The syllabus for

CMGT 586:
Entertainment Media:
Content, Theory, and Industry Practices

Annenberg School for Communication
University of Southern California
Prof. Chris Smith
Fall 2009

Office: ASC 321A
Office Hrs: TH 4-6pm; by appointment
Email: christhs@usc.edu
Phone: 213-821-5243
Class meets: TH 6:30 – 9:20 pm, ASC G34

Academic Integrity Policy:
The Annenberg School for Communication is committed to upholding the University’s Academic Integrity code as detailed in the SCampus Guide. It is the policy of the School for Communication to report all violations of the code. Any serious violation or pattern of violations of the Academic Integrity Code will result in the student’s expulsion from the Communication major or minor, or from the graduate program.

ADA Compliance Statement
Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.
Course Goals

1. To familiarize students with a representative range of social scientific research on celebrity – spanning sociology, media effects, and cultural studies.
2. To formulate the celebrity as a useful tool for introducing students to the study of social status, (post-) modernity, and power.
3. To offer students opportunities to reflect and write critically about the role of celebrity in contemporary cultural experience.
4. To offer students practical exposure to media and corporate industry professionals who work to create, manage, and extend celebrity personae within the marketplace.

Course Description

The circulation of celebrities through contemporary media and the accelerating commodification of this circulation within the consumer marketplace are two of the defining features of contemporary times. This course seeks to place this key factor of everyday culture within broader historical perspective so as to better appreciate its role in reproducing the social order from which it springs.

Readings will include a classic essay by philosopher Walter Benjamin; a selection from *The Image* by Daniel Boorstin; more recent work on the psychology of celebrity from *The Mirror Effect*, by Dr. Drew Pinsky; and various approaches to utilizing celebrities for the marketing of consumer brands as found in recent legal, marketing, and PR literature. These readings will be bolstered by additional social-scientific analyses of celebrity, including those that seek to appreciate its role in social identity formation, its connection with networks of economic, juridical, and political power, and its impact on inter-personal communication.

Grading assessments will include punctual attendance and informed participation, weekly reading summaries, and several short papers.
Competencies and Evaluation

Participation 10%

Reading summaries 30%

Papers #1-3 60%

Participation

Class discussion is a critical part of the effectiveness of this course. This is a seminar course, where we collectively grapple with issues and challenges to communication management today. Each individual is expected to be actively involved in class discussion during each class period. The primary assessment will be the quality of those contributions to the group effort.

Good contributions are:
- thoughtful
- analytical
- constructive to the group effort
- topically relevant
- linked to the readings assigned for that day*

Poor contributions:
- simply restate what someone else has already said
- take the discussion on a tangent
- refer to issues we have already left behind as the discussion moves forward
- do not respect the other participants
- show that the individual has not done the assigned readings*

This 10% will be based on overall contributions throughout the semester based on my judgment of overall frequency and quality. If you skip class, don’t expect a high participation grade. If you want to know how you are doing on class participation, don’t hesitate to ask me.

Reading Summaries

Thoughtful notes on each week’s reading (as marked with an *) will be due 24 hours before each class (30% of final grade). Please submit these via e-mail. These notes, approximately 250 words per article or chapter, should include:

- The full bibliographic citation of the work
CMGT 586 – Entertainment Media: Content, Theory, and Industry Practices

- The main points of the reading, including summaries of each chapter or section
- Definitions of major concepts and examples of their use in the text
- Significant quotations and commentary on items that you find interesting
- Your reactions/questions/critiques/connections with other theorists and “big ideas” we’ve covered in class
- Page references throughout

The summaries will serve as your customized index of the course literature. They will be graded 3 points each if complete and turned in on time, 2 points if incomplete or one class late, and 1 point if more than one class late.

Papers #1, 2, & 3
Specific reading segments will prompt each paper at regular intervals during the course of the semester.

Course Readings

Required (Available USC Bookstore):

1. *Celebrity Diplomacy*, Andrew F. Cooper
2. *The Future of Reputation*, Daniel Solvoe
4. *Fame Junkies*, Jake Halpern
5. *The Beckham Experiment*, Grant Wahl
7. *Where’s My Fifteen Minutes*, Howard Bragman

Course Reader (Available at Magic Machine Copies)

I will also distribute handouts as needed. A wide assortment of audio-visual examples will be utilized during lectures. Textbooks and supplementary material will be on 3-hour reserve in Leavey Library.
Reading Schedule

**Week 1 (Aug 27): Introduction, Course Description**
Lecture:
Introductions, syllabus review, overview of expectations.

**Week 2 (Sep 3): Celebrity: Its History***
(CR) L. Braudy, “The Dream of Acceptability,” *Stardom & Celebrity*, Ch. 15
(CR) J. Gamson, *Claims to Fame*, Chs. 1 & 2
(CR) A. Lai, “Glitter and Grain”*

**Week 3 (Sep 10): Celebrity: Its Critique***
Reading:
(CR) D. Boorstin, *The Image*, “From Hero to Celebrity”*
(CR) C. Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism*, “Changing Modes of Making It”
(CR) M. Rowlands, *Fame*, Chs. 1 & 6
(CR) “Jessica Lynch: ‘I’m No Hero’”
(CR) M. Steinberger, “Arizona Hero”
(CR) P. Noonan, “Is ‘Octomom’ America’s Future?”
(CR) B. Stephens, “Celebrity Culture vs. The Right Stuff”
(CR) J. Queenan, “Icons Aren’t What They Used to Be”

**Week 4 (Sep 17): Celebrity Media Events, Pt. 1 – Lennon & Diana***
Reading:
(CR) S. Cottle, “Mediatized Rituals”*
(CR) A. Elliott, “Celebrity and Political Psychology: Remembering Lennon”
(CR) S. Whiteley, “The Killing Fields of Popular Music”
(CR) E. Wilson, “The Unbearable Lightness of Diana”
(CR) M. Helmers, “Electronic Memorials to Diana”

**Week 5 (Sep 24): Celebrity Media Events, Pt. 2 – Michael & Miley***
Reading:
(CR) C. Hedges, “The Man in the Mirror”
(CR) M. Harris-Lacewell, “The Black Funeral of Michael Jackson”
(CR) H. Als, “Michael”
(CR) D. Henniger, “Michael: The Last Celebrity”
(CR) G. Collins, “Michael, a Foreign Affair”
(CR) A. R. Silver, “Li’l Wayne, BET set stage for child pornography”
(CR) R. Traister, “Miley Cyrus: Daddy’s little hurl”
(CR) T. Clark-Flory, “Miley Cyrus: Too young for ‘hooker boots’?”
(Paper Topic # 1 Assigned)
Week 6 (Oct 1): Celebrity, “Reality TV,” and Self-Disclosure, Pt. 1*
Reading:
D. Pinsky & S.M. Young, The Mirror Effect, Chs. 1-3
(CR) M. Andrejevic, “Between the New Medium and the Old”*
(CR) Ted Magder, “The End of TV 101...”
(CR) S. Lyall, “Squirming, but Watching a Dying Reality Star”
(CR) M. Engel, “Public follows sad end of reality tv star”
(CR) D. Samuels, “Shooting Britney”

Week 7 (Oct 8): Celebrity, Social Media, and Self-Disclosure, Pt. 2
Reading:
D.J. Solove, The Future of Reputation, Chs. 2-3; 7-8
H. Bragman, Where’s My Fifteen Minutes, Chs.18-19
(Blackboard Link) J. Gould, “The Secret World of Lonelygirl”
(CR) E. Gould, “Exposed”
(CR) C. Thompson, “Brave New World of Digital Intimacy”
(CR) N. Cohen, “When Stars Twitter...”
(CR) A.H. Petersen, “We’re Making Our Own Paparazzi”
(CR) M. Corcoran, “Death by Cliff Plunge”
(CR) “Sarah Palin’s Facebook Alter-Ego...”

Week 8 (Oct 15): Celebrity Psychology
Reading:
D. Pinsky & S.M. Young, The Mirror Effect, Chs. 4-7
J. Halpern, Fame Junkies, Chs. 4-7
(CR) K. Ferris, “Seeing and Being Seen”
(CR) L. Hirschberg, “Being Rachel Zoe”
(Paper Topic # 2 Assigned)

Week 9 (Oct 22): Celebrity and Democracy*
Reading:
(Handout) D. Kellner, “Barack Obama and Celebrity Spectacle”
(CR) L. Friedman, The Horizontal Society, Introduction, Ch. 1
(CR) J. Lloyd, “Democracy versus the tube”
(CR) D. Talbot, “How Obama Really Did It”
(CR) A. Chozick, “Obama: The First 100 Days...”
(CR) J. Senior, “The Message is the Message”
(CR) M. P. Marks & Z. M. Fischer, “The King’s New Bodies...”*
(CR) E. Spohrer, “Becoming Extra-Textual”*

Week 10 (Oct 29): Celebrity Diplomacy*
Reading:
A. Cooper, Celebrity Diplomacy, Chs. 1-3; Conclusion
(CR) J. Traub, “The Celebrity Solution”*
(CR) S. Malcomson, “Shakira’s Children”
(CR) “UNDP Goodwill Ambassador Drogba...”
(CR) D. Brockington, “Powerful Environmentalisms”*
Week 11 (Nov 5): Celebrities and/as Brands, Pt. 1
Reading:
H. Pringle, *Celebrity Sells*, Chs. 8-11
(Handout) G. Turner, “The Economy of Celebrity,” *Stardom & Celebrity*, Ch. 16
(CR) I. Aleksander, “No to Rachel Zoe”

Week 12 (Nov 12): Celebrities and/as Brands, Pt. 2
Reading:
H. Pringle, *Celebrity Sells*, Chs. 12-17
H. Bragman, *Where’s My Fifteen Minutes*, Chs. 11-16
(CR) S. Vranica, “Jackson Popularized Celebrity Ads”
(CR) J. Creswell, “Celebrities Pitch Products and Themselves”
(CR) A. Behr & A. Beeler-Norrholm, “Fame, Fortune, and the Occasional…”
(Paper Topic # 3 Assigned)

Week 13 (Nov 19): Celebrities and/as Brands, Pt. 3
Reading:
G. Wahl, *The Beckham Experiment*, Intro, Chs. 1-6, 10, 15-17
(CR) J. Summer & M. J. Morgan, “More Than Just the Media…”
(CR) M. Futterman, “…Pele Awaits His Payday”

Week 14 (Nov 26): Thanksgiving Holiday

Week 15 (Dec 3): Celebrities and/as Brands, Pt. 4*
Reading:
(CR) R. Khurana, *Searching for a Corporate Savior*, Chs. 3 & 6*
(CR) D. Carr, “Unhealthy Fixation on Jobs’s Illness”