

ENGL 114E
Summer 2024
M/W/F: 1:00-3:15 EST
Location: Zoom

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Office Hours: TH 10:00-12:00 EST
On Zoom

Admirers, Aficionados, and Addicts: A History of Fan Culture

“I’m not a fan of modern fandom....[T]he behavior of these social media hordes represents an anti-democratic, anti-intellectual mind-set that is harmful to the cause of art and antithetical to the spirit of movies. Fan culture is rooted in conformity, obedience, group identity and mob behavior, and its rise mirrors and models the spread of intolerant, authoritarian, aggressive tendencies in our politics and our communal life.”

--A.O. Scott, [“And Now Let’s Review ...”](#) *The New York Times*, March 17, 2023

“What’s that thing you guys have been saying online? You’re always just like “mother is mothering”... [laughs]...which I think you mean in a totally different context than Mother’s Day, but I just thought of it because you made me think of the word that you use a lot when you’re like turning it into a verb, like, good for you, that’s cool...”

--Taylor Swift, from a [TikTok](#) taken at her Mother’s Day concert in Philadelphia on May 15, 2023

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Everyone’s a fan of something. Today, allegiance to a pop star or a basketball team can be a central part of a person’s identity. Even political orientation seems more often based on attraction to personality than considered ideological beliefs. What does it mean, then, to be a fan? Is fandom simply admiration? Or is there something childish or even pathological in the fan’s adoration? This course seeks to answer these questions by examining the history and meaning of the fan. We’ll read about the fan in relation to debates around the rise of mass culture. And we’ll take up particular examples of fan culture, thinking about the violence of British football hooligans, the elaborate rituals of queer opera fans, and the behavior of contemporary online stan communities. Throughout, our attention will be not only on what fans are obsessed with but how they express their feeling, the material culture of fandom.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This class is about developing college-level writing skills. Through the four assignments that you’ll be completing this semester, you’ll learn what goes in to making a compelling and interesting argument. Focusing on the fundamentals of academic writing, together we’ll learn how to identify a *problem*, make a clear *claim*, support our ideas with relevant *evidence* and *warrants*, and provide a *motive* for our findings. We’ll be going to the library to see how to make use of their resources. Writing is also crucially about reading—and we will be analyzing the texts that we look at together throughout the semester not only for *what* they have to say but *how* they say it.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein, *They Say / I Say, 2016 MLA update*, 4th ed.
ISBN: 978-0393631678 // Price: \$27.95
- Diana Hacker and Nancy Sommers, *A Pocket Style Manual*, 8th ed.
ISBN: 978-8925598406 // Price: \$36.65

Readings will be available on Canvas.

Course Format:

This class will meet remotely (but synchronously) over Zoom. All office hours will also be held on Zoom. To access our sessions, use the “Zoom” tab on our Canvas page or refer to the zoom link below.

Class and Office Hours Zoom Link: <https://yale.zoom.us/j/7496701289>

Meeting ID: 749 670 1289

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- Attendance at all class meetings. If you are going to miss class for any reason, please let me know. More than two unexcused absences will begin to affect your standing in the class. More than four unexcused absences will result in a failing grade for the course.
- Active participation in discussion. It is important that you come to class prepared to share your thoughts and opinions about the reading. Please have your *computer camera on* during class sessions. Participation is about more than just speaking, however; engaged listening is essential to taking part in class. Don't hesitate to be in touch if you have concerns about your participation.
- Three essays—see below in the deadlines section for information about the different style of each paper. More information will be provided throughout the semester.
- A final presentation on the last day class sharing your research project with the class.
- Two instructor conferences. These informal conferences help me to get to know you and address your individual areas for development as a critical thinker. In these meetings, I invite questions about class discussions, course themes, and writing in general.
- One discussion presentation—working in pairs, in the second week of class each group will pick a reading from the syllabus that they will be responsible for presenting. This involves a very short summary of the article, information of the article's context (author and publication), and two or three questions for the class.

GRADES AND DEADLINES

Grading: All grades are non-negotiable. They will be calculated as follows:

Participation, including discussions, informal writing assignments, and workshops	10%
Discussion Presentation	10%
Paper 1 (2 pages, close reading for argument)	10%
Paper 2 (4-5 pages, controlled research argument)	15%
Research Proposal and Bibliography for Paper 3	5%
Paper 3 (8-10 pages, research-based argument)	35%
Final Presentation (P4)	15%

Deadlines (“P2V1” = Paper 2, version 1)

P1	Wednesday, July 3 @ Midnight
P2V1	Tuesday, July 9 @ Midnight
P2V2	Sunday, July 14 @ Midnight
P3 RP	Wednesday, July 17 (in class)
P3V1	Saturday, July 20 (Partial) @ 3 PM
P3V1	Friday, July 26 (Complete) @ Midnight
P3V2	Wednesday, July 31 @ Midnight
P4	Friday, August 2 (in-class)

CLASSROOM POLICIES

ACTIVE READING

Your experience in the classroom begins with your engagement with the reading at home. To that end, I encourage everyone to read actively, to underline sentences that seem particularly interesting or confusing and to jot down your reactions as you read. Try to figure out what kind of system works best for you—this is different for everyone.

COMPUTER USE

Laptops are permitted, but only to take notes. Everyone should have hard copies of the reading on hand in class. Checking email, refreshing twitter, and working on other assignments is distracting not only to you but to others. Resist the temptation to check your phone.

LATE WORK

All papers are expected to be turned in on time. For one of these assignments you may request a 48-hour extension. In any other case late work will reduce your essay grade by one third of a mark (from A- to B+, B+ to B, etc.) for each day the assignment is overdue.

ESSAY SUBMISSION

You will submit essays through the “Assignment” page on Canvas. Please submit papers as Word documents, not PDFs. I’ll be commenting using tracked changes. If you don’t have Word,

you can use Google docs to complete your paper and download it as a Word document when you're done.

All essays should be 12-point font, Times New Roman, with one-inch margins.

Here are some academic conventions that will be good to practice this summer in advance of starting your first full Yale term:

1. Make sure your first page (not a separate title page) has your name, the course title, instructor name, and submission date on the top left-hand corner
2. Include a paper title, centered, below this information. Remember that this is the first introduction your reader has to the thinking you are hoping they'll do alongside you; you are giving up this opportunity if you choose a title like "Paper 1".
3. Cite your sources using MLA format. The [Purdue OWL](#) is a great website for more information on how to do this correctly.

EMAIL ETTIQUETE

Email is one of the genres of academic writing that this class seeks to teach. My email policy is simple: email me if you have questions about the class that cannot be answered by the syllabus or your peers. Do not address me with "Hey," or not at all; "Dear Ben," however, is always an appropriate way to start an email. I will reply to emails within 24 hours, unless they ask for information that was offered in class or is available on the syllabus.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

Academic knowledge is built by engaging with the scholarly tradition, and to write effectively you need to make use of pre-existing texts. It is essential, however, that you distinguish your ideas from those of other people. All the written work that you complete this semester must be your own, and you must document all of your source material. If you take any text from somebody else, you need to make clear the text is being quoted and where the text comes from. You must also cite any sources from which you obtain numbers, ideas, or other material. I'm always happy to talk about any issues that may arise around these questions. For more information on Yale's academic honesty policy, see the Center for Teaching and Learning's website: <http://ctl.yale.edu/writing/using-sources/understanding-and-avoiding-plagiarism/what-plagiarism>.

STATEMENT ON DISABILITY AND LEARNING DIFFERENCE

Any student with a documented disability needing academic adjustments or accommodations is requested to speak with me during the first three weeks of class. All discussions will remain confidential. Further information is available at the Resource Office on Disabilities website: <http://yalecollege.yale.edu/content/resource-office-disabilities>.

READING AND ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

Our schedule for the summer is below. Please note that this is subject to modification as we work through our ideas and reading together. If things change, I will upload a new syllabus and let you know in an email.

“TSIS” refers to *They Say, I Say*, a very useful writing guide we’ll be working with this summer. No readings from this work are required, although I may ask that you bring this book to class occasionally. However, I have included chapter reference in brackets if you’d like to consult the text for further information.

Week 1 **Introduction: How Do We Consume Culture?**

M, July 1st

Introduction

Williams, “Culture is Ordinary”

First Paper Assigned

W, July 3rd

Michel de Certeau, “Reading as Poaching”

From Theodor Adorno, “On The Fetish Character in Music and the Regression of Listening”

[TSIS Intro-Chap. 3]

DUE AT MIDNIGHT: P1

F, July 5th

Stuart Hall, “Encoding and Decoding”

[TSIS Chap. 4-5]

Second Paper Assigned

Week 2

The Business of Fandom

M, July 8th

From Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*

[TSIS Chap. 6-7]

T, July 9th

DUE AT MIDNIGHT: P2V1

W, July 10th

John Fiske, “The Cultural Economy of Fandom”

[TSIS Chap. 8-9]

F, July 12th

Alison McCracken, “Falling in Love with a Voice: Rudy Vallée and His First Radio Fans, 1928”

[TSIS Chap. 10]

Third Paper Assigned

Su, July 14th t

DUE BY MIDNIGHT: P2V2

Week 3**Fandom and Gender**

M, July 15th

Barbara Ehrenreich, Elizabeth Hess, and Gloria Jacobs, "Beatlemania: Girls Just Want to Have Fun"
[TSIS Chap. 11]
Bass Library Visit

W, July 17th

Janice Radway, "Women Read the Romance: The Interaction of Text and Context"

In-class: P3 Research Proposal and Bibliography Due

F, July 19th

select episodes from Maria Garcia, "Anything for Selena"

S, July 20th

DUE at 3PM: Partial P3V1**Week 4****Fans in Action**

M, July 22nd

from Wayne Koestenbaum, *The Queen's Throat*

W, July 24th

Claudio Benzecry, "Introduction" to *The Opera Fanatic. Ethnography of an Obsession*

F, July 26th

Rebecca Wanzo, "African-American acafandom and Other Strangers: New Genealogies of Fan Studies"

DUE BY MIDNIGHT: Full P3V1**Week 5****Fans and Contemporary Media**

M, July 29th

Henry Jenkins, Mizuko Ito, and danah boyd, "Participatory Culture in a Networked Era"

W, July 31st

from Kaitlyn Tiffany, *Everything I Need I Get From You*
DUE BY MIDNIGHT: P3V2

F, August 2nd

Final Presentations (P4)