **Workshops**

Most drafts and many exercises will be discussed in class. This means that select essays may be discussed by the class as a whole, or individual essays may be considered by small groups of 2 to 3 students. Workshops will provide you with valuable feedback from your peers and instructor as to how you can revise your essay drafts.

### **Final Essays**

Imagine an audience of astute, interested, and intelligent readers who may or may not share your precise opinions, experiences, or beliefs—that’s the audience you should be writing for. Papers will be evaluated in terms of the quality of their ideas and arguments, their engagement with the readers, their form and style, and their grammar and mechanics.

### **Essay Format and Submission**

Final essays and drafts should be submitted to me on or before the day they are due via the Canvas @ Yale portal. Please make sure that all essays follow these specifications:

- Typed, generic size 12, Times New Roman font
- Double-spaced
- One-inch margins (top, bottom, and sides)
- Numbered pages
- Stapled (if submitted in hard copy)
- Word-count, given at the end of the essay
- Citations in MLA or Chicago format

### **Academic Honesty**

Academic honesty is the basis on which this class and our university functions: we share and discuss our research with each other in the understanding that we will give credit where credit is due and present as our own only our own ideas. I expect you to show integrity and care as participants in our academic community. One of the central goals of this course is to teach

students how to use published research to support their own thinking, both in speaking and in writing. Any instance of plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty may result in a failure on the particular assignment involved or of the course. I urge you to consult Yale's policies on this matter, which can be found at <http://yalecollege.yale.edu/content/undergraduate-regulations>, or to talk to me if you have any questions.